

Understanding Fascism

The characterisation of the fascist traits of the RSS has assumed a familiarity with the nature of fascism. This assumption may not be valid. The term fascism is used quite frequently, but most often in a somewhat loose manner. It conveys an image and a response (of antagonism and disgust) but does not indicate the exact characteristics of fascism. Terms that acquire general currency often lose precision and as a result, they obscure reality and hamper exact understanding.

The problem with the term and concept of fascism is even more complex.⁴⁸

It has been used quite loosely as a political pejorative to indicate any right wing non or anti-democratic forces, organisations or regimes. In such loose usage any dictatorship, without proper characterisation or analysis is termed fascist.

The classical fascist organisations and regimes that came up between the two World Wars also presented a spectrum – differing in many details. The analyses of these fascist organisations and regimes generally situated them in very specific historical material conditions. These analyses were of course extremely important but they did throw up

⁴⁸“St. Augustine once observed that he knew what time was till he was asked to define it, and fascism has a similarly elusive property. Practically all readers of this article, whatever point they occupy in the political spectrum or circle, know instinctively what fascism is, and can recognize it when they see it. However, many would be hard put to say what it means for them in other than impressionistic terms, possibly resorting to an MOT-type check-list of attributes and associations (leader-cult, violence etc.). If they were all to send their definition to the editor (the basis of a future feature?) it would reveal an extraordinary profusion of conflicting approaches. The ‘Babel effect’, which operates in all areas of human phenomena when efforts are made to pin them down conceptually, has been peculiarly strong when it comes to fascism” (Roger Griffin; *Fascism is more than reaction*; *Searchlight*; Vol 27, No 4; September 1999). Ernesto Laclau (**Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism-Fascism-Populism**; NLB 1977; Verso Edition 1979; London) [B.Q20.L105] quotes an excerpt from Ortega y Gasset (1927): “Fascism has an enigmatic countenance because in it appears the most counterposed contents. It asserts authoritarianism and organizes rebellion. It fights against democracy and, on the other hand, does not believe in the restoration of any past rule. - - - - Whichever way we approach fascism we find that it is simultaneously one thing and the contrary, it is A and not A- - - -”

the possibility that fascism is a phenomenon of the past since those exact historical material conditions no longer obtain nor can come into existence once again.

There is nevertheless resilience to fascist politics and organisation. They keep cropping up – unmistakably very similar to the classical fascist organisations – in different parts of the world.⁴⁹

It therefore becomes necessary to understand with some certitude what fascism is. It becomes essential then to grasp the common features.

This becomes difficult again since classical fascism was not very keen to propose a comprehensive fascist ideology or theory. In fact, fascism had an anti-theory and anti-intellectual stance. It relied heavily on action. This was not self-reflexive practice. In fact, numerous fascist positions, stances, and actions were inconsistent and self-contradictory.⁵⁰

Attempts at defining fascism then fall into two traps. One is of creation of a long drawn out ‘shopping list’ of characteristics, without justified prioritisation of the essential and contingent. The second one is the obverse of this of just using fairly vague criteria.

Yet another difficulty is created by the view that treats fascism as an aberration, a pathological abnormal occurrence. This view does not

⁴⁹Umberto Eco in his essay *Ur-fascism* published in the **New York Review of Books** on June 22, 1995 (available on the net at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1856>) makes some very interesting points in this regard. The first, rather obvious one is that one cannot look for exact replicas of the regimes in Italy or Germany from the inter-war period. He insists that no two regimes can ever be exactly the same. To talk of minor differences then is not relevant. He then lists out 14 characteristics of ‘eternal fascism’ and says the presence of a few would mark a movement or regime as fascist. He evokes Wittgenstein’s concept of familial similarity and claims that there may not be exact match in characteristics in two contemporary regimes (or movements) but if they will still be similar in their overall nature if the characteristics belong to the list of 14 essential features. This argument will also question the appropriateness of qualifying titles like neo-fascism or semi-fascism. The addition of the term ‘neo’ to many scholars only indicates the period – post world war and after the dissolution of the classical fascist regimes in Italy and Germany. Eco’s short essay makes some other interesting points as well. He feels that the term fascist, rather than Nazi, became a generic term because the Italian movement/organization/ideology/regime was somewhat loose, non-specific and lacked ideological as well as philosophical rigidity and rigor. German Nazism was far too precise, specific, rigid, and exact to become a generic term. One could almost add that the original image that gave the movement the name – the bundle of sticks, *fascis* – is necessarily loose and uneven.

⁵⁰This view is challenged by some scholars, for example David Barker in his “not to be quoted work in progress” essay titled *The ‘Political Economy of Fascism’: Myth or Reality or Myth and Reality?* (paper presented at the Research Seminar of the Political Economy Research Centre at the University of Sheffield on 10th March 2005 argues that the contradictions may be more apparent than real.

necessarily differentiate between the holocaust and fascism. In fact, it equates the two and pronounces the judgement.

The way out of the conundrum is perhaps to identify the essential and common features of all fascist organisations and movements. This is neither new nor path breaking. Many contemporary analysts of fascism have made these attempts. They have tried to identify the fascist ‘matrix’ or the fascist ‘minimum’ on this basis and to create a picture of ‘generic’ fascism.

With the Indian experience and context of communalism in mind the following characteristics of fascism should be considered essential.

01. The Necessity of the ‘other’

Suppression, subjugation, and even elimination of the ‘enemy other’ are not the only or even the defining features of fascism, classical or contemporary – though these often are vital components of fascist agenda and programme.

The ‘enemy other’ is necessary to fascism, classical or contemporary, for many reasons.

The most commonplace is also the most obvious and ‘common-sense’ reason. The constitution of ‘one people/folk’ requires strong identities. Definite inclusion and exclusion create identity. To posit ‘us’ is also to posit ‘the other’. It must be clear who constitutes the ‘one people’ and who can never be a part of the ‘one people/folk’. The other thus posited must be obvious, evident, palpable, and experiential. The ‘otherness’ must be ‘natural’ and ‘common-sense’. It should also be evident, ‘total’, overt, palpable, visible, and external.

These criteria define the ‘other’ – one who is not included in the ‘us’. This is sufficient for identity politics in general. It is necessary but not sufficient for (hard) communal politics, and not at all for classical or contemporary fascist ideology and politics. The ‘other’ in this case also has to be an ‘enemy other’.

(A subtle but vital distinction may exist in this regard between communalism and fascism. It is perhaps adequate for communalism to posit a ‘competitive other’ who is a ‘rival’ but not necessarily an ‘irreconcilable enemy’. The rival is someone to be cautious of, to oppose

– principally within the sphere of civil society, but not necessarily eliminate or even totally hate. There is no justified denial of the right to exist of the rival. The competition over resources and opportunities will be intense but not necessarily always or inevitably violent. The ‘soft’ forms of communalism posit the ‘competitive other’ and champion the rights of the ‘self’ or ‘us’. The rabid forms of communalism with violence as their distinguishing feature are, of course, far closer to fascism in their orientation⁵¹.)

The constitution of the ‘one people’ in fascism is not content with mere identification. It has some more attributes. The ‘us’ or ‘one people/folk’ in classical and contemporary fascism are also ‘wronged’ people. They have a glorious past but a piteous present. The reason of the misery is the conspiratorial, deliberate, antagonistic action of the ‘enemy other’. Moreover the ‘us’ or ‘one people/folk’ are also the rising emergent people, the people with glorious future, the people who are the absolute rulers of tomorrow. This rising and rule requires not only ‘self-improvement’ but also a rout of the ‘enemy other’ that serves two purposes at one and the same time; rectification of a historical wrong/ injustice and the defeat of a current enemy to ensure forever the security and prosperity of the ‘one people/folk’.

The enemy is necessary to weld together varied sections within the ‘us’ to really wield them as ‘one people/folk’. A common enemy equally threatening to all sections (classes and castes) within the ‘us’ and whose destruction will bring rich spoils to all is necessary to create this unity – however temporary it may be! This is a classic way to reject internal differentiation and to outright deny the legitimacy of class or caste conflict.

The projected nature of the ‘enemy other’ is quite specific. The animosity is natural and total. The conflict is not over *specific issues or particular claims*. The antagonistic opposition is rooted in the very character and nature of the two communities – religious/ ethnic/ linguistic/ national. It is not just some people within the ‘enemy

⁵¹Such competition is not only on communal lines. The recent reservation moves inspired intense competition, with the upper class students of the more elite institutions launching agitations and even taking very extreme stands. The political parties found it very difficult to oppose the reservations – but the parties of the right did support the agitating students. Self-appointed spokespersons for the anti-reservationists have been quite ridiculous at times. One filmmaker – who also wanted a declaration of war without being sure against who, after the July 2006 explosions in Mumbai local trains – advocated appealing to the President of the USA to intervene in the matter!

community’ who are the problem – but the entire community itself. Thus, the Nazis made no distinction between the good and the bad Jews – the entire race was evil and beyond redemption to the Nazis.⁵²

In India occasionally, the communalists attempt to make noises to distinguish between “good and bad Muslims” – also classified in various other ways, viz., patriotic/nationalist vs. pro-Pakistani/anti-nationalist, fundamentalist vs. liberal, fanatics vs. tolerant, etc. Occasions do bring out the true feelings. The usual refrain then is that wherever they are in any sizeable numbers Muslims always cause problems. The criticism often goes much deeper than this. Depending on the kind of public façade necessary for the organisation or the mask/ image of the commentator, either the social or the political concepts of Islam or incompatibility of Islam with the modern world and modern liberal values or the inability of Islam to change come in for criticism. The extreme spokespersons of communal values portray Islam as an evil creed. No compromises with the ‘enemy other’ are then possible. There can only be ‘final solutions’ to the problem!⁵³

Enough work has countered the stereotypes propagated over the years. The interesting fact regarding fascist propaganda is that rational, logical, factual repudiation of the prejudices generally has no effect. The crux is not in the facts – but in the very irrationality of the slogans that appeals not to the logical aspect but to the unconscious and unrecognised complexes.⁵⁴ There hence exists about the ‘enemy other’

⁵²In relation to the Muslims a similar exercise was carried out. From the 1920s, the creation of the Muslim Other involved attacks on Allah, the Prophet, and their sexual life and tastes, as an assertion that it is not merely this or that Muslim, but the essence of Islam, that represents sexual perversion and a threat to all Hindus. Scurrilous comments on the alleged sexual life of the Prophet formed the subject matter of some pamphlets by the Arya Samaj in the early period. The theme recurs in many Hindutva publications.

⁵³The *Sangh Parivar* now seeks to deny any right to the Muslims to protest in the country – in however peaceful and democratic a manner. The protests in Vadodara that led to communal violence were essentially peaceful. The dispute in Bhivandi was basically simple though a sudden violent eruption took place. (The violence was brutal and mindless to say the least. Two police constables in mufti were burned to death by participants in a demonstration.) *The Shiv Sena* and the BJP in response repeatedly termed any protests by Muslims as illegitimate. They considered that the Muslims had no democratic rights to express their feelings or to organise protest actions.

⁵⁴Most commentators on fascism have recognised this aspect of fascist propaganda. The fascist leaders themselves recognised that not rational arguments but emotional appeals reinforced through spectacles and rites were important for the propagation of their cause. Violence and the public acceptance or social legitimisation of pervert violence also probably plays a part in the hold of fascist ideology. A revealing piece in this regard is an excerpt from **Mein Kampf** by Adolf Hitler included in William Ebenstein (Ed) **Modern Political Thought: The Great Issues**; Oxford & IBH Publishing Co; New Delhi.

a curious mixture of envy and contempt. Both emotions have, predictably, strong sexual overtones. The grotesque sexual violence during the Gujarat carnage probably owes its inspiration to these overtones.

[Fascist spokespersons and commentators often glorify the intemperate, abusive, indecent, sexually offensive, male chauvinist language of fascist propaganda. They portray this language as the idiom of the people and contrast it with the dense pedantic language of the liberals. Even erudite journalists often praise the uncouth language of Thackeray as being closer to that of the people. They tend to forget that the Thackerays, Modis, and Togadias, as also other lesser figures in their organisations express the most crass and crude sentiments of the mobs. These expressions, usually suppressed in cultured conversations, are not the reflections of class or caste anger; nor do they portray a rebellion against oppression and exploitation. These sentiments are violent, directed against other oppressed sections. They are also sadistic, sexually offensive, demeaning to women. The implicit, perhaps even unwitting, assumption here, of these 'objective commentators' is that the anti-fascists are elite faddists and that anti-fascism is necessarily an alien sentiment. The fascists of course always harp on the alien nature of secularism, democracy, and socialism. A strange but perhaps intended (by the fascists) effect in India and particularly in Mumbai is that Hindu and Marathi self-respect is equated with rude, impolite, uncultured, manner-less, near violent behaviour.]

The 'other' is constituted by anyone and everyone who is not 'us' – that is potentially opposed to 'us' and a threat to 'us'. The 'other' is seen in a peculiar way, even normally – even when not a hate object. It is perhaps necessary to maintain a distinction between non-integration, competition, antagonism, hatred, and conflict. These are certainly not the same. It is also necessary to recognise that different communities – with cultural differences will be distinct from each other and shall maintain these distinctions without fear or aggression in any democratic society. The denial of distinctions, in fact, constitutes a pressure to deny identity – to deny cultural specificity and cultural autonomy. It is a pressure to *integrate* (into the 'mainstream' – read majority) at the cost of self-hood. The recognition of difference, specificity, and distinction is not communal or fascist. These elements enter only when a hierarchy with notions of primacy of the majority enter into the secular – non-cultural spheres.

The fascists however constitute the 'enemy other' somewhat differently. The fascists project all the bad qualities on to the 'other' and reserve all the good for the 'self'. The 'other' then becomes the malevolent, coercive opponent – the 'enemy other'. The stereotypes too then are quite peculiar – they combine both envy and contempt. The 'us' then necessarily project the 'enemy other' as both – strong enough to be a threat and weak enough to be vanquished and crushed. The stereotypes are strongly and predominantly male creations – and deal with an aggressive male interpretation and understanding of sexuality – of both the women and men of the 'enemy other'. This of course does not mean that the women of the fascist group do not actively share or propagate these stereotypes. In Gujarat, they did so, quite aggressively.⁵⁵

Obviously, a fascist organisation cannot simply 'name'/'declare' some entity as the 'other', as the mortal enemy, or conjure it up out of thin air. The constituency must experience the 'enemy other' as such – as a living natural threat and adversary in violent confrontation. The Jews in Europe were no more than convenient soft punching bags for inebriated, weak, frustrated, sadists till the advent of Zionism, the potential actualisation of the dream of the Jewish homeland – the land of 'milk and honey' – of Israel, and the increased influence (real or imaginary) of the Jews on the foreign (obviously military) policies of the emergent – then reluctant – superpower – the United States of America. These features on the background of defeat in the First World War, the – treaty of Versailles, and the deterioration of conditions in Germany built up the search for scapegoats and enemies. The communists were the natural enemies of the Nazis – but for the entire 'us', Jews became the perfect targets. The communists were *ideological* enemies – the Jews '*natural*' ones. The ideological debate often beyond the scope and acumen of the fascist hordes was not necessary to target the Jews. (In fact, at times, international communism itself was termed a Jewish conspiracy or otherwise an identity between the communists and Jews was established.) Committed fascist militias carried out violence against the communists. The fascist demagogues could incite the general mass against the Jews. (This also occurred in other countries in Europe with

⁵⁵A useful reference to this aspect of the Gujarat Carnage is Rege, Sharmila & others; *Gujarat Carnage: Outlining the Gendered Character of Communal Stereotypes, Strategies and Violence*; in **Lessons from Gujarat**; VAK, Mumbai; 2003. [B.L70.P60]

Also see Durham, Martin; **Women and Fascism**; Routledge (UK) 1998 for discussion of stances of fascism towards women as well as of fascist women's organisations.

traditions of anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic pogroms.) In India too, chosen troops of the SS attacked the communists while the propagandists created only a sanction for the violence with the general population – by branding the communists anti-national. This policy now yields almost no returns. Neither the SS nor the *Sangh Parivar* can physically attack the Left in its strongholds – or even in areas where it is not very strong. The general supporters of the fascists and incited masses do not see the purely ideological or political opponents of the fascists as the ‘enemy other’ for and of themselves. A different construction of the ‘enemy other’, even ‘internal’ is necessary.

The Hindu communalists in India made the Muslims hate objects through peculiar use and distortion of history. They portrayed all struggles against tyrannical, unpopular, coercive, imposed rule in religious terms – of Hindu subjects or champions of freedom against Muslim rulers – often against *all* Muslims or against Islam.⁵⁶ The ‘nationalist’ or anti-colonial views of the ‘national’ leaders or opinion makers who precede the formulation of clear fascist ideology and the formation of fascist organisations also play an important role in the creating the ‘other’ – the ‘enemy other’. In India, the views of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak played such a role. Later, less significant leaders who held clear Hindu supremacist views continued to operate in the national movement, even as prominent members of the Congress. The project of the communalists succeeded to a large extent. Muslims became in popular consciousness (obviously in differing degrees) atrocious oppressors and hence enemies.⁵⁷ The partition with independence in 1947 renewed the violent sentiments. It was nevertheless difficult to treat the Muslims in India after independence as

⁵⁶This is done not only through explicit political propaganda but also through films – particularly historical ones, theatrical productions, songs, ballads etc. In Mumbai the floats associated with the Janmashami celebrations or the scenes created at the Ganeshotsav pandals clearly reflect this attitude.

⁵⁷It is true that the communalists have misinterpreted, quoted out of context, and even distorted many remarks by Dr B R Ambedkar regarding the Muslims. It is nevertheless true that he did make some remarks that lent themselves to easy distortion of this variety. He holds aggression by Muslims responsible for the decline and virtual expulsion of Buddhism from India in his speech at Nagpur at the time of the mass conversion by Dalits to Buddhism (October 1955). He blames the Muslim aggressors for the destruction of Buddhist places of worship and the persecution of the Buddhists. Such images too become part of the popular consciousness. For *Sangh Parivar* contentions regarding Dr Ambedkar’s positions and their refutation, see Anand Telumbde; **Ambedkar on Muslims**; Vikas Adhyayan Kendra; Mumbai 2003. [B.L61.T2]

threatening dangerous hate objects. They were themselves poor and oppressed. They wielded no power – economic or political. The communal organisations – and views – took many years to creep back into social and political reckoning.⁵⁸ There are numerous causes – some incidental and some basic structural – for the *Sangh Parivar* to succeed in its designs (of creating a single hate object par excellence and thereby mobilising communal Hindus).

The hatred for the ‘other’ becomes active principally in situations of disequilibrium in the society. In a stable society, there may be non-integration, even contempt at times – but not hatred leading to action, violent action. A real scarcity of resources and opportunities leads to a fierce competition and may then result in all efforts to grab the share going to the ‘other’. Economic conditions deteriorated rapidly from the mid sixties to the mid seventies. The worst affected was the lower middle class. This is the period in which there is the first surge in communal passions and violence after independence. The ‘natural constituency’ of the *Sangh Parivar* easily accepted the argument that the government frittered away scarce resources on appeasement of a minority – particularly a minority that had already partitioned the country and created an enemy on the border. (A similar hatred against the Dalits – ‘beneficiaries’ of the policy of positive discrimination in the form of reservation of jobs in the government sector and seats in educational institutions also mounted during this period. Atrocities against Dalits increased. Conflicts broke out in the rural areas over land and wages. The victims of the violence were mainly Dalits and Adivasis.)

Since the March 1993 serial bomb explosions in Mumbai – and subsequent other incidents – the hated ‘enemy other’ namely the Muslim has acquired another image – that of a dreaded terrorist. *Sangh Parivar* spokespersons, media, security forces all seem to equate the terrorist with the Muslim. The image has almost become a part of the common social (read Hindu but also Christian) consciousness in the country. The

⁵⁸The first major Hindu-Muslim riot after independence was in 1961 at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. Riots became more common after 1969. The *Jan Sangh* – the earlier incarnation of the BJP – became politically significant to some extent only in the anti-Congress swell of 1967 and through the Grand Alliance of various parties of different hues united only in their opposition to the Congress. The *Sangh Parivar* came into serious social and political reckoning in the early ‘70s when Jay Prakash Narayan included the RSS and the *Jan Sangh* in his alliance against the Congress. The merger of *Jan Sangh* into the *Janata Party* in 1977 and the subsequent formation of the BJP in 1980 transformed the political fortunes of the *Sangh Parivar*.

'moderate' statement is "all Muslims are not terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims". It need not even be stated that this is a gross distortion of facts.⁵⁹

In the nineties the situation was again unstable, though in a very different manner. Once again, it was the middle class that was affected the most. The situation this time did not deteriorate but created hopes of rapid advance. The economic changes – globalisation, liberalisation, and privatisation created at least illusions of great prosperity. New occupational opportunities opened up and incomes of some sections increased. Consumer goods were also available as never before. Consumerism became a reality in the country for the first time in independent India. The nature of this economic 'prosperity' was somewhat speculative and insecure with impermanence built into the entire occurrence. This again led to a scramble to monopolise the resources and opportunities – now for incremental revenues.

Some other factors also led to reception for the hate propaganda. The government in its wisdom always pandered to the demonstrative symbolic demands of the Muslim traditional elite and ignored any real development of the Muslim masses.⁶⁰ Each of the symbolic demands created resentment and was open to wilful misinterpretation by the communal elements. These essentially were and are the examples of 'appeasement of Muslims' that the communal forces always cite. Two international events also created the background for increased animosity. One was the Saudi-driven petro-dollar financed effort to 'purify' Islam, to root out the local traditions and the 'folk elements'.

⁵⁹It is worthwhile to quote Seema Mustafa cited earlier (*Asian Age* 28/10/2006) once again. "Who is the Indian Muslim? If one takes even a cursory look at the television channels these days, he is a terrorist wanted for every other terror blast in the country. He is in close touch with Pakistan and the ISI and has extended links with Dubai. He is a wife beater. He is a rapist. He is anti-woman. He is uneducated, and over religious. - - - - Who was the India Muslim till just a few years ago? Before 9/11, before the NDA government, before the RSS/BJP doctrine of divisiveness and hate, before the UPA government's continuing obsession with the US and open suspicion of the Muslim, before Gujarat? He was religious, he was uneducated, he was unemployed, but so were the majority of Indians. But he was not a terrorist, he was not a Pakistani employee, he was not anti-national. - - - - He was not seeking identity with Muslims in other countries, he was content to be Indian. He refused to vote for the fundamentalist parties, he always chose the secular alternative."

⁶⁰The report of the committee to inquire into the social and economic conditions of the Muslims headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar is reportedly ready – the first such survey ever undertaken in independent India. The report apparently reveals that the conditions of the Muslims are deplorable in education, employment, economic opportunities, assets, incomes, social status etc. The government reportedly finds it difficult to make the report public – or even officially accept it.

These efforts also attempted to break down exchange (between the communities) and negate the syncretic elements. In a way, they attempted to create a self-sufficient global community of Muslims separated from their local roots – including language and dress patterns. This was also an effort to impose a single fundamentalist (Arab or rather Saudi) conception of Islam on all who wished to embrace the faith. The second development, somewhat later was the attempted politicisation of Islam – in its extreme form as the so-called Jihadi terrorism. Both developments were products of the cold war – of the American effort to create a Muslim bulwark against communism and the Soviet Union. The US carefully nurtured fundamentalism and anti-liberal attitudes – particularly in wake of the Soviet adventure in Afghanistan. The current antipathy of the US towards Muslims arises after the Cold War, and thus the need for Islamic fundamentalism is over – and after it turns against the West itself.

These communal elements could then project the Muslim as part of a global community with financial support, an international political agenda, an international loyalty, and plans to capture 'infidel' lands. They could also convince a large number of Hindus that the Muslims with these characteristics were a threat – an 'enemy other'. The 'enemy other' now also became an adversary worth fighting – strong enough to threaten and yet weak enough (numerically, resource – wise) to be crushed. The orthodox, fundamentalist, opportunist, reactionary leadership of the Muslim masses of course thrives on the isolation of the Muslim masses and on their victimised status. The secular forces too made a mistake in abandoning the representation and leadership of the Muslim masses to Muslim leaders. The exceptions compete with the reactionary Muslim leadership and raise the same issues, the same essentially symbolic demands.

In Gujarat, for example, the plural and syncretic tradition was systematically broken down. The continuous (obviously planned and engineered) violence since 1969 in Ahmedabad played a significant role in the creation of permanent hatred and enmity. Perhaps nowhere else has there been endemic communal violence of the same proportion. This too in all possibility was a part of the 'experiment'. The other sensitive spots see sporadic violence, often long drawn out tension. There is in all probability not a total divide at all times. The endemic

violence in Gujarat created the total and permanent divide.⁶¹ The situation is almost classical – no possible compromise or co-existence with the ‘enemy other’. Many analyses of the Gujarat violence since 1969 missed the mass character of the hatred and readiness for violence. Many of these concentrated on specific issues and concrete circumstances – including the involvement of organised crime and the competition between gangsters. These factors were significant but did not define the ‘experiment’. Rational solutions could not be answers to the ‘communal problem’ in Gujarat – not after the late seventies anyway. The problem was not this or that specific grievance. No concrete measure – even dialogue – could redress the grievance. No compromise was possible because the Hindu masses led by the fascist organisations did not want a compromise. They increasingly wanted obliteration – if not a final solution, at least ghettoisation, and ethnic cleansing. Each episode of violence – actual or potential – fed the next one and hardened the attitudes. One foundation of the ‘experiment’ was perhaps the routine, annual tension and violence around the Jagannath Rath Yatra. The conversion of common traditional festivals into occasions of pogrom against the ‘enemy other’ is a sign of success of fascism, an indicator that it has become a mass phenomenon. Various analysts quite correctly blamed the *Sangh Parivar* for the communalisation and the communal violence in Gujarat. They missed the fact that a large section of the masses had accepted and adopted the now fascist ‘ideology’.⁶²

The Gujarat Carnage of 2002 waited in the wings for enactment in these circumstances.

⁶¹The latest (October 15, 2005) results of the elections to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation are yet another indicator of the success of the ‘experiment’. The BJP campaign led by Narendra Modi has yielded spectacular results. The BJP has swept the elections winning nearly 80% seats. The BJP has not covered itself in glory in matters of cleanliness (freedom from corruption) or ability to govern and administer. The vote is not for good management or non-corrupt pro-people administration or even efficiency. The BJP campaign too did not make these the campaign issues. The issue was *Hinduva* and anti-Muslim stance. Modi made sure that these were the only points that came on the agenda. The vote then is for Modi’s extreme *Hinduva* – his ‘experiment’ – his fascism.

⁶²The so-called radical strategy of the Congress to forge a united front of the marginalised in the Gujarat society – Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, and Muslim (KHAM) – also perhaps backfired. It forced a reactive unity of Brahmin, Baniya and Patel. The easiest commonality among these could only be *Hinduva*. Moreover, the Congress did not articulate KHAM in class terms. The appeal of *Hinduva* could break its ranks.

02. Nature, Permanent Conflict, and Violence

The ‘enemy other’ as a target of violence is also necessary for other reasons. The fascist organisation and ideology – definitely classical but also contemporary – is militarist in many senses. It of course appeals to ‘male bravery/ valour’ that includes ruthlessness and capacity (ability and willingness) to commit violence against the ‘enemy’. It also builds organisational structures that attempt to resemble militias – not armies.

The militarism goes beyond the symbolism of the ‘military’ or ‘militia’. It encompasses a mindset of a permanent state of war – or civil conflict. The rationale of existence of a fascist organisation – in any version, any form, and any period – is a state of war/conflict – actual or potential. A fascist state creates a state of war – actual armed conflict between nation states; a fascist organisation creates a state of actual or potential violent civil strife.

A strife – and this is very different from any notions of class conflict at whatever levels of comparison – needs an enemy – a concrete, living, experiential, palpable, ‘real’ enemy. The ‘enemy other’ is thus necessary for the very existence of the fascists – classical and contemporary. There is a need for the fascist to threaten someone all the time and also feel threatened by someone all the time. In the absence of an external war, the war has to be internal – in the style of the Nazi ‘war’ against the Jews even before they could conduct the ‘final solution’.

The war or conflict is a natural state of existence for the fascist. The conflict is an existential situation ordained by nature. The fascists have a peculiar attraction to nature. The attachment is to some particularly authoritarian notions of natural laws. Nature is glorified by the fascist as the arena of conflict – a conflict in which there is no logic, no reason, no justice, no compassion – only an exercise of strength and might along with a manifestation of ruthless determination. (That also is the reason of the fascist attraction for notions of ‘social Darwinism’.) The struggle to finish is attractive to the fascists, but there is no ‘finish’ or end to the conflict. The fascists view conflict in nature as permanent and also desirable. The concept of conflict – an unending conflict – also imparts many notions integral to the fascist worldview.

The doctrine of permanent conflict as a natural (hence divine and ordained?) state of existence leads to eager glorified acceptance – almost as a moral or pious duty or obligation – of war or civil war,

perpetual preparation for war – including militarism and war economies, ‘emergency’ or ‘war’ states with severe curbs on rights and liberties, restrictions upon the civil society, ethic of hatred, valorisation of violence, subjugation and suppression of all ‘others’ (not just ‘the enemy other’), as well as culture of machismo, patriarchy, and institutionalised male domination.

Permanent natural conflict as condition of existence is an intense strife – not only beyond the borders but also within the borders. Predatory attitudes, ‘natural’ (‘food-chain’) hierarchy, survival of the fittest, and the morality of ‘might is right’ are all logical conclusions of this tenet. Obviously, there can then be no notions of tolerance or of equality.

Social Darwinism in fact becomes a ‘scientific principle’ to adhere to and cherish. This view considers the ‘chosen people’ as superior and all other as inferior examples of human existence. Race becomes a biological entity akin to species. The ‘others’ – all except the ‘chosen people’ – are then unworthy of existence. The fascists choose the prime hate object – the ‘enemy other’ – depending on the specific situation.⁶³ All others too are however on the hit list. Even when tolerated they are not equal. They are not only different but also unfit to survive and exist. The holocaust targeted all ‘others’ – the elimination of gypsies, and of people with mixed blood is well known. This attitude goes beyond other forms of racism.

The other forms of racism may consider racial difference as fundamental and may even consider other races as inferior. They may even build up logic of racial superiority. There may alternately be racial enmity based on (real or imaginary) perception of oppression and thus resistance to oppression/ exploitation. The clash in these cases – though articulated in different ways, in racial terminology – is over very specific issues – over access to and control over resources, balance of economic and political power, opportunities, political and cultural freedom, etc.

These forms too may lead at times to interracial violence, sometimes grotesque and gory. However, they do not create an ideology of racial extermination. It usually manifests at worst as attempts to exile or exclude

⁶³In practice, the relationship with the ‘other’ and the sentiments that govern the relationship are not quite simple. There is a curious mixture of envy and contempt. The Nazis ‘built up a case’ against the Jews that portrayed them as usurious moneylenders, cheating traders, speculative financiers, etc. The Nazis condemned the Jews for their hold on the professions and for propagating dangerous ‘anti-national’ ideas – from Marxism to psychoanalysis. In the Indian case, the images are often contradictory.

a particular race from a territory. The Nazis, however, formulated and executed a doctrine of total racial extermination. The victims were not only the Jews though they were the worst affected. The Nazis similarly attempted to eliminate the gypsies as well. Total extermination – the holocaust – is not however a necessary feature of fascism. The effort may be limited to subjugation and creation of an institutionalised secondary status.⁶⁴

The same logic also leads to ‘justified’ attempts to improve the chosen race. There were efforts to eliminate and eradicate undesirable, suspect, or ‘weak’ traits within the ‘chosen people’ themselves – to purify the race, to emphasize and strengthen the ‘chosen’ characteristics, to ‘improve’ the race. This is also an effort to bring about the rejuvenation or strengthening of the race. The Nazis wanted to breed the super kids – the purest Aryan children by choosing parents with the ‘ideal’ Aryan characteristics.⁶⁵ It led to selective breeding and attempts to nurture and foster particular characteristics. The idea of eugenics fascinated the Nazis. Genetic Engineering had not developed then and hence they had to depend on state controlled selective breeding. The negative side they practiced with enthusiasm – banning unions, and culling the undesirable traits – by even killing off the people exhibiting those. That was their cure for congenital defects including mental retardation. No other fascist parties or regimes could practice that since they never had comparable absolute power. The others also did not have an ideal racial type to project as the only authentic one (tall, sharp featured, blue eyed, blonde Aryan!)

The improvement is obviously to attain a pure form of the chosen race. The propaganda sometimes evokes a return to a state of purity of the race – a purity and glory once present but now lost. Fascism often

⁶⁴Some other situations also exhibit racial violence leading to actual or attempted genocide. This usually occurs in societies that have not fully entered the capitalist/industrial phase and where – not land (as means of production and capitalist property) is the sole resource and source of survival. These are situations of no or very low surplus and precarious existence. ‘Tribal wars’ often exhibit these features.

⁶⁵Savarkar in India advocated that the Hindus should give up their vegetarian diet and eat all meats including beef. This he opined will lead to stronger Hindus who can be more militant and confront the ‘physically stronger and better built’ Muslims. It is fashionable to consider these attitudes as ‘scientific’, ‘modernist’ and ‘rational’. Obviously, they are nothing of the kind. This view at best makes a fetish out of a common sense (mis)understanding of science. The attitude was by no means scientific though at some level it was ‘radical’ in the sense it dared to go beyond ‘tradition’.

teeters between the past and the future. On the one hand, there is an attachment to an almost imaginary past and on the other an urge to overcome the present. This depends partly on specific histories of the countries, and the particular situations the fascists face. The fascists in Italy glorified the Roman past and drew symbols from it constantly. The militarism and the expansion were to capture lost glory. The occupation of Ethiopia was for Fascism a continuation of the Roman legacy of imperialism and colonialism. To the Nazis on the other hand the conquests were portents of the new Germany – of a Germany of the future. The past fascism seeks to recapture is almost a mythical past, not a living history. Legends may carry tales of it but there are no living memories of that period – no real, living, experiential connection with it. (There may however be real memories of ‘humiliation’ – of the First World War in the case of Germany – of the defeat, reparations, and forced armistice/surrender.) In a strange way, fascism glorifies legend as history and attempts to overcome real recent history!

This also informs the fascist attitude to the present. An aggressive occupation of a place of honour – a place of domination – in the community of nations needs strong, technologically advanced, modern nation. Fascism is hence impatient about modernisation. The modernisation concerns essentially the production facilities, technology, and specifically the military machine. It however also involves the eradication of any institutions or traditions that stand in the way of the modernisation or in the way of the absolute power of the fascist party. The fascist fascination or fetish for science and technology (without scientific attitudes or modern enlightened values) arises from this need to modernise and to acquire industrial/ military capacities. (Those who read modern or scientific approach in Savarkar in India completely miss this point.) The fascist view of science and technology is completely instrumental. Scientific method or rationality does not inform this view in any way.

Permanent conflict and fascination with ‘natural’ laws also treats violence as necessary and desirable. Conflict and war obviously require violence. The fascists do not however embrace violence only as a forced need – as a strategy of survival or even of dominance. There is a fundamental glorification of violence and the capacity to perpetrate

violence.⁶⁶ Fascism considers violence not only natural but also eternal. It attributes almost mystical virtues to violence. It relates violence to machismo – with strength of body and character, and with virility. The desire for violence thus goes beyond the need of violence for the war effort. Fascists consider violence as redemptive, an instrument to purge and purify the chosen and to create the new man. One can also interpret Mussolini’s view of the fascist man as the ‘warrior saint’ as essentially a purity driven person seeking fulfilment and realisation through war and violence.

This is not merely a rejection of Ahimsa – or non-violence against any living being preached ages ago by the Mahavira and Buddha and in recent past by Mahatma Gandhi. This is violence directed against other human beings. This is a glorification of killing of human beings. The Hindutva lobby has found fault with Buddha – though no longer publicly – for preaching a doctrine of non-violence. This they believe led to ‘weaknesses of the Indians and paved way for foreign conquests. The same people have been similarly contemptuous of Gandhi’s principle of non-violence. Strangely, the same lobby – when scratched deep enough, Bramhanical – advocates vegetarianism.⁶⁷

Fascism also sets great store by physical culture and the strength of the body. The body thus strengthened and trained is an instrument of violence. The realisation of the capacity of this male body is in violent

⁶⁶In India, of course there is a peculiar paradox. A number of fascists are (or were) perhaps strict vegetarians. A number of the perpetrators of violence in Gujarat perhaps abhor killing of any animals – including insects. They happily endorse and indulge in killing of human beings! Savarkar went the other extreme and criticised the vegetarian habits of Hindus. He felt that made them physically weak and temperamentally non-militant, tolerant or cowardly. He, therefore, advocates eating of all meats that would make Hindu men strong. He also finds fault with Shivaji for his chivalry towards the accidentally captured daughter-in-law of the Muslim governor of Kalyan!

⁶⁷A series of posters plastered all over Mumbai in 1992-93, when the communal lobby felt triumphant after the violent orgies, proclaimed ‘*Shakahar hi Hindutva ki pahachan hai*’ (Vegetarianism is the identity/identification of Hindutva). One should not treat this poster as a stray whimsical publication. The *Hindutva* lobby in that period indulged in a sustained ideological poster campaign. Another poster for example declared that ‘Indian defines citizenship Hindu/ Hindutva defines nationality’. This statement was not a mere slogan or exercise in semantic polemics, though it was a rejoinder to another poster by anti-communal forces that stated ‘Say with pride I am an Indian’ itself a rejoinder to the *Hindutva* poster ‘Say with pride I am a Hindu’. The emphasis on differentiating citizenship from nationality was an ideological effort to redefine nation and nationality – and thereby *place or locate* the ‘other’.

action. The glee that the perpetrators of Gujarat Carnage exhibited in the most perverse acts of violence flows from this mentality. Violence is not only an instrument of punishment meted out to the other but also a mechanism of purification and strengthening of the self – of the fascist person himself. The authoritarian image that fascism has of society and all human institutions obviously requires continuous violence – if not enacted at least ever present as a threat. The violence, moreover, is an attitude as well as an act.

It is almost trite to say that specific social realities promote violent mentality and culture of violence. Stable situations with economic growth and expansion of opportunities and resources are not conducive to violent social upsurges. Intense competition, insecurity, threats to existence or identity, shrinking access to resources and opportunities, perceptions of intense humiliation or loss promote violence. Other factors too, apart from these very general ones, are responsible for cultures of violence. Alienation from creative physical activity in the spheres of productive activity or of culture leads to peculiar glorification of human body and exaltation of physical fitness/ activity. The exaltation of the body operates at various levels. This may take the path of glorification of muscular power and capacities, 'beauty' for exhibition (both of the muscular virile male body and of the feminine, 'seductive' female body), objectification, adornment, flaunting of sexuality, etc. Adventure sports, situations of the extreme, and competition over physical strength and power are some of the ways of expression. The traditional test of the body – of its strength and capacities – is its efficacy in committing acts of violence, against human beings or other animals. War and hunting are the age-old activities associated with bravery, courage, and virility. In the absence of these 'martial opportunities' (and particularly in conditions described above that produce unfocussed anger and resentment) the expression is petty, everyday violence – physical as well as verbal and emotional. This may range from extreme road rage to domestic violence. (Organised crime also becomes an outlet for violence, 'spirit of adventure' and search for thrill.)

Fascism with its glorification of conflict and violence can attract a constituency in such situations. It organises the violent sentiments, gives them a justification, glorifies violent action, 'naturalises' hierarchy and thus victims, and most important creates long-term targets of the violence. The 'enemy other', the 'historical tormentor or oppressor', the traitor, the anti-national all become 'legitimate' targets of the violence.

Dissenters, critics, those who uphold and propagate opposing views, those who sow confusion in fascist ranks through inconvenient questions or statements, those who oppose fascist cultural norms and social behaviours also become enemies to be violently suppressed. The mass violence – including ethnic, religious, caste, linguistic, or political riots become a celebration and a cathartic outlet for mobs mobilised by the fascists. When there is no real fear of reprisal – retaliation by victims or stringent state action – this 'bravery' scales new heights of violent exhibition and lunacy. The Gujarat Carnage 2002 was an eloquent example of all these features.⁶⁸

Women are a special target of the violence and the conflict. Rapes, sexual humiliation, mutilations, and killings are the most obvious and visible examples of the special attack on women. More deep rooted but less obvious mechanisms are also at work. These relate to the fascist view of woman.

The fascists unlike traditional orthodox reactionaries do not oppose the participation of women in public life. They do not oppose education or even specific activities for women. The fundamental status of women is however secondary. Fascism sees them as mothers, providers, homemakers, supporters of the fascist men. (Fascism also sees women as sex objects – desirable in that role. It is not puritanical in that sense. It does not deny sexuality or condemn sexual activity, even indulgence. The fascist understanding of the content of this sexuality is of course a totally different matter.) The fascist also view women as 'precious possessions' of the 'community'. Their 'honour' (read chastity) is the indicator of the capacities, strength, virility, and self-respect or pride of the chosen people. The men must therefore always 'guard' their women. The guarding is of two kinds. First, the men must secure the safety of the women against any attacks on their person by the 'enemy other'. The men then also consider it their obligation to avenge any such real or imaginary attacks. Second, the men must also 'guard' the women against any 'allures' held out by the 'enemy other'. No woman from the 'chosen community' must become involved with a man from any other community, particularly the 'enemy other'. (Reportedly, the **BJP** government in Gujarat has directed the police force to seek information on inter-religious marriages and to attempt to prevent such unions!) The

⁶⁸Gujarat Carnage 2002 was the most serious orgy of such fascist violence. It would be wrong to assume that all fascist threats in contemporary India will take that form. Fascist tendencies can, may, and do exist outside the ranks of the *Sangh Parivar*.

fascist men believe, in accordance with this thinking, that a war or conflict situation endangers 'their possessions' – the women from the community. Strict curbs then become necessary to protect them and to guarantee their safety!⁶⁹ Conversely, the women of the 'enemy other' community are legitimate targets of choice to teach the enemy a lesson. The doctrine of violent conflict justifies the violation of enemy women as the final sign of victory and of suppression of the enemy. The rapes (mass and public with violence and mutilation) of 1993 and 2002 (Surat and Ahmedabad respectively) are eloquent manifestations of this mentality.

Social hypocrisy facilitates such behaviour. Technological fetishism without scientific attitudes and veneer of modernity (dress, behaviour, social interactions) without values of enlightenment promote the hypocrisy. The traditional values and institutions are shells empty of all content. New contemporary values and ethics stand rejected as inimical and corrupt. This creates an ethical and moral vacuum. This is not imaginary or restricted to ideas. Social and personal behaviour itself becomes constantly contradictory. In Gujarat, the rootless feeling of the Diaspora and its desperate search for an unsullied traditional culturally perfect homeland add to the pressures. There is desperate effort then to keep the women suave westernised and modern in externalities and repressed traditional beings in essence. At the root of this mentality is an intense fear of women's sexuality, women's creativity, women's autonomy that threatens the machismo and virility with exposure of inadequacy, relative impotence, and futile uselessness. Fascism very strongly depends on this situation and mentality. The mortal fear of openness, debate, liberal attitudes, tolerance, and co-existence stem from the complex of inadequacy. The contours of this fear are different from traditional sexism and male chauvinism. They stem from an inability to deal with cultural modernity while the material aspects of the modern world become indispensable for survival. Needless to say, those sections of the society that feel most vulnerable and insecure in the changing situation become the eager constituency of fascist ideology and worldview.

⁶⁹Fascists also seek to promote martial traits amongst the women along with a violent mentality. *Durga Vahini* a component of *Sangh Parivar* imparts martial arts, weapons training for 'self-defence', and inculcates a militant violent mindset. This is not a stray example. The *British Union of Fascists* led by Edward Mosley boasted of a large participation of women and of the women black shirts. It also claimed that it stood for equality of men and women and also practiced it! *Fascism exhibited heterogeneous attitudes on some issues even during the classical phase.*

Violence is not only an ideological component of fascist organisations. The ideology justifies and glorifies violence but the necessity of violence is far more practical as well. This is particularly true about fascist or semi-fascist organisations with mass base that espouse and practice direct action as a methodology of all activity. The examples of VHP – *Bajrang Dal* or *Shiv Sena* are eloquent enough in India. These organisations have neither a philosophy nor ideology – at least none that reaches the rank and file members.⁷⁰ They operate on the basis of evocative and affective slogans. The slogans are to lead constantly to action, violent action. An imaginary grievance, a feeling of victimisation, a paranoid sense of conspiracy, a hatred of all who profess peace and human values, and an urge to avenge the injury and/or insult drive the active elements of these organisations. These feelings too can only be sustained if there is constant action. In fact, these organisations base themselves on a flurry of action. The continuous cathartic action does not allow thought or introspection. It keeps perpetually intact the walls between 'them' and 'us'. Only action can do so. Any cessation or pause in action may evoke questions, real experiences, an understanding of complexities of life. Direct action, therefore, is necessary for the survival of these organisations. Any activities or programmes by these organisations – particularly when they are in ascendance – are fraught with possibilities of orgiastic violence. This is not violence against the state. This is not long-drawn-out insurrectionary use of violence. This is riotous violence. This violence essentially involves looting, destruction of property, killing or wounding of persons from the 'enemy other' community. The violence has more practical and mundane uses. The looting provides the rank and file apart from cathartic sanguine pleasure, and income. The local level chieftains can run their extortion rackets only on the basis of threats of such periodic riots. The actual outbreak also drowns all internal differences and dissent. It directs all hatred against the 'other'. It also entrenches the leadership, viewed as the warrior chieftains whether they actually exhibit any 'bravery' or not – in the sense incur any personal risks or not.

⁷⁰Savarkar attempted to develop an ideology with a philosophical base leading to a worldview. The RSS itself had to dilute this into some operative principles – of vanity and hatred. That is precisely why *Hindutva* for the *Sangh Parivar* is a confusing concept reducible to *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation – that actually encompasses a Hindu Nation-State). For offshoots like *Bajrang Dal* and VHP as well as parallel organisations like *Shiv Sena* it is further reduced to xenophobia and calls for bloody Hindu supremacy. This disjunction between the philosophical-ideological core and the operative slogans is no surprise. The street organisations – Storm Troopers – do not need any nuanced thought, even fascist thought. They in fact cannot handle thought at all.

The riots invariably invoke some repression by the state. The state always controls the riots after some time. The re-establishment of law and order always involves use of force by the state – however small or unwilling that may be. If nothing else, it means arrests, the usual rough treatment in police custody, court cases, and threats of conviction with possible severe penalties. The organisations increase their hold over the supporters and particularly the lowest level activists by seemingly defending them against these repressive measures of the state. These may range from providing bails, securing release from custody at the local level, or negotiating withdrawal of cases at a higher level while the organisation (or more correctly the leadership) reaches compromises with the rulers. This is an exhibition of the power of the leadership.⁷¹ These organisations hence also collapse quite rapidly. In fact, they grow only when the state is soft towards them and has at least a tacit understanding of tolerance with the leadership. They can survive neither determined ideological nor physical opposition.⁷²

03. Capital and fascism

The quest for modernisation also has a dual attitude towards capitalism. On the one hand, there is an impatient haste for capitalist development and industrialisation. On the other hand, there is unease about capitalism – and more importantly the attendant value systems. Fascism resents the values particularly associated with the phase of liberal, competitive, emergent, ascendant capitalism – the principles and values championed by the bourgeois revolutions. Many of these are complete antitheses of fascism. Fascists, it is no surprise, hated the French Revolution and all it represented and championed. Fascism wanted to undo the French Revolution – and what the French Revolution achieved. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity are anathema to the fascists. (It obviously wanted to smash the Bolshevik Revolution too.)

The notions of social contract, democracy, rule of law, binding constitutions, and checks-and-balances, limitations of state power,

⁷¹Such Storm Trooper organisations rapidly disintegrate if the action is absent, if the organisation shows 'cowardice', if the leaders are not able to extend the patronage and protection, if the repression is determined, or if the 'other' puts up frighteningly determined resistance.

⁷²Many analysts have claimed that anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat is a steady source of income through loot or extortion, of socially legitimised physical violence and rape, of social acceptance and recognition of nasty sociopaths, of establishment of petty criminal fiefdoms.

individual rights, and fundamental freedoms irk fascism. Fascism characteristically desires the industrial progress and the riches derived from a capitalist system but it abhors the elements of democracy and individual freedom associated with it (associated, at least in theory, at least at an abstract level). It thus simultaneously clamours for rapid modernisation and attacks modernisation as the destroyer of the soul of the chosen people. In its attack on capitalism then it often utilises populist – even workerist idiom. It at times articulates the real grievances of the excluded in capitalism. At times, it decries disparity, uneven and imbalanced development, increasing misery of certain sections.

In practice, the concrete stances depend on particular situations. In Italy, the fascists wanted rapid industrialisation and capitalist development – the modernisation of Italy. In Germany, the Nazis did want industrial strength but were contemptuous of the capitalists to some extent. They also attempted to win the workers away from the communists by advocating protection of workers' rights (though on some conditions). A fascist regime allows a fairly free hand to capital. The notion of totalitarian strong state in control of every aspect of life however means that the operations are not as free as in a pure market driven economy. The market and capital are always secondary to the fascist state that alone represents the 'will of the nation'. There may be a close alliance between the fascist organisations and capital but the state increasingly united with the fascist party reserves ultimate control.⁷³

Classically capital utilised fascism to destroy the might of trade unions, of workers' revolutionary movements (specifically the communist movements), and to exercise total power and control over labour. It was ready to pay the price of some curbs on democratic and civil liberties to avert and abort a revolution. It chose this path when it felt that the state could not deliver these results through a constitutional path. The mandate of the *Shiv Sena* in Mumbai, it is well known, was to destroy the trade unions, particularly those controlled by the communists.

⁷³This poses some questions about the character of fascism in the era of globalization and neo-liberalism. In an age of total rule of markets and international capital with strict limits on the roles and functions of the state classical fascist command of the economy seems a difficult proposition. The virtual disappearance of 'national' capital also means that there can be no *natural capitalist* allies of fascism. The capital of today moreover is dependent on the service sector, speculation, volatile operations in the financial markets at a trans-national level, and consumerism. These activities need certain freedom of operation and social milieu. This may make the emergence of a fascist state difficult. These factors do not however deny the existence or strength of a fascist movement/ organisation.

Widespread communal violence in the nineties also played a peculiar role. It created a situation of extreme urgency with cataclysmic possibilities. The priority then (for the progressive elements) was to stop the violence, establish peace, and restore communal harmony. The communal frenzy affected the mass organisations too in many cases. In Mumbai, for example, the 1992-93 violence led to divisions amongst workers on communal lines in some establishments. The overall result was that the trade unions became weaker. The progressive forces concentrated – under force of circumstances – their attention on the single issue of defence of secularism. This also meant dilution – at least in practice – of the resistance to economic changes that were already under way. The rulers pushed through economic reforms in the situation of virtually no effective opposition.⁷⁴ The virtual dispersal of the organised working class and a substantial weakening of its organisations occurred in these circumstances.⁷⁵ The dispersal of the working class meant the reduction of its social and political significance and weight. This aspect certainly contributes a factor towards the emergence or further strengthening and penetration of fascist forces. Fascism however has another ambiguous relationship with capitalism. This is a little difficult to notice and more so to understand/ explain.

Fascism is emphatically opposed to socialism – to any notions of social ownership of means of production or of workers' control of the economy. It defends individual enterprise and entrepreneurship, private ownership, private profit and accumulation, individual superiority, right of 'the capable' to control economic power.⁷⁶ It has no critique of the

⁷⁴Paradoxically this leads to a situation of numerical strengthening of the constituency of fascism.

⁷⁵Strangely enough, a section of the *Sangh Parivar* attempted to defend its traditional constituency of 'national' capital. The *Swadeshi Jagaran Manch* (loosely Native Awakening Forum) – a formation related to the RSS raised voice against the incursion of foreign capital and demanded a 'level playing field' if not privileges for 'national' capital. The capital they defended was largely mercantile, backward industrial. The opposition too was xenophobic – identifying capitalists on an ethnic basis. The Left unfortunately failed to distinguish itself from this position very clearly at least in popular perception. Opposition to the contemporary phase of capitalism collapsed into economic nationalism under the guise of anti-imperialism. A clear Left perspective on the issues is coming to the fore only in 2005. This too is so far defensive – and does not propose an alternative path of development – even within the capitalist framework. It obviously requires further nuanced detailing.

⁷⁶This is quite in keeping with the basic thinking of the fascists. They have contempt for the weak – social and physical. They do not even consider them fit to survive. The power and domination of the stronger is *natural* and *good*! The weak, those who have not seized power and control, those who are oppressed, to the fascists, deserve their status. The fascists would consider any measures to grant them any modicum of participation or any share in decision-making power disastrous and unnatural. The rule of capital too then is natural! The hatred towards migrants and aliens also flows from this position.

basic principles of capitalism. Ideologically it always posits socialism-communism as the enemy. In India too the RSS while it heaps abuses on 'minority appeasers' and 'pseudo-secularists' repeatedly declares that the real and fundamental enemy of Hindutva is the Left. Nevertheless, the fascists at times criticise capital and insist on justice to the working people. There is no notion of the rights of the workers, except in words at times under compulsions of competitive mass parliamentary politics. The fascist pose is that they would obtain the just payments for the workers. Fascism also criticises capital for being wasteful, inefficient, selfish, and myopic. In Italy and in Germany they targeted capital in this manner.

A far more significant critique is the cultural critique of capital. Fascism abhors liberalism and individual freedom. It sees capitalism as the system that promotes both these values. It is hence severe on the decadence of capitalism. The cultural decadence and the openness of the society are condemned and damned. Fascism accepts capitalism as an economic system but hates its political and social attitudes – even the ones that remain on paper. The criticism encompasses the family structures capitalism promotes as well as its attitudes towards relationships between genders – social and personal. In theory, fascism has a quasi-puritanical attitude towards sexuality and sex. (The practice has always been at variance with this theoretical attitude.) It frowns at any but heterosexual marital reproductive sexuality and posits a male-dominated, sexist, patriarchal norm for the society.⁷⁷ The very idea of women's sexuality also terrorises the fascists. The sexism borders on misogyny. The condemned decadence of capitalism includes the openness towards all these attitudes.⁷⁸

The relationship between capital and fascism is to say the least complex. An obvious fact is that fascism is a product of modern age – of the age of capital. The economic system of fascism is capitalism. Moreover, it requires mass society and mass politics to come into existence. It is an enemy of open democratic society and polity and yet paradoxically can emerge only in such a society. It can lay any claims to power only in societies that do not restrict such claims and treat all

⁷⁷Fascism persecuted homosexuals though the incidence of homosexuality within the Nazi ranks was not insignificant.

⁷⁸Susan Sontag has very interesting and perceptive views on sexuality and fascism – particularly its relationship with female sexuality. (See Sontag, Susan; *Fascinating Fascism* in **Under the Sign of Saturn**; Vintage, Random House, UK; 1996 – first published in the US in 1980; the particular essay is dated 1974.)

citizens as equal. Fascism – if it seizes power destroys democracy and the republic in spirit if not in letter but arises only in a democratic republic.

The fact that fascism is a product and occurrence of the age of modernity and capital does not mean that fascism is the ideology, politics, and regime of choice for capital in all situations and all phases.⁷⁹ The price that the fascist regime exacts from even capital is too high in situations that do not force the regime on to capital for survival. It is a regime and political solution of the last resort – when the very existence of capitalist rule faces a threat – through possibility of a proletarian revolution – or similar social upsurges.⁸⁰

The fascist regime may be exceptional – an extraordinary response to an extraordinary situation by capital – the fascist organisation and ideology is not. Even logic dictates that it has to predate the regime and be ‘in place’ for the opportune moment when it may become necessary. This is not to believe in a conspiracy theory of history – some so called secularists currently impart a supra-historical and supra-natural consciousness to the RSS – as if it knew exactly what would happen when! This view (apart from being alarmist and illogical) is ridiculous. The RSS floundered for decades – and does so again!

Capitalism has changed since the period of classical fascism quite considerably. The change in the past two decades is quite rapid, extensive, and intensive. Technological revolutions have taken place and more loom on the horizon. The technological changes made possible sweeping changes in the organisation of labour process, in organisation of production, in the nature of operations of capital itself.

⁷⁹It has become fashionable partly to consider many regimes – Thatcher, Reagan, and Bush-Blair as fascist. These regimes may have authoritarian traits. They may violate many democratic and human rights. They may seek international domination. They may even be continuously in search of wars. In many other respects, they differ from fascism. In the first instance, they are not mass movements. They do not aim at any radical alteration of the nature of the state and society. They are not closed xenophobic regimes – and certainly cannot model the society on those lines. Not all imperialism is fascism – though the brutalities may seem quite comparable. A section of opinion in the USA too has held the Bush regime to be adventurist/fascist without truly arguing the point.

⁸⁰ Some recent work tends to show that fascism was actively promoted by at least a section of capitalists – in both Italy and Germany – see for example **Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1945** (ED: Michael N Dobkowski & Isidor Wallimann), Cornerstone Publications, Kharagpur, India, December 2003. There is no need to dispute these facts. Even in India, reportedly specific business houses financed the murder of the Mahatma, most violence (anti-communist in particular) of the *Shiv Sena*, violent actions of the VHP and *Bajrang Dal* (here the NRI capital was more though not exclusively involved).

Dead labour now dominates living labour and the necessity of labour changes completely. In the age of global capital the extent and intensity of the technological and social changes is uneven and heterogeneous. Nevertheless, no corner of the world remains immune to the changes.

The socio-political changes brought about by these technical-economic changes are of tremendous significance. The emphasis of the operations of capital has changed from manufacture to finance, from production to services, from producer to consumer. Technically the world today has the capacity to fulfil the needs of the entire population and simultaneously to free human kind from all manners of drudgery. The socio-political impacts are, however, quite different. The working class gets demobilised and devalued. Capital no longer needs workers in ever-larger numbers. In fact, the need for workers declines across economies and countries. Temporarily the white-collar workers dominate the scene. Ultimately, they too face demobilisation and unemployment. The organisations, social weight, political significance of the working class also decline as a result. Apparently, capital has at last overcome the threat of working class revolution. The social and ideological significance of this development is tremendous. The social compact between capital and labour dissolves and there is a marginalisation of the working class. Socialist thought seems to lose its material base. All worldviews that champion egalitarianism and social responsibility face an eclipse. The aggressive new middle class acting as the most ardent mouthpiece of capital wishes to oust the toilers from the society totally. It advocates policies that could result in further impoverishment and greater deprivation of the toilers – with no social responsibility for the amelioration of the conditions. In a certain sense, capital declares this population as surplus to the ‘civil society’ and can only hope for its extinction.

Obviously, the basic contradictions of capitalism do not disappear. Only the nature of their manifestation has changed. Global capitalism of course continues to face the problems of fierce competition, economic cannibalism, and insecurity inherent to speculative operations. These are not the only problems. The exclusion of vast numbers – majorities in most countries - from secure economic/livelihood activities and their subsequent destitution itself creates a massive problem. Such a mass may feel despondent and helpless today but is unlikely to be permanently quiescent. Its discontent poses greater threats than even organised revolutions. The discontent is unfocussed, unclear, and

without a definite enemy. This discontent is likely to take one of the two paths.

It may erupt in unfocussed and chaotic bouts of public violence without any definite agenda. These eruptions of rage are already quite common and occur in varied places for varied reasons – some quite quixotic. They take various forms – from anti-state or anti-capital violence to caste and communal violence. Sometimes the frenzy is against any and everything – there have been incidents of mob attacks on hospitals because of deaths of some patients. Such violence may create ‘law and order’ problems or disturb peace and normal life in specific areas for some time but does not really challenge the system in any fundamental manner. Sometimes the violent outbreaks seem ‘choreographed’. A sudden bout of mass violence occurs even over some very specific, local grievance. The administration until then indifferent to the plight of the people then seems to suddenly wake up and redress the issue. It almost seems that the only way to attract serious attention of the officialdom and evoke action is to have controlled violent incidents. These incidents, however, disrupt normal activities often fundamental to the operations of capital.

The second path is of more sustained ideologically motivated mass phenomena. In the past couple of decades, these have strong fascist character. The activities range from aggressive public celebrations and rituals to acts of violence. The two closely relate to each other. The VHP and *Bajrang Dal* routinely but demonstratively organise trident distribution ceremonies that resemble initiation rituals of some nefarious cult. These precisely are the hordes that perpetrated the Gujarat Carnage. These gangs have attacked any number of places of worship – Muslim and Christian. They have also killed priests and raped nuns. The idea is not perhaps to ‘achieve’ anything but to create a general atmosphere of instability and continuous conflict.

These activities also create some conflict of interest with capital – particularly in the contemporary phase. The orgies of rioting and violence may serve as safety valves to let off steam and to keep the discontent, resentment, and anger unfocussed. The riots actually keep the more aggressive elements in some check – with ‘legitimate’ avenues of violence, looting, even rape. However, the disruption of civil life and communications has numerous ‘undesirable’ effects. Critical supplies may be affected, commerce interrupted, and stock markets may become volatile. These are lifelines of contemporary capitalism. It needs peace

and order with illusions of continuous prosperity as well as indulgences in consumerism to survive and expand. This vision is obviously neither homogenous nor uniform. Some capitalists support the fascist organisations and finance them. Panic sales – reportedly by Gujarati NRI investors – caused the sudden swings in the share markets after the defeat of the BJP in the parliamentary elections of 2004. There is some speculation that the action may not have been very innocent. [The ex-defence minister and ‘socialist’ militant did appeal to all and sundry at that stage to subvert the constitution and prevent any *Congress* government particularly one headed by Mrs Sonia Gandhi to take the reins. He appealed also to the chiefs of defence staff to act (through a military coup?) to ensure that no such government became possible]. The leaders of big business have not favoured such violence. Their stances are obviously opportunist. Nevertheless, there is a general (at least mild) opposition to totalitarian and authoritarian regimes since they affect the markets adversely.

Even at a basic level, the fascist stance towards capital is and has been somewhat contradictory even during the classical period. This was particularly evident in Italy. The fascists under Mussolini actually talked of a third path of development – neither socialist nor capitalist. The state (obviously merged with the Fascist Party) was to lead the development. It was to ensure production-productivity-efficiency-profitability and just wages as well as production necessary to the nation and the society. The economics of the fascist state was to be of this ‘third path’ that would allow private ownership but presumably not unrestrained private control of economic operations. The war situation in practice did lead to continued private corporate profiteering but the state dictated the operations of the corporations.

It is obvious that at different periods different sections of capital – actually groups of capitalists – collaborate with fascism. The reasons are varied. Some may do so out of individual ideological conviction while others as political expediency. In Germany and Italy, in the period of classical fascism, the fear of capital was of a proletarian revolution. Numerous analysts insist that this drove capital either to create the fascist movement or to support it. The former contention is highly inadequate at best. Fascist thought – even organisations – predate the First World War. This is not to deny at all that certain objective conditions increase the attraction of and support for fascism. In some situations, particular sections of capital would consider fascism an attractive alternative to

democracy – especially when it commands a sizeable mass following. The period after the First World War in both Italy and Germany – with the spectre of the Bolshevik Revolution and the continued existence of the Bolshevik regime; economic deterioration, political instability, inability of the traditional parties of capital to command legitimacy or even to properly govern the country, the increased strength of the trade unions, the militancy of the working class, advance of the communist parties must have created tremendous insecurity and fear for capital as well as for significant sections of the middle class. Instability and inability to govern in such situations will be the key issues. It may not however be correct to imagine that fascism is the constant choice or strategy of capital – forever waiting to actualise itself. Obviously, detailed empirical study of the exact sections of capital that backed the fascists is necessary to make definite analytical statements.⁸¹ It would be interesting to analyse for example whether all sections of capital supported fascism equally even within that period. In other words the differences – if any – within the capitalist class on the issue of fascism would indicate the nuances of the relationship between fascism and capital. It would also be instructive to examine the ‘popular’ concept that only monopoly or big capital supports fascism – principally for imperialist reasons. It would be further useful to examine whether fascism has any relationship with the conflict of interests and visions within the capitalist class.

Questions have been raised about the existence of a political economy of fascism. Many fascist readers of the classical period denied any material roots of culture and history. They did not think it was important to have a well worked out economic doctrine. A recent study claims that though the fascist state in Germany tried to be in control of economy and directed production, particularly during the war years, owners and controllers of enterprises did have certain autonomy and took numerous decisions themselves.⁸² Nevertheless, the economic doctrine of fascism remains flexible and vague. It championed the cause

⁸¹There are numerous analyses of fascism that discuss the economic conditions of its rise as well as the role of capital. The exact nature of the factions of capital that supported fascism – and the reasons of this support – is not however easily available. Dobkowski and Walliman (already mentioned) is one such source. Beetham, David (Ed); **Marxists in face of Fascism: Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the inter-war period**; Manchester University Press, 1983 brings together various analyses by Marxists writers during the period of the rise of fascism.

⁸²See the paper by Christoph Buccheim and Jonas Scherner of University of Mannheim, Germany; ‘The Role of Private Property in the Nazi Economy: The Case of Industry’ 2005. Also see the ‘The Political Economy’ of Fascism: Myth or Reality: or Myth and Reality’ (Work in Progress) by David Baker; University of Warwick, UK.. This is a paper presented at a seminar of Political Economy Research Centre, University of Sheffield; March 2005.

of ‘national’ capitalists and petty capitalists and placed the working of enterprises in great restraint. At times, the fascists advocated a near total isolation from world economic systems and called for economic autarky in the new nation to be born. The traditional middle class actively supported the fascists. It was probably taken up with the dream of autarky. The fascist regimes did not however implement this programme of self-sufficient economic isolation from the world capitalist system or markets.

The fascists spoke often of a third path of economic development and organisation – one that was neither capitalist nor communist. The essence of the third path was corporatism. Corporatism placed the economic command and direction in the hands of the fascist state but actual ownership and control of specific enterprises in the hands of capital. The state and capital were joined by state appointed bodies of workers in managing economic activity and enterprises. This partnership of state, capital, and labour is to constitute the third way or third path. Similar ‘partnership’ institutions are expected to exist in all spheres of economic activity. In Italy and Germany, the state also created institutions for welfare and entertainment of the workers that at least for some time did provide some actual (fringe) benefits to the workers in the fields of health, education, holidays, etc. The state pronounces the economic requirements of the nation, sets goals, and prices. The capitalists then take over the micro-management of the activity/enterprise to achieve the goals. The workers actually execute the work. The fascists actually believed that this was a just and efficient system for the nation. The goal in some ways was also self-sufficient isolation from the world economy and markets. There was thus an emphasis on economic autarky. The system seemed ideally suited for the period when the fascist states faced isolation in the international community or economic boycott or sanctions and later war economics with all activity directed towards the war effort.

In the contemporary era, the situation seems quite different from the ‘popular’ concept. The evidence in India also perhaps would lead to

⁸³There is obviously certain opportunism in the support business houses extend to political formations. Often the donations are spread across the spectrum. The relative quantities would actually be interesting to study. This data is not available. Once upon a time business enterprises – as individual firms – could officially donate sums of money to political parties. These donations were then reflected in the annual reports of the companies. The donations are now unofficial and hence unknown. The task of uncovering support would have to rely on indirect evidence and sift through voluminous documentation. The donations – due to the omnibus opportunist nature mentioned above – were never very reliable indicators.

startlingly different conclusions.⁸³ A provocative hypothesis would be that fascism draws support only from certain sections of capital. This section is generally not involved in manufacture of general goods for general consumers but relies heavily on state patronage and is likely to gain the most in a period of militarisation. It perhaps thus is also the section that requires active and massive state patronage to survive and to dominate the economy. Further, it perhaps is a section that is unable to hold its own in a free competition (however manipulated by the markets), particularly of an international nature. It perhaps also is capital that is technologically and organisationally at least somewhat 'backward' and requires general inefficiency of the economic system. The Gujarat carnage evoked active responsive support neither from national capital located in Gujarat nor from Gujarati owned or controlled capital with national operations but from middle-level local capital that in some ways was quite moribund. Its economic practices too were fairly questionable and backward. The Gujarat example also shows that the fear was not of a working class revolution but of a general destabilising upsurge by lumpenised sections of the society. In the Indian case – extending in all probability to areas beyond Gujarat – another important factor is that fascism as an ideology and as an organisational alternative occupied spaces left vacant by the retreat of the working class – as a social entity, as a political force, as an organised force. The advance of communalism coincides with the advance of an ideology of assault on the working class. The dreams of post-industrial development fuel the rabidly anti-people ideology of the middle class that also wanted to lay sole claims to most resources – natural and human created.

The simple point again, is that the relationship between contemporary capitalism and contemporary fascism is complex and not at all linear or simple.

Many analysts currently relate the rising right wing authoritarianism in many countries – including India – to operations and policies of global capitalism. It is true that the 'globalisation' of Indian economy created the conditions that led to the rise of the *Sangh Parivar*. The destruction of survival/sustenance/subsistence economies, further marginalisation of the deprived sections of the populations, intensification of urban and rural poverty, erosion of workers' rights and organisations, curtailment of democratic rights – particularly those related to class struggles are common features in many 'developing' countries.

Appendix 05:

Global Capital and fascism

The advanced capitalist countries insist on the existence of formal democracy but not on the protection of substantive democracy. The interest very clearly is in market democracy. The democratic façade – in a very formal sense - is necessary to promote consumerism and consumerist culture. An authoritarian repressive regime may be very useful for reordering the economy or to change balance of social forces but it does not promote market booms – in capital, services, or consumer goods markets. A modicum of civil liberties is essential for these operations.

It is also true that authoritarian right wing movements based on ethnic or national chauvinism have arisen in many countries after the end of the cold war or rather after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In many countries, such forces have captured power.

The exact relationship between global capitalism and contemporary fascism needs to be analysed in some detail. That would require comparative studies of many countries, not attempted here. Some general features, however, need at least brief notice.

Today, fascist programmes – though transiently – seem to take root in developing countries that attempt to catch up with the global economy. The economic programme is non-revolutionary of fast growth and rapid 'development' – of creation of a corporatist culture, of suppression of class struggle, of a new enslavement of the working class. Typically these are countries with a large agricultural sector, relatively low development of industry (but with some industrial base), a vast pool of labour power (domination of living as against past/dead labour), low accumulation, a problem of poverty and unemployment, no assured foreign markets, an assertive national capital in a hurry to integrate with global economy while insisting on a due share to itself. This requires an unchallenged rule of capital to push through a number of policies that increase the misery and deprivation of the toiling masses. Invocation of

national interest and *national security* then create consent for coercion. Extreme nationalism – often based on xenophobia, frequently directed against specific ‘other’ becomes the ideology of these movements or regimes. In the absence of an internal ‘other’, obsessive concerns over national security play a similar role. Sometimes, the two may exist in combination.

These are definitely right wing authoritarian tendencies. They cannot however be classified as fascist. A number of these regimes have no mass backing. They are not ‘popular’ regimes. A number of them rely heavily on the support of the armed forces if they are not military dictatorships themselves. The national capital in many of these countries is quite weak. It is weak in economic terms as well as in its social and political weight. Hence, the regime itself represents the vision of the capitalist class almost vicariously. This vision thus represented has a heavy dose of the interests of global capital. Democratic institutions and processes in these countries may not face active destruction but far more so experience impediments in development and functioning. There is no active revolution from the right – armed or otherwise – in these countries.

The economic crisis in some of these countries is not a crisis of capitalism but brought on by inadequate transition to capitalism. The agenda of these regimes is not so much of reordering and reallocation of capital as of rapid accumulation.

These satellites of neo-imperialism hence can be termed reactionary, anti-democratic, right wing, authoritarian but not necessarily fascist or neo-fascist.

The Indian situation is markedly different. The *Sangh Parivar* as already discussed adequately shows distinct fascist tendencies in its organisation, programmes, ideology, and methods of operation. The failure of the fascists in India was their inability to launch a revolution from the right. The *Sangh Parivar* failed in this task because it could not overcome the traditional and modern divisions in the Indian society and create adequate social basis for such a transformation.

The policies pursued by the various authoritarian regimes in various countries are perfectly in keeping with the ideology of global capital. The various prescriptions of IMF and World Bank for example do demand withdrawal of the state from social welfare and social security

functions, curtailment of labour rights and unchecked play for market forces.

It is however difficult to link neo-liberalism as an ideology with fascism. There are in fact distinct contradictions in the neo-liberal ideological core and fascist formulations.

Neo-liberalism privileges processes over structures and considers market as the supreme process in society. The pursuit of markets also leads to trade unrelated to production – converting even unsubstantial or notional items into commodities – e.g. the trade in option over options. Neo-liberalism also denies the existence of or need of any normative utopia. In fact, the only structure that it puts up with – in practice if not in theory – is the nation and nation state, even an ethno-centric nation state. (This could be an area leading to softness and tolerance of fascism, in practice if not theory.)

Fascism on the other hand is obsessed with structures. It has strong dreams of a nation – its revival, resurgence, and domination of others. It also is emphatic about physical production.

The neo-fascists and the strategists of global capitalism agree totally on the violent and brutal suppression of people’s resistance and movements, particularly any class based revolutionary movements. The two however will differ substantively and with acrimony on the relationship between the party-state and the markets. Neo-liberalism views the market as the only force capable of ordering the society and stands firmly for no controls and impediments in the market processes. Fascism even as neo-fascism will demand total subjugation of the market to the party-state.

On this background, it is interesting to note that electoral reverses have thrown the BJP in particular and *Sangh Parivar* in general in an ideological and organisational chaos. Loss of power – and this was limited, governmental power – has led to unprecedented confusion and disorder in the ranks of the organisations. This was not expected. Obviously, the electoral defeat of the BJP led front in the national parliamentary elections and then in some of the state assembly elections does not mean the defeat of the *Sangh Parivar* or of its ideology even in its narrow communal incarnation. The danger presented by the RSS and its offshoots exists as a serious threat to the Indian republic, to

democracy, and to secularism. At present, however, despite all bravado, the *Sangh Parivar* seems a confused organisation. The delay in the realisation of dreams of total power and perhaps a realisation of the failure of the social project – of a neo-fascist *Hindu Rashtra* – has created the confusion. The BJP has even proved itself to be an ineffective opposition party. It never was a very effective mass political force except during the *Ram Janmabhoomi* campaign. Its tactics to stall the parliament all through on one pretext or the other have nullified its own role as a parliamentary opposition. This becomes a serious drawback when it is incapable of launching a mass movement anyway. This again is perhaps a neo-fascist, fascist trait. The fascists can only live on success. Reverses and defeats throw them into disarray. The core will of course survive and hold fast to the ideology but as a force, the *Parivar* itself may have to live on the periphery of the political sphere. In the recent past, the *Sangh Parivar* has indulged more in internal fights and squabbles than in any effective assault upon its ideological enemies – the *Left* and the Congress. For a fascist outfit this is not mere internal ideological or organisational struggle. The lack of homogeneity, coherence, and discipline disheartens its own supporters and social base. The iron single-willed non-discordant image is one of the attractions that a fascist outfit holds out. If and when that begins to evaporate, the organisation may get into serious trouble.

Further, the change of regimes has made no difference to global capital. International capital has not flown out of the country following the electoral defeat of BJP nor has the inflow of foreign investments dried up. The investment indicators suggest that the regime did not matter very much to global capital. In fact, the Gujarat carnage had more impact. It did shake confidence and slow down the inflow. That state in particular did suffer and was unable to attract substantive new investment. Strenuous efforts by the state government and the passage of time may have changed the situation to some extent but it is certainly not the prime destination for capital. This would only strengthen the observation that fascism is not necessarily the regime of choice for global capitalism in developing countries.

The relationship between operations of global capital and fascism may also be very complex. Simplistic analyses may not reveal the true picture at all.

04. Nation and Nationalism

The fascists claim a monopoly over nationalism and patriotism. The assertion of nationalism is coupled with the accusation that no one else is nationalist enough. In fact, the fascists treat all other socio-political forces as anti-national traitors, at least to some degree. This nationalism or ultra-nationalism of the fascists forces a detailed and careful discussion of the concepts of nation, nationality, and nationalism. Particularly when fascism is strong enough to mount an ideological challenge, the understanding of these concepts often gets distorted at a popular level. The 'other' is always a suspect – and the nationalist fervour often fuels communalism (in the Indian situation) or racial violence (where that is an issue). More seriously, it can generate competitive ultra-nationalism in the social and political arena.⁸⁴

Nationalism is a sensitive issue in most countries, as is nationality. It perhaps acquires more aggressive and strident articulation in countries that were till recently colonies. Their current status as developing countries adds to the complexity of the issue. The incomplete process of decolonisation combined with the invasion of the world markets produces a 'nationalist' defence reaction. This actually serves the backward indigenous ('national') capital but finds a popular mass cord – politically and culturally. The nationalist sentiments are not however features only of these countries. Despite increasing regional economic cooperation, nationalism is a strong force even in the developed industrialised capitalist countries.

A people sharing common territory, eco-system (or subsystem), language, culture, political economy (including production systems and markets), social system, and belief systems constitute a nationality. (At a pristine level, the territory will be demarcated by high mountains,

⁸⁴Every 'other' is always projected as a community with dubious nationalism. The fascists always claim that only they – as the core authentic and legitimate community in the 'nation' as also an ideological organization – are nationalists without any question or qualification. All others are suspect at best and proven anti-nationals at worst. The communists are condemned because they espouse proletarian internationalism. The Muslims are suspect in India because of two reasons. The simple one is that all Indian Muslims are suspected of love and loyalty for Pakistan – interpreted as their true country. (The 'inconvenient' examples are cited as exceptions and held up as 'models' that all Muslims should emulate. "If all Muslims were like 'XYZ' we shall not have anything against them" is a common refrain of the *Sangh Parivar* as well as the SS.) More importantly, it is claimed that Islam does not believe in a nation and hence no Muslim can be a nationalist. All Muslims by this definition consider themselves only as members of a world Muslim/Islamic community. Obviously, this view claims that no Muslim can be a nationalist unless s/he abandons Islam.

impenetrable forests, or large water bodies that cannot be easily crossed). Such an entity will be essentially self-sufficient and thus closed. At a 'pure' level, such a group will be homogenous in terms of language and ethnic backgrounds and the differentiation will be only in terms of economic and hence social status. It is equally obvious that perhaps barring some relatively isolated groups (generally referred to as tribal or indigenous communities or in India as Adivasis) such pure nationalities or national communities do not exist anywhere. Such uniform, homogeneous national communities are then imaginary, fictional, mythical, and mystical. There is almost no historical evidence of their existence in such a form. The fascists evoke the myth of precisely such an imagined nationality or nation treating it as real, historical existent entity. The fascists define the 'us' and 'the other' – particularly the 'enemy other' – based on this mythical or imaginary nationality. *Fascism is not always associated with racism or with communalism but it is always associated with a fanatic attachment to this mythical nation. In fact, the fascist attachment is to the mythical nation as against the historical or real nation.* This also imparts to fascism the characteristic regressive retrograde element. Fascism does not necessarily seek to restore a pre-capitalist economic or social order. It does not necessarily wish to return to medieval traditions or ritual practices. *Fascism does seek to restore or rejuvenate the mythical nation and nationality.* This mythical nation by its very character, to the fascists, is a natural entity. As far as the nation is a natural entity – it is also not a concrete historical occurrence. Mussolini, in fact, averred that the nation was a myth that the fascists invented and used (Naples Speech mentioned earlier). Italy as a nation – not as an extension of Rome but as a modern nation state – came into being only in the nineteenth century. Germany too emerged as a nation state only in 1870. The Italian Fascists and German Nazis nevertheless spoke of the Italian and German nations as if they were eternally in existence. The RSS speaks of India (or *Bharatvarsha*) with sub-continental boundaries (and more too) as if it existed thus as a nation for millennia.⁸⁵ The German nation visualised by the fascists was free of the territorial and political boundaries of the period. All 'pure' German people were part of the German nation – wherever they resided. The German claim to various lands in other nations was based on the contention that 'pure' Germans resided in these lands. The unification of the German people – the 'pure' ones of course – was considered a legitimate aim. At the same time, the 'non-pure' residents of the German nation were considered

alien intruders who had no right to be there. This is quite clearly a racial definition of nation and nationality. Common gene pool or blood, culture, traditions, customs, and history are the characteristics and criteria of this nationality. This peculiar ultra-nationalism provided the justification of Nazi aggressions, wars, and crimes against humanity. Fascist Italy saw itself as the continuation and extension of the Roman Empire. It then claimed 'legitimate' rights to colonise any countries it desired. The 'conquest' of Ethiopia was the resumption of the imperial campaigns of the Roman Empire. Not only the Fascists but also a large number of ordinary Italian citizens saw the conquest as their due and a proud achievement.

The RSS and the *Sangh Parivar* have always refused to accept existing India as the nation of their dreams. They always talk of an *Akhand Bharat* (complete, undivided, or indivisible *Bharat*). In the narrow and immediate sense, this entity is to overcome and undo the partition of the country that occurred in 1947.⁸⁶ The cancellation of the partition means to them only the destruction of Pakistan and Bangladesh as separate nation states and annexation or assimilation of their territory. The territory is coveted but the people of these countries – the Muslim population – are not welcome, definitely not as full or equal citizens. The plans for these people are never spelt out but are not difficult to guess. In this *Akhand Bharat*, the Muslims will be second-class subjugated citizens or be driven out as stateless people. The dream of *Akhand Bharat* does not rest here. It creates a mythical geography of 'original' *Bharat* or the land of the *Aryan Hindus* – that includes territories from other neighbouring countries including Afghanistan.

The strange case is that of the Zionists. The movement gained

⁸⁵There is enough historical evidence to indicate that the sub-continent did not consider itself a nation or nationality at all. There were in the first instance ethno-linguistic and cultural differences. Secondly, even the geographic distinctions mattered. A beloved concept of the *Sangh Parivar* is *Hindustan as the land of the Hindus* – despite the 'alien' origins of the sobriquet. Not all Indians felt they belonged to *Hindustan*. A letter of the Peshawa (quoted in a well documented and researched Marathi novel ***Chambalechya Palikade*** on the life of Mahadji Shinde [Scindia]) in late 18th century asks of Mahadji Shinde why he had not yet invaded *Hindustan* that year to collect tribute. The implication obviously being that the base of the Peshawa rule was *Deccan and Hindustan* was not his country.

⁸⁶Kumar Ketkar, the editor of ***Loksatta*** – the Marathi sister publication of *The India Express* writing on the Partition on August 12, 2006 points out an obvious but interesting fact. The Partition he argues was of British administered India – and not of any pre-existing nation. The sentiment of Indian nationalism too was built during the period of British rule – through the Independence Movement. He also argues that world history shows that neither race nor religion become the sole basis of nation states in the modern world.

strength and sympathy from most quarters of the world in face of the pogroms unleashed against them in some countries of Europe. The quest for a homeland for a people without a nation began and became significant due to the atrocities they faced continuously. The inhumanity of the 'final solution' and the holocaust lent justification to the quest. Quite strangely, the victims of the Nazi holocaust also harboured dreams of a mythical nation – that was not a historical memory but scriptural descriptions separated by two millennia. The political solution worked out by the international community did not satisfy the Zionists. The Zionists lay claim to varied territories based on what are essentially mythology and mythical conceptions of the homeland of the Jews. It is true that not all Jews, and not all Israelis, support the policy of the state of Israel. A significant number are opposed to the arrogant adventurist belligerence of the Israeli state. Nevertheless, a significant number of Israelis in words and action support almost the same kind of state as the one that perpetrated the holocaust upon them. Israel remains a militarist state with a state-of-war economy and a permanent state-of-war social system. It remains a proud sub-imperialist power whose sole aim seems to be waging a war against the Arab neighbours. It too perpetrates atrocities akin to genocide against weaker, poorer, and often helpless elements. It too utilises the same logic of holding an entire people and an entire community responsible for the acts of some elements. It too metes out inhuman punishment to essentially unarmed non-combatant civilians because they are soft targets. In addition, it has the dubious distinction of being the only movement actually to realise the dream of the rebirth of a mythical nation, including the rejuvenation of a dead language. The geo-politics and political economy of the region allows it to utilise astutely its client state status and continue to perpetrate this state of affairs. In their military arrogance, the leaders of Israel – perhaps the current worst enemies of the common people of Jewish origin – do not realise that this permanent-state-of-war state and society cannot ever be a permanent situation.⁸⁷ In a strange way, the rulers of Israel have totally internalised the fascist thought process and created perhaps the most successful fascist regime that even Hitler would envy.

The real (as opposed to mythical) nation is, of course, a historical entity. It arises only at a certain juncture of social and economic development. The nation state is historically a modern phenomenon of the capitalist age. The medieval state had no real logic except military conquest. The borders were flexible and ever changing. The basis was

the military might of the ruler. The common subjects too had no real reason to feel any sense of belonging to a particular kingdom. The attachment (often defensive) may have been to an immediate region or group. Linguistic, ethnic, and religious identities could create bonds – particularly in face of 'alien' aggressions or rule. The functions of the state were also far different from the ones of a modern nation state. The immediate overlord would matter in such a case – but not the remote king or emperor. The notional belonging to a kingdom did not affect the day-to-day lives of the common people – peasants or artisans. In such situations nationalism as understood now does not really exist at a popular level. The rulers at times carried out some public benefit works and provided some relief in times of calamities. These were not duties or obligations – though good rulers were supposed to be paternalistic to the subjects and to provide a modicum of justice. There could be no nationalism in such circumstances – the belonging was either accidental or forced. The feeling of membership was to a nationality defined in ethno-linguistic terms and that too perhaps in the immediate neighbourhood. Strangely, the nation the fascists dream of is a version of this medieval nation – and not the modern territorial nation state.

The discussion on nation and nationalism is important for many reasons. The chief amongst these is the importance fascism lays to nationalism. If there is one ideological element in fascism that is conveyed to and embraced by the rank and file, it is nationalism.⁸⁸ Major analysts of fascism like Roger Griffin and Mark Neocleous emphasise that nationalism is a distinguishing feature of fascism. Griffin includes it in his definition of generic fascism, fascist minimum, and fascist matrix.⁸⁹ Griffin and Neocleous are somewhat cautious and often use the term ultra-nationalism. Jairas Banaji squarely poses nationalism as the core of fascism⁹⁰ and opposes it to democracy.

⁸⁷The brutal suppression of the Palestinian people probably gave rise to the phenomenon of international terrorism – another proud 'achievement' of the state of Israel.

⁸⁸It is perhaps essential to add immediately that the nationalism of the fascists is exclusivist, ethnocentric, chauvinist, xenophobic, expansionist, militarist, and jingoist.

⁸⁹Griffin in his article in the msn Encarta encyclopaedia makes this point quite clearly. The point is discussed in greater detail in *The Palingenic Core of Generic Fascist Ideology*; a Chapter published in Alessandro Campi (ed.), *Che cos'è il fascismo? Interpretazioni e prospettive di ricerche*, Ideazione editrice, Roma, 2003, pp. 97-122. In fact most of his writings bring out two aspects of fascism – that it is a revolution and that its core is palingenic nationalism. Mark Neocleous in his book **Fascism** (Concepts in Social Sciences – Series); Open University Press; Buckingham, U.K.: 1997 titles a chapter 'First I Became a Nationalist' using a quote from Hitler's **Mein Kampf**.

⁹⁰Jairas Banaji, *Political Culture of fascism*; quoted earlier.

The stigma attached to the ultra-nationalism of the fascists often reflects upon nationalism per se. This sometimes creates some confusion about the understanding of imperialism – and in the present circumstances about hegemonic corporate globalisation. The anti-imperialist struggle historically has based itself on nationalism. Imperialist exploitation and oppression is based not only on economic (market) operations of (trans-national) corporations but also on the political and often military actions of the nation state of the home country – USA and UK in the main today. It is now well known that conglomerates of trans-national corporations operating through the American and British (and some other European) states virtually dictate international treaties and conventions.⁹¹ The reasons for the imperialist wars in West Asia also are linked to the economics of oil. Here the economic interests of the corporations are actualised by nation states acting in the name of national interests and national security. In fact, the interests of a set of corporations are interpreted as the interests of the nation.⁹² The imperial nation states obviously subjugate other nations. The conflict then necessarily takes the form of *national struggles*. These can neither be wished away nor condemned because the form they take is 'national'. Proletarian internationalism is not even a strong ideology today. No real anti-imperialist struggles do or can take place as international struggles. In such a situation, nationalism becomes also a defensive position. It is true that all nationalism can slip into national chauvinism. The crux however is not the form of nationalism but the content of the nationalism. To consider all nationalism as fascist or proto-fascist may not be valid.

Human beings are social beings. The social nature is neither hypothetical nor imaginary. It is a concrete reality seen in actual relations of human beings. A person feels ease and comfort in interactions with other people who speak the same language, inhabit the same familiar (not notional but actually frequently traversed) territory, share similar cultural practices, food habits, and styles of living. This ease creates a sense of identification with and attachment to this immediate concrete and real society and the area it inhabits. This is a concrete sensuous bond that facilitates easy interactions of both contradiction and cooperation. This bond may constitute a community.

⁹¹ See the instances cited by C T Kurien in **Global Capitalism and the Indian Economy**; Orient Longman, Delhi; 1994. B.FaK2

⁹² The slogan "what is good for General Motors is good for America" immediately comes to mind.

This community is not necessarily held to be superior to all others, eternal, and virtuous. It is seen in human terms, with strengths and limitations, with good and bad points, with achievements and failures. It is seen as humanly contradictory. No natural rights to subjugate others are ascribed to such a community. It may only be jealously defensive about the resources critical for its existence and life practices.

Nationalism as fascist ideology (or versions resembling it) is quite different from such a concrete, real, sensuous, practical bond. It is an ideology about an entity that is not concretely experienced but notionally constructed. It also ascribes to the nation qualities that are imaginary and unreal. This nation is also held to be eternal and inviolable. No changes with regard to this nation are ever allowed in the ideology of nationalism. This imagined nation is also highly competitive and ever attempting to prove its superiority over others – in the last instance militarily. This nation and nationalism is also projected as a pure entity ultimately in ethnic terms. The individual in such a nation is also subordinate to the nation. Such nationalism rarely attaches itself to the modern nation state – which is the creation of conscious thought based on common interests and convenience that are always subject to alteration. It invariably attaches itself to an ethno-centric notion of the nation that is beyond reason, dispute, and negotiated creation.

What therefore is necessary is to understand the nature of fascist nationalism – including its dreams of palingenesis.⁹³

One needs to hardly state that the modern nation state – even in the age of globalisation – has an economic and political logic of existence. Membership of the nation is at least in theory voluntary for a region or a group. (In many cases, right to cessation or self-determination may be a part of the constitution.) The modern nation state is also – at least in the ideal form – a democratic republic. Most nation states also proclaim equality of citizens before the law. There is no discrimination in law based on birth among citizens. Gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, language thus are not criteria for any differentiation amongst citizens of

⁹³ The best discussion on palingenesis is by Roger Griffin. See his '*The palingenetic core of generic fascist ideology*' in Alessandro Campi (ed) **Che cose il fascismo? Interpretazioni e prospettive di ricerca**; Ideazione editrice; Rome, 2003 or '*Revolution from the Right: Fascism*' in David Parker (ed) **Revolutions and the Revolutionary Tradition in the West 1560-1991**; Routledge; London, 2000. It must be added that Griffin does not describe the fascist nation as 'mythical' nation anywhere; nor does he contrast it with the real, historical nation.

a nation – in at least the formal organised public spheres. The discrimination actually takes place in the sphere of civil society. The modern nation state – barring some affirmative action designed to remove traditional discrimination – does not differentiate between citizens on this basis. (The civil society often continues to do so, particularly in the realm of economic opportunities.) The modern nation state (and national society) is thus often heterogeneous and pluralist. The national culture too is syncretic. All people, communities, and groups staying within the national territorial boundaries become equal citizens of the nation state, and share common nationality defined by the commonalities within that territory. This is a complex relationship where different ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups inhabit the same territory and subscribe to the same nation. The different identities are maintained – often jealously. Equal claims are however made on the material and cultural resources of the nation – including full belonging. The nation state may often be federal in character (in principle or practice or both). In such a case, there is clear devolution of powers (of administrative decision-making) to the states or provinces that constitute the federation. The extent of autonomy may differ in different nation states but broadly, the only areas reserved for the central or federal government are currency, defence, and foreign policy. Other areas either are the preserves of the states / provinces or are jointly administered by the federal and provincial governments. The relationship is complex because the membership of the nation state is in principal and historically voluntary and is dependent on an equal (proportional) distribution of resources and equal (proportional) access to opportunities. The material and cultural claims on the nation of the various groups are equal. The nationalism associated with this nation is not a divine right – it is historical: evolved based on a process of creation of the nation ('nation building') or of an anti-imperialist or anti-colonial struggle. The nationality is neither racial nor religious. It is territorial and material.⁹⁴ In so far as nation states and nationalisms exist – territorial nationalism too has an element of politics of identity. It is not necessarily expansionist or militarist by definition or innate characteristic. (Though it can certainly become that in certain conditions – when there is competition with other nation states over resources, markets, spheres of influence {specifically economic influence} and sometimes territory.) In

other words, this is not a racial or religious nationalism but basically an economic nationalism. In so far as it is an economic nationalism, it is open to different interpretations and disputes based on class positions and conflicts.⁹⁵

The fascists sing paeans to a territory but interpret it usually in a non-human way. The territory is described in its natural elements (mountains, rivers, etc.) and in a holy or divine manner. It is almost the sacred land for them. The sacred territory is not the actual historically constituted modern nation but a holy ancestral land of mystical powers.⁹⁶ The fatherland for the Nazis was a mystical and holy land to which the 'pure' German had divine and inviolable rights – and more importantly, no other people had any such rights or claims. Savarkar in India also sees the land – Bharatvarsha – as the holy land (*punya-bhoomi*) and in contrast to the popular usage till then as the 'fatherland'. He is perhaps the only one not to describe it as the *motherland* but as the *fatherland*. The latter word is quite uncommon in most Indian languages (*matru-bhoomi* vs *pitru-*

⁹⁴Talcot Parsons in his "Some Sociological Aspects of the Fascist Movements" published in **Social Forces**, Vol XXI; December 1942 and appearing as a lengthy excerpt in William Ebenstein (Ed) **Modern Political Thought: The Great Issues**; Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi; 1970/ 1974 argues that nationalism is a modern phenomenon and constitutes a rationalizing element (as opposed to the traditionalising one) in society. The modern (capitalist) nation and nation state to him are rational constructions that represent a historical advance.

⁹⁵For a discussion of the characteristics of the modern nation state and its evolution (but not necessarily the views stated above) see E. J. Hobsbawm; **Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality**; Cambridge University Press, UK: second edition 1992, reprint 2000 [B.Q15.H61]. Also see John Holloway & Sol Picciotto; **State and Capital: A Marxist.H Debate**; Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., London. UK; 1978, reprint 1980. See particularly in this volume Claudia von Braunmuhl; *On the Analysis of the Bourgeois Nation State within the World Market Context*.

⁹⁶This characteristic they share with the communities or people who are not yet largely a part of the capitalist process or of modernity. Such communities define the land as holy, sacred, and inviolable – an object of worship. The territory is then seen as the place of ancestors, residence of holy spirits, of departed souls. The process in this case is quite clear. These communities relate not to patches of land as bourgeois property but to a territory that embraces an entire eco-system that is critical for their survival, that is based not on even agricultural surplus but a system of sustenance. The explanation in these communities does not develop on the basis of the material understanding and hence acquires the 'spiritual' explanations. A lifestyle and social organisation strongly controlled by traditional roles and conventions without scientific investigations into conditions of existence is unlikely to utilise material, secular, scientific, rational ideological explanations. The necessity of the mountain or the river then makes them *holy* and *sacred*. The fascist interpretation is in this sense a throwback to the primitive understanding but for far different purposes.

bhoomi).⁹⁷ The fascists are contemptuous of territorial nationalism. The objection is not to the territory; in fact, they want more of it. The contempt is about the 'others' who also inhabit it and moreover demand rights as equal citizens. The Nazis very clearly declared all non-'pure' Germans (non-Aryans) as unworthy of any claims or rights in their Aryan nation. They sought to at first subjugate and disenfranchise them and ultimately to actually eliminate and eradicate them. Struggling to define Hindu, Savarkar ultimately settles on racial definition. He talks of history, tradition, and culture, religious belief, sense of belonging, etc. but finally arrives at 'blood' as the defining characteristic. He is prepared to accommodate the non-Hindu as some kind of a citizen in the new nation – but as a secondary citizen. He wishes to exclude those who do not emerge from the Hindu stock from certain spheres – the critical areas that affect the functioning of the federal state and government – the spheres of security forces, foreign policy, and perhaps major economic policies. The second head of the RSS, M. S. Golwalkar (popularly known as 'Guruji' in the *Sangh Parivar* circles) ridicules the idea of territorial nationalism in even stronger terms. In his writings, he expresses a fear that such territorial definition of nationalism will grant equal rights to the stones and rocks as well as animals within the geographical border of the nation.⁹⁸ The nationalism of the fascists is based on origin – essentially race. It is defined in India by the *Sangh Parivar* as Cultural Nationalism.

The dream of the fascist is the rebirth of the mythical nation of the pure people and the divine right of this nation to dominate, subjugate, and rule over all 'others'. The attitude towards the mythical nation is similar as the one towards the 'us'. The nation was once great – the

⁹⁷Is this a mere different use of the word – or does it actually connote that the legacy and hence racial purity and nationalism is determined by the sperm not the womb? Savarkar perhaps does not explain the reasons of the change of terminology. It could also be based on the concept of 'ancestors' always used as forefathers – never with any reference to mothers.

⁹⁸Savarkar was a prolific writer and all his works are available to the reader. The most significant work for some of the thoughts is *Hindutva*; Nagpur; 1923. Two short books by M. S. Golwalkar are significant, viz. **We or Our Nationhood Defined** and **Bunch of Thoughts**. S. H. Deshpande a pro-Hindutva scholar in his excellent review of *Hindutva* thought in **Savarkar te Bha.Ja.Pa.: Hindutva-Vicharacha Chikitsak Alekh** (Marathi); Rajhans; Pune; May 1992 provides the essence of the arguments of all significant Hindutva thinkers. Golwalkar's remark appears in his **Bunch of Thoughts** – available in Marathi as **Vichardhan** (cited earlier)

greatest in the world; its contribution to civilisation was incalculable; through various reasons it has now fallen upon bad times; it is now time that the nation was restored to its rightful glory and place in history. The reasons cited for the current unsatisfactory state of affairs are both internal and external. The nation became mentally and spiritually weak as it embraced dangerous, debilitating ideologies like tolerance, non-violence, liberalism, etc. (In India Buddhism is squarely blamed for these 'non-valiant' 'non-virile' ideas.) It lost its élan and its will to play its rightful role. External aggressions or alien intruders then sapped the strength of the nation even more. Hence, the nation needs to be reborn, renewed, rejuvenated. In the rebirth of the nation will be the renewal of the chosen people. The path is hard and demands sacrifice. Determination that weeds out the unwanted and polluting elements from within the chosen people and rebuilds the nation is necessary. A strong and decisive organisation and leadership alone can fulfil this task.

Italian Fascism mostly did not have an explicit strand of racial superiority or racial hatred (except for a brief period under the pressures of Nazi Germany). It did however believe strongly in the 'divine' and 'historical' right of Italy (as the continuation of the Roman Empire) to rule over other nations, to colonise and control other nations and people. The Cultural Nationalism of *Sangh Parivar* is clearly linked to *Hindutva* and to the superiority of the Hindu along with the natural right of the Hindu to dominate at least within a geographical area.

It is necessary to differentiate this nationalism and dream of resurgence of the mythical nation from national liberation and anti-imperialism, which are essentially defensive and not directed en masse against other nationalities. It is however also necessary to recognise that all nationalism as identity politics can lead to chauvinism and hence potentially to expansionism and dreams of national superiority with domination of other nations and nationalities. The current 'war on terror' has clearly acquired imperialist character with almost racial and religious justifications. The Muslim – though termed Islamic Jihadi Fundamentalist - is a suspect and a target. The ire is directed against the Arabs but not confined to them. The 'war on terror' it hardly needs to be said is fought in the name of democracy, freedom, progress, modernity, and above all national security!

05. Masses and Fascism

The various characteristics of fascism (and specifically the discussion above on relationship with capital, the necessity of the 'other', the permanence of conflict and violence, and the formulations on nation and nationalism) must not obscure one major feature of fascism. This feature is the mass character of fascism. Fascism differs from a number of other right wing, retrograde, reactionary organisational efforts by virtue of being a sustained mass movement. The classical fascist movements in Italy and Germany clearly showed this mass character. The fascist movements also did that in some other countries like Spain, France, and Britain.⁹⁹ In the Indian situation, one must remember that the SS was and remains even today - in the somewhat weakened condition - a mass party. The RSS - as argued earlier - acquired a truly fascist character only when it floated various fronts as mass organisations.¹⁰⁰

Numerous questions of course arise. What kinds of people follow the fascists? What motivates them? What kind of attraction does fascism hold for these groups? Does the fascist constituency as a group gain anything from the fascist movement? What does it hope to gain

⁹⁹This does not of course mean that the fascists commanded the loyalty or support of the majority of the population. In Italy, the opposition remained intact though for quite some years the Fascists perhaps did attract the support of a large section of the population. The same is true of the Nazi support in Germany. In Germany, terror and brutal physical elimination of all opposition and dissent perhaps played a significant role in the quietude of the majority. However, Hitler and the Nazis did enjoy popular support at different periods. Moreover, nationalism acquires very different characteristics in periods of actual war -in victory or in defeat. Even conscientious objection is put to rest at least temporarily where the popular interests and the interests of the nation state merge or appear to do so, at least temporarily. In Spain, there was a vigorous opposition to the fascist organisation and regime that could be crushed only with military action with the aid of other fascist nations. In Portugal, the fascists perhaps never enjoyed majority support but managed to neutralise the majority into acquiescence. In Britain and France, they were loud but never enjoyed the support of even a significant section.

¹⁰⁰One other distinction must immediately be made. The fascists mobilise the masses through various means and multiple front organisations floated for the purpose. The fascist core organisation remains a cadre organisation. Its nature is not that of a mass organisation. The membership is selective. The members are highly indoctrinated and motivated persons dedicated and committed to specific duties and tasks assigned by the leadership. This core organisation is often paramilitary and is highly regimented. It is also a centralist organisation controlled by a central council that is not elected even by the dedicated cadre members. The rise of a member through the ranks is analogous to promotions and advancement in a military force/ establishment. This was true of the classical fascist parties and is true for the RSS as well. The other organisational structure, apart from an army, that the fascist core organisation resembles is a religious order.

anyway? How are the masses organised and mobilised? How much of a say do the masses have in policy formulation, organisational structure, strategy, and tactics of the fascist organisations? What is the view of the fascist leaders of the masses? What do the masses understand of the ideology and programme of the fascist organisation?

Adequate and comprehensive answers for these questions will be extremely difficult to attempt in a brief essay like the present writing. The task is even more difficult given the existing significant literature on the subject.¹⁰¹ Banaji (mentioned earlier) is critical of the *Third International* for not recognising the mass character of fascism adequately. However, Dave Renton sites numerous fairly early debates within the *Third International* that do not ignore the mass character of fascism. The problems of the official positions of the *Third International* (particularly during the so-called 'third period' - essentially post 1928) may be somewhat different. They may stem not from a failure of analysis but from the compulsive necessity to 'theoretically' and 'analytically' justify the varied changes in the foreign policy of the USSR¹⁰² as also the (partial and transient) tendency to look at *all* right wing phenomena as a *conspiracy* of monopoly capital and particularly the governments of the western capitalist nations. These debates, crucial as they are, interest

¹⁰¹Griffin (**Fascism**; OUP, 1995) [B.Q14.G3] and Neocleous (**Fascism**; Open University Press, Buckingham, UK, 1997), already mentioned, discuss the mass character of fascism though they do not necessarily tackle all the questions listed here. Some classical works from the official tradition of the communist movement include Rajani Palme Dutt; **Fascism and Social Revolution** [B.Q14.D2]; Martin Lawrence, London, 1934; E Ercoli (Palmiro Togliatti); **The Social Basis of Fascism in Italy**; The Communist International 21; London, 1926. A classical work remains Leon Trotsky; **Fascism: What it is and how to fight it** [B.Q14.T2]; 1931; now available in Marx-Engels Internet Archives, 1993. Apart from this Dave Renton; *Towards A Marxist Theory of Fascism*; University of Sheffield; 2006 in <http://www.tripod.luycos.co.uk> is a useful summary of various Marxist views on the subject. D K Renton, *The Political Economy of fascism* [C.eldoc1/0704/political-economy-of-fascism.html] at <http://www.dkrenton.co.uk>, date unknown, is also a useful reading. Nicos Poulantzas as well as Ernst Laclau provide very useful information but do not directly address these questions. David Beetham (Ed), **Marxists in the face of Fascism: Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the Inter-War Period**; Manchester University Press, Great Britain, 1983 carries excerpts from the writings of various Marxist thinkers and leaders that do show an awareness of the mass character of fascism. These writers include Antonio Gramsci, Palmiro Togliatti, Clara Zetkin, Ernst Thalman, Georgi Dimitrov, August Thalheimer, Leon Trotsky, Ignazio Silone, among others. As the *Introduction* states the purpose of the book is to present the rich variety of Marxist analyses of fascism, particularly before 1928. The same volume also carries excerpts from numerous documents from the *Comintern* and some communist parties from Europe.

and make sense to the historians and theoreticians engaged in deep analysis of the period and the phenomenon, far more than to general readers.

The background in Italy and Germany was the disaster of the First World War. The countries had suffered in the war and gained nothing. Germany in fact was crushed by the defeat and the reparations. The military forces were demobilised. In a situation of extreme economic hardship, national humiliation, and general unrest, there was a mass of soldiers suddenly rendered unemployed. The dismantling of wartime industry also led to unemployment. The demobilised soldiers were peasants and workers pulled into the military forces, away from their original occupations. The professional career soldiers – and particularly the higher officer corps – probably remained in service as some kind of defence force, however disarmed. The draftees were the ones who were thrown into the streets. The nucleus of the organisation that was to become the Fascist Party came from groups of these demobilised soldiers in Italy. In Germany too, the situation was similar.

The War, the reverses in the War, and large number of demobilised soldiers are perhaps only specific factors. The general features may be more important.

First and foremost is the sudden, explosive creation of a huge mass of unemployed people. These people had lost all occupation. *Not only were they unemployed but they had also lost all hope of being gainfully*

¹⁰²No comprehensive study of fascism can avoid examination of the foreign policies of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. It will similarly have to deal with the positions taken by other significant world powers towards these countries, including the Soviet Union. It also will have to study the analyses and positions of the *Comintern* about fascism and fascist powers. The scope of this particular writing does not permit that long discussion. Even coming to India, the theoretical and practical stances of the varied political forces then active towards fascism will need examination in a larger work. Here these are examined only in relation to the communal forces/ organizations/ thinkers. Thus, this writing does not examine the positions of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. This is also in a way quite convenient since it avoids a debate – bound to be very acrimonious – that is not very relevant or germane today! (There are many views regarding the position of Bose. It is claimed that his alliance with Germany and Japan was very tactical – not to say opportunist. It is also claimed that he asked members of the INA fighting with the Nazi troops not to fight on the eastern front but only on the western one. It is claimed that those Indian (INA) soldiers who followed his instructions and refused to fight against the USSR were court marshalled and shot by the Nazis. It is also claimed that towards the end of his life he wished to change his position and align with the USSR. A critical biography of Bose is of course not the aim here – but that should involve an examination of his ideological positions and not just the alliances he made. There is no doubt, that he had a mass orientation – but many fascists too had a populist even workerist turn of phrase!

employed in any worthwhile occupation in the foreseeable future. They had thus lost all moorings and hopes. In a sense, they had become lumpenised. Such explosive unemployment is not only the result of the end of a major total war. Generalised crisis with industrial shutdowns and collapses can create massive retrenchment. This may occur in all manufacturing industry or in a sector of paramount importance in a nation or region – particularly in terms of employment. This can also occur in periods when industry undergoes reorganisation. This may be due to sudden and massive technological changes that render a large number of workers across all establishments surplus. It could also occur in instances of deindustrialisation. The loss of hope is also generational. Not only are people rendered unemployed but the next generation too has no hope of gaining any employment. This creates a mass of unemployed, near hopeless, angry, desperate young men (and often women). The fascists draw their youth support from this mass. The unemployment is not limited to the industrial urban sector. Gainful employment in agriculture and related occupations too may decline in such periods.

In Italy and Germany, the economy was sliding out of control. There were no signs of recovery. Life at a day-to-day level had become extremely arduous. Inflation and price rise were forcing the already scarce essential commodities totally out of reach of the common people. Survival was an uphill struggle. There seemed to be no relief in sight. *There was no hope for the common person¹⁰³ and no one held out any.* In fact, the established leadership of the nation showed scant concern for the common person. (Hitler harped on this situation in his speeches before assumption of power and also soon after taking over the reigns of Germany.)¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³The 'common person' here is the retrenched or blocked out worker, the peasant without own land, agricultural labourer who had no employment, and the petty bourgeoisie who saw his/her occupation doomed to extinction! To the classical petty bourgeoisie must be added the white-collar worker experiencing exactly the same pressures.

¹⁰⁴The documentary film **Hitler: A Career** referred to elsewhere in the section has many such snatches of Hitler's speeches at various mass rallies. He refers often to the inflation that had eroded all savings and purchasing power of the common Germans. The film also shows that one Nazi promise was of stability, of an end to political chaos and near anarchy that had characterised the years after the First World War in Germany.

In Italy and Germany, the known organisations of the workers and other exploited sections were essentially forced into defensive tactics despite many militant, sometimes even insurrectionary, struggles.^{105 106}

In similar situations, the cashiered workers and ousted peasants may actually resent the existing trades unions. They may see the trades unions as powerless and unable to protect employment leave alone create new jobs, despite the revolutionary rhetoric. They may see the unions as essentially powerless to force any changes in policy at the economic or political level. Further, they may see the unions as narrowly partisan, only catering to the few who continue to retain jobs. In this light, they may be seen as only protecting the privileges of the already 'privileged' (with employment). They may also be seen as adversaries who do not allow the unemployed to get jobs or at least some benefits. The absence or failure of revolutionary struggles of the working class heightens this resentment.

In Italy and Germany, the rulers faced a crisis of legitimacy. They had failed to prevent the war and worse the deleterious impacts of the war. (In Germany, there was also a deep national humiliation after the defeat and the treaty of Versailles.) The post-war governments were seen as weak and unable to manage the crisis. They did not provide a stable government. They took no decisive measures to resolve the problems faced by the country. They were even unable to repress resolutely the challenge posed by the communists and other revolutionary forces.

¹⁰⁵A serious examination is also necessary to gauge whether the communists and revolutionary socialists have an adequate understanding, even today, of such situations and can forge adequate strategies and tactics to deal with them. Workers' struggles are 'glorious' but unsuccessful in periods of recession when capital cannot or does not make any concessions. The defeats of 'glorious' struggles – and one must also think of the textile workers' strike of 1982 in Mumbai in this context – make good poetry but lead to fascist entrenchment. In a certain sense, the defeat of the workers' struggles in '82 despite (or because of) the extreme militancy led to the communal violence of 1984. This in Mumbai and Maharashtra paved the way for the new lease of life for the fascist politics of the SS actually orchestrated by the RSS. In periods of expansion and 'economic prosperity' the workers seem to gain without any 'glorious' struggles. In these periods with astute leadership, the working class organizations could actually make significant advances, which the media cannot, and for a revolutionary should not, recognise.

¹⁰⁶Is this also a period of possible revolutionary upsurge? That is a question that crops up repeatedly – see for example most of Trotsky's writings. Hindsight may prompt us to say today that these may be upsurges doomed to failure since principally the working class – and not just its party – fails to exercise social leadership and provide a viable vision and path out of the crisis. Actually, this may prompt a very different debate. The working classes, despite the fond and romantic beliefs of the revolutionaries, only attempt to live not change the world or make a revolution. Revolutionaries have often stated that fascism is the choice of last resort for the capitalist. May be they should add that revolution is the choice of last resort for the working class.

Governance was in shambles with no firmness in policies. National security and integrity were perceived to be under threat.

These conditions produced an angry mass – losing its class moorings and associations – in a desperate situation. The anger was also unfocused and unclear. It had no exact target. It was in fact in search of an enemy, a scapegoat.¹⁰⁷

These are peculiar conditions. There are angry masses on the streets disappointed with the political rulers and the economic masters. The

¹⁰⁷This becomes a particularly congenial development for the fascists since fascism as an ideology and philosophy – in so far as it has these features – celebrates enmity and enemy. **Carl Schmitt** wrote an essay 'The Concept of the Political' in 1927 (*Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Vol 58). He later expanded it into a book which became one of the most widely read and quoted political texts in Germany during the Nazi period. Schmitt considered one of the most brilliant political scientists of Germany of that period had a peculiar political career travelling from proximity to Communists in 1919 through Social Democrat, Democrat, Catholic Centrist, German Nationalist, and finally to Nazis. He treats the distinction between friend and enemy as the basic political characteristic. "The specifically political distinction, to which political acts and motivations may be traced back, is the distinction of friend and enemy. It corresponds, in politics, to the relatively independent distinctions in other fields: Good and Evil in morals; Beautiful and Ugly in esthetics; etc. The distinction is independent, i.e., it cannot be deduced from any of these other distinctions, singly or combined. --- The distinction between friend and enemy can subsist, in theory and practice, without applying, at the same time, moral, esthetic, economic, or other distinctions. The political enemy need not be morally evil nor esthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may, in fact be advantageous to do business with him. He is the other, the stranger, and his nature is sufficiently defined if he is, in an intense way, existentially different and strange; in case of conflict, he constitutes the negation of one's own kind of existence, and must therefore be repulsed or fought - - - - what is morally bad, esthetically ugly, or economically harmful, need not be the enemy: - - - - The enemy is, thus, not the competitor or opponent in general. Nor is he the private opponent whom one hates. "Enemy" is only a collectivity of men who eventually, i.e., as a real possibility, will fight against a similar collectivity of people. Enemy is only the public enemy, because everything that relates to such a collectivity, especially a whole nation, becomes public. - - - - The terms "friend", "enemy" and "struggle" obtain their real significance from their relation to the real possibility of physical killing." The text is quoted in William Ebenstein, **Modern Political Thought: The Great Issues**, Second Edition, Indian Edition 1970; Second Indian Reprint 1974; Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Schmitt is of course not the only person to make such assertions. Mussolini himself makes assertions in a similar vein about war and conquest. "Above all, Fascism - - - - believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. It thus repudiates the doctrine of Pacifism – born of a renunciation of the struggle and act of cowardice in the face of sacrifice. War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it. All other trials are substitutes, which never really put men into the position where they have to make the great decision – the alternative of life or death. - - - - This anti-pacifist spirit is carried by Fascism even into the life of the individual: - - - - For Fascism, the growth of empire, that is to say the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality, and its opposite a sign of decadence. Peoples which are rising, or rising again after a period of decadence, are always imperialist; any renunciation is a sign of decay and death." (Benito Mussolini, **The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism**; 1932; English Translation 1933; The Hogarth Press. Excerpt also included in Ebenstein mentioned above.)

working class organisations are either defeated, or weak or seen as incapable of solving the problems. Capital too needs a reorganisation at both economic and social levels. It needs to step up 'investment' – increase accumulation and deny rights of labour – of both the 'standing' and the 'reserve' 'army' of labour. (The 'reserve' army in these conditions far outweighs the 'standing' army of labour.) It needs hence to curtail the possibilities of any uprisings by the proletariat or be able to crush it with impunity if it does occur. The mass of the people – thinking out of the class box – and that does occur when the class organisations become moribund – look for a scapegoat – a convenient 'enemy other' – and support protectionist measures, made all the stronger by a paranoid victim complex. There is also a real or imagined threat to identities and self-esteem in such a situation.

The cashiered workers and the ousted peasants provide the numbers and the street fighters to the fascists. The petty bourgeoisie – lower middle classes – white-collar workers, petty traders, petty entrepreneurs, and sometimes professionals – form the ideologically convinced core.¹⁰⁸ This section also experienced the effects of the crisis. It had no ideological or emotional links with the trade unions or with the revolutionary organisations. In fact, they were deeply suspicious of and antagonistic to the communists and revolutionary socialists. They were nationalists with a fear of the foreigner. They also were troubled the most by the instability and the turmoil that the situation produced. Their ordered conformist lives were most endangered by the fluid and near chaotic situation. One can almost argue that these sections crave repressive stability and prefer it to the chaos of freedom of choices. Their notions of national culture were most disturbed by the rapidly changing situation. They held the uncultured 'hordes' of workers and peasants in contempt and at the same time blamed the 'decadent' capitalists for their attitudes and actions. Towards the upper classes, they had a peculiar mixture of envy and contemptuous resentment. By their class position and their situation, they could identify with the ultra-nationalism, cultural conservatism, xenophobia, and rigid orderliness of the fascists. They craved the restoration of the golden age, and a national rebirth in which they would enjoy their rightful place. They craved their privilege of petty tyranny that democracy had dismantled.

¹⁰⁸ In India, in the case of the RSS, the former are part of the various front organisations while the latter form the core RSS cadre! Here, needless to say, they are predominantly upper caste too. – And of course, all are male though efforts are now made to recruit women through various fronts!

This was the mass (of the demobilised workers, displaced peasants, and frightened petty bourgeoisie) that embraced the fascist cause or supported it. This mass lacked any independent organisations. It had no history of exercise of social weight or political influence. The Left did not recognise this unorganised mass as a distinct stratum of social and political significance. It did not realise that it could be wielded into a powerful and dangerous instrument. The fascists lionised this mass, appealed to it, valorised it, mobilised it. They turned it against the left and against democracy. They gave it a concrete enemy, a dream, and a vision of a future. This mass backed the fascist almost because they alone recognised it as a significant human and social stratum.

There is one more peculiarity of the mass organisation of the fascists. In the initial period, the Fascists in Italy and to some extent the Nazis in Germany drew support from trade union sources too. Particularly the Fascists had a background of syndicalism. It influenced at least the initial somewhat fumbling ideological formulations of the Fascists. It also provided the workerist or populist tone of the early days of Fascism. Soon the trade unions were rendered powerless. They did not remain organisations of class struggle but became instruments of class collaboration to effect national renewal, revival and to achieve national glory. They became elements of the Corporatist reconstruction of the society in which the State (in effect the Fascist party) was to direct, the capitalist to manage and the worker to carry out the tasks for the new state and society. Rights of the workers were to be no longer the concerns of the workers but of the Fascist party and state – in the Germany of the Nazis.¹⁰⁹

The fascists barring the brief initial period organised (or rather mobilised) the masses – who they courted – on non-class lines. In fact, there was a conscious and deliberate effort to oppose and bypass the class organisations. There were student associations, youth

¹⁰⁹The references to these origins and characteristics of fascism are numerous. Any list is bound to leave out some source that someone else may consider critical. A simple way is to refer the reader to the various encyclopedia entries found quite easily on the net. MSN Encarta, Wikipedia, itiscali, Brainy Encyclopedia, Google, Keywords, Columbia Encyclopedia, The Free Dictionary are some of the easier sites that list characteristics and brief history of fascism. There are of course many more books that go into detailed discussions of the organisation, the constituency, and the origins of fascism.

associations, neighbourhood associations, women's associations, leisure associations, nationalist clubs, and other myriad organisations. There was a careful penetration of daily life and of 'civil society'. There were efforts to organise life at the home level and to indoctrinate the very young. There were, however, no class organisations. This is no surprise since a class analysis of the society is not acceptable to fascism.¹¹⁰

Interestingly the fascist forces/ organisations in India share this characteristic. The *Bharatiya Majdoor Sangh* (BMS) is the official trade union related to the *Sangh Parivar* and the BJP. It is generally not considered a militant or significant trade union though it does at times join united actions of the organised workers.¹¹¹ The *Sangh Parivar* or BJP do not even claim significant workers' support (as workers).¹¹² The SS has myriad trade union organisations broadly under the umbrella of the *Bharatiya Kamgar Sena* (BKS) {Indian Workers' Army} known more for inter-union violence, strikebreaking, and extortion than genuine working class actions. There is a plethora of other organisations of both the *Sangh Parivar* and the SS. The notable one amongst them is the white collar workers' organisation of the SS – the *Sthaniya Lokadhikar Samiti* (Local People's Rights Committee) – which is not a trade union but enterprise based organisation to influence the recruitment policy and attempt to ensure some justice to the local people – a 'sons of the soil' stand. The other active mass organisations are the student wings of both outfits. The militancy of the *Sangh Parivar* comes through the overtly communal organisation the *Bajrang Dal* while that of the SS comes from the parent organisation – the *Shiv Sena* – itself. Both, the *Sangh Parivar* and the SS, intervene and operate at the level of day-to-day life and penetrate the civil society in various ways through programmes that seem far removed from politics or ideology. The *Sangh Parivar* is predictably more organised in these efforts and has a network of

¹¹⁰Mussolini, in the text quoted earlier, quite clearly denounces notions of equality of human beings. Approvingly quoting Renan, described as 'one of the inspired pre-Fascists' he says that democracy and egalitarianism are against the plan of nature. He also states that (Fascism) "affirms the immutable, beneficial, and fruitful inequality of mankind".

¹¹¹In fact, the *Sangh Parivar* might have considered the trade union involvement as an afterthought – actually copying the Left.

¹¹²The BJP website <http://www.bjp.org> provides the links to the web information on the RSS and through it to the list of the organisations within the *Sangh Parivar* as well as some information on these organisations. Incidentally, *Sangh Parivar* is not a pejorative sobriquet coined by opponents but a phrase the RSS uses quite proudly to describe its galaxy.

organisations active in fields of education (founding and running schools and other educational institutions with partially independent curricula and readings), health, culture, etc.

It is of course essential to note that fascism, classical and contemporary is by design massbased. It is also necessary to note the exact nature of the mass character. The masses are brought together into varied associations at different levels. These associations are potential nuclei of fascist actions. There are however no self-reliant, self-active, independent, democratic organisations of the masses – not at all on a class basis. The mass character comes from a political need to gather numbers and from an ideological position of populism. Populism may come up with slogans apparently close to the aspirations of the masses and strike anti-establishment postures but is essentially a movement to renegotiate the balance of forces within the factions of the ruling class/ ruling bloc.¹¹³

The mention of mass character can however also be misleading. The fascists are able to attract masses and draw mass support. This does not mean that the character of fascist organisations is mass democratic.¹¹⁴ In fact, the fascist organisations perhaps fall into two categories: the core political organisation and the mass fronts. The core political entity is a stable organisation. It is well knit with a proper structure and a chain of command. As already noted it has a paramilitary structure (or one of a religious order). Its membership is carefully chosen, well indoctrinated for a long time – often since childhood. This organisation consists of regimented obedient reliable cadre. The fronts work with broad masses to achieve one of three effects. One is to create a silent or vocal – but not necessarily very active - support for fascist agenda, organisations, and action. Second is to create a base in the civil society and to win over a large number to the general cause of fascism or to at least render them neutral. Third is to have on call street tough elements for violent actions. The activities of the mass fronts may be sporadic and symbolic. The 'mass' is not necessarily organised, except in a very loose manner. It is

¹¹³A discussion on populism is clearly outside the scope of this writing. See Ernesto Laclau; **Politics & Ideology in Marxist Theory** [B.Q20.L105]; London, 1977 as also **On Populist Reason**; London, 2005 for in depth discussion of populism. Also see Gino Germani; **Authoritarianism, Fascism and National Populism**; Transaction Books, New Jersey; 1978. Also see *Populism as Core of Fascism*; Political Research Associates; Public Eye Organisation at <http://www.publiceye.org>.

¹¹⁴Mussolini in his **Doctrine**, as well as Hitler in **Mein Kampf** [B.Z03.H1] are actually dismissive and contemptuous of the masses. They treat the masses as primitive hordes incapable of any thinking powers. They do not thus believe that masses deserve democracy. Both, in fact, fear that democracy would lead to chaos and disaster.

mobilised when necessary. (Again, it should be clear that these characters are present when the fascists are not in power. If and when the regime and the state turn fascist, the street fighters too may be regimented and organised on paramilitary lines into more or less stable permanent organisations. In fact, the elements from the street fighters who refuse to accept the new reins may be eliminated if inconvenient.) The core cadre determines (or rather communicates) the timing of the violent upsurges, identifies the exact targets, decides the level and extent of the violence, and provides the material wherewithal and sometimes the tactical plans for the actions to the street troops. By itself, it may be incapable of perpetrating the actions, though sometimes it may participate in these or at least seem to lead them. The apparent participation and leadership is essential to ensure that the street troops with their questionable commitment do not get swayed away from the violent actions by any other agencies. There are of course material incentives for the violence – the lure of loot, of rape, of blood letting, of varied ‘socially legitimised perversions’. Reports indicate that this was a clear pattern in the anti-Muslim violence in Mumbai in January 1993 as well as in the Gujarat Carnage of 2002.¹¹⁵

A rising fascist organisation – or one that wishes to gain strength – adopts a dual policy. The approach and address to the masses may be apparently quite contrary to the core beliefs of the organisation. The fascists identify the grievances of the target audience and loudly articulate the same. They also make generous promises to redress the grievances through direct action. The problems lie with the analysis of the causes and the identification of the enemies. These are invariably dishonest and fraudulent. In fact, the blame is laid on the ‘enemy other’ (for capturing more than a justifiable or legitimate share of the ‘national’ resources, wherein justifiable and legitimate are never defined nor rationally defended; the ‘other’ is blamed for laying any claim to them and for challenging the primacy and exclusive privilege of the ‘national folk’). They also blame the government of the day for appeasement of the ‘other’ or for a soft misplaced liberal policy. Often ire is directed against the democratic process and institutions. The fascists popularly cite an international or foreign conspiracy against the ‘national people’. They advocate a strong state, determined remedial measures, limitations of ‘illegitimate’ rights, and military preparedness with ruthlessness of will to

¹¹⁵The now famed book by Suketu Mehta; **Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found** [B.J06.M2]; Vintage 2005; has interesting details of the violence in 1993 in Mumbai along with rather informal interviews with some of the perpetrators of the violence. The descriptions need not be considered accurate in all details but provide some introduction to the killers and rioters. Various reports on the Gujarat Carnage 2002 are available at <http://www.onlinevolunteers.org>.

defend the rights of the ‘national people’. Clearly, they attempt to create a mass support based on simple, often simplistic solutions. Such agenda in some situations finds mass support principally because it is simplistic. It is difficult to understand an invisible and abstract system and to struggle to change it. It is simple street toughie logic to identify an immediate, concrete, visible, and somewhat weaker enemy who can be physically attacked in direct violent street actions. The fascists do not leave the matter at this level of redress of immediate grievances. It is also elevated into a national duty and a nationalist necessity. The promise is not only of slightly higher incomes and more commodities but also of national glory, pride as a people and nationality and of domination of all ‘others’, within and without the national boundaries, ‘competitive’ or ‘enemy’. It is a dream also linked to peculiar interpretations of history, to rejuvenation or rebirth of the nation and the ‘national people’, to recapturing the golden age. The fascists in fact often ridicule obsession with individual material interests. Apparent paradoxes and contradictions in their own statements never faze or embarrass the fascists. Therefore, promising a better life here and now once the ‘enemy other’ is vanquished, the fascists also call for great sacrifices for the sake of national glory. In their obsessive praise of martyrdom and eternal fame through acts of suicidal (and homicidal) valour, the fascists resemble the religious fanatics calling for a religious war to attain glory

¹¹⁶This is not something that just *happens* in fascist movements more or less accidentally. The propaganda and the manipulation of the masses is deliberate and conscious. No one spells it out as clearly as Adolf Hitler does, in his **Mein Kampf** (1925-27) [B.Z03.H1]; available easily on the net. An Indian print published by Embassy Books, Mumbai, 2005 is also readily available – almost at most street corners these days. Hitler says, “Like the woman, whose psychic state is determined less by grounds of abstract reason than by an indefinable emotional longing for a force which will complement her nature, and who, consequently, would rather bow to a strong man than dominate a weakling, likewise the masses love a commander more than a petitioner and feel inwardly more satisfied by a doctrine, tolerating no other beside itself, than by the granting of liberalistic freedom with which, as a rule, they can do little, and are prone to feel that they have been abandoned. - - - - All they see is the ruthless force and brutality of its calculated manifestations, to which they always submit in the end.” Further he states, “All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to. Consequently, the greater the mass it is intended to reach, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be. - - - - Once we understand how necessary it is for propaganda to be adjusted to the broad mass, the following rule results: It is a mistake to make propaganda many-sided, like scientific instruction, for instance.” Hitler, of course, quite cynically talks of telling a lie, a big lie, to the masses, in order to corrupt them and to turn them to the desired (in this case Nazi) side. Goebbels later might have come up with quotable quotes but the basis for propagating lies clearly originates with Hitler himself. Mussolini in his **Doctrine** does not hold any higher opinion of the common people and the masses. Mussolini too insists on race and nation. He also extols reawakening of a race/people/nation that had forgotten its historic role and glory for even centuries. He also sees that the reawakened people will express their glory through a rule over others – through imperial conquests. It is also interesting to note that Hitler’s conception of man-woman relationship is overtly sado-masochistic.

and salvation in the afterlife. It should also be stated that the nationality and nationhood for the fascists is mythical and ethno-centric, even if the common ethnicity has to be invented or imagined.¹¹⁶

The promises of populist reforms, of course, pose problems. The fascists are not capable of delivering any of the promised benefits. The fascists cannot deliver the goods to the dispossessed masses they mobilise in their quest for capture of power, because they do not create a people oriented or people-centric economic system, even if the people are to be narrowly defined in terms of the mythical nationality.¹¹⁷ Some writers have commented that the non-fulfilment of the populist promises sometimes caused problems within the fascist organisations with certain sections insisting that the people's interests be protected with priority. Differences of opinion, particularly over policy matters, are however not tolerated in any fascist organisations. 'Dissidence' is never tolerated. Even trusted activists are consulted at best on local tactics.

The attraction that the fascists hold out for the masses and their technique of mobilisation should be subjects of deeper study than the ones that exist till now. Such studies are necessary not only to understand

¹¹⁷In other words, the fascists do not attack private property. Their economic model is nationalist – directed at ultimately building up the *national war machine*. To achieve even this they need heavy industrialisation and a military-industrial complex. This often demands a change from the earlier economic organisation but of a different kind than the pro-people one that they had promised. The new system needs to enhance – to almost demonic proportions – extraction of surplus value, relative if not absolute; speed up and intensify accumulation to effect heavy investments in war-oriented industries as well as military research and development. None of this can be effected with pro-people economic policies. It is immediately necessary to add two qualifications. One is that employment may actually rise in some cases, with the virtual forced military-industrialisation, particularly given the fact that the corporatist state allows for no independent labour rights. Hitler launched a major project of building highways – the autobahns – as soon as he came to power. Five million people were then unemployed in Germany. The dream at one level that he held out was a totalitarian welfare state. This has also been described as despotism with a human face. Mussolini with his characteristic turn of phrase (in **Doctrine**) describes Fascism as “an organised, centralised, and authoritarian democracy”. (He probably means Republic rather than Democracy in this instance.) Work and bread were combined in the Nazi promise with national honour – an honour even at the cost of peace. The German people felt that the Nazi project overcame unemployment, chaos, and humiliation. The project was also of reconstruction, of creating a national community. An excellent film based on documentary film material from the period brings home the various characteristics of Nazi Germany with telling effect. (**Hitler: A Career** by Joachim C Fest and Christian Herrendoerfer; produced by Interart Filmbeteiligungs-Und Produktions GMBH, Munich; available in India since 2006.) The second is that in specific historical and geo-political situations a fascist state may be able to make economic advances – particularly as a convenient regional sub-imperialist power. In such a case benefits in terms of employment opportunities, social welfare, increased incomes, etc. may be delivered by the state to the mobilised people. The reference here obviously is to Israel – a position that many other nation states may actually covet (while they condemn Israel in words, e.g., Saudi Arabia).

the historical occurrences but also to face contemporary reality. This particular aspect is also somewhat perplexing because as in other facets fascism exhibits some apparent paradoxes and contradictions in the mass activity. It is trite to say that fascists are not democrats. The anti-democratic attitude goes somewhat beyond the processes of formal political democracy. The fascists believe that the masses need to be constantly led and guided. They do not believe in any popular wisdom. Yet classically they exhibit a dependence on masses.¹¹⁸ This paradoxical relationship with the masses has other aspects too. There is contempt at one level for the masses – for the people in general. The fascist leadership showed a strange elitism though it was not of elite or aristocratic extraction. In India, the RSS, till it changed its track nestled in its Brahmin superiority complex and exhibited ill-concealed contempt for the other castes. On the other hand, there is a dependence on the masses – particularly by the top leaders - that mimics populist reliance on the masses.¹¹⁹

The mass appeal is based on simple notions. Hatred of the other, dreams of glory, and promises of rejuvenation of the chosen nation/ race/ people are the elements that are conveyed to the masses. The mobilisation is not based on any complex ideological appeals. It is an active appeal. The fascists rely on ruthless, brutal, violent street actions to attract and to terrorise the population. The fascist message is also carried by the rituals and spectacles of fascist conclaves. The large banners, the celebrations, the disciplined regimented militia like rallies,

¹¹⁸There are two interesting illustrations of this dependence on masses. Bertolt Brecht in **Schweyk in the Second World War** (Brecht, Bertolt; **Collected Plays Vol 7**; Methuen; - plays written in the US between 1942-48) has a character that resembles Hitler. It is a peripheral character that constantly asks the followers to tell him that they love him. In **Escape from Freedom**, Fromm quotes Goebbels to the effect that all self-doubts and vacillations disappear when one is with masses (Erich Fromm, **Escape from Freedom**, Rinehart, New York; 1941; the work is also titled **Fear of Freedom** in the British edition of 1942). Fromm also suggested that the fascists feel powerless and drained when not surrounded by applauding crowds. In the Indian context, too it has been said that leaders like Savarkar and Thackeray did not stand isolation in jails very well, though it is claimed that Savarkar was not broken by the physical hardships of rigorous imprisonment in the infamous cellular jail in the Andamans. The film mentioned in the earlier note also makes the point that Hitler had tireless energy only to address mass rallies – not for routine work. The earlier quotations from Hitler and Mussolini quite eloquently express their low regard – actually contempt – for the masses.

¹¹⁹Thackeray overcomes any and every challenge – even imaginary – to his absolute and uncontested leadership, or even any questioning of his integrity – by threatening to resign and retire from politics. He then always appeals to the **Shiv Sainiks** (rank and file 'members' of the **Shiv Sena**) who characteristically gather in huge hordes at his residence and press him to stay on and eliminate the characters who threaten his leadership.

the observances of particular days all work towards the creation of a fascist political culture. The fascist uniforms, the different drills and salutes of the fascist cadre, the mounting of the processions and rallies, the conversion of existing popular events into fascist celebrations and events are efforts at creation of mass hypnosis or mass hysteria. The Nazi rallies used the darkness of the night, torchlights, and elaborate movements of columns of Nazi cadre to awe the general population. The rallies were always spectacles, very elaborately staged. The arrival of the leadership – particularly of the supreme leader – at the rally was also theatrical. The address by the leader was also dramatic. After the annexation of Austria (March 1938) Hitler went to Vienna and addressed a rally. He opened his speech with the remark, “As German Chancellor and Fuehrer I report to the history of the German people----- “. ¹²⁰ The spectacle combined with the rituals and the street violence were core parts of the operations of the fascists. These were their vehicles to convey their ideology and programme to the masses. ¹²¹

06. ‘Radicalism’ of fascism

Fascism, as a movement and then as a regime, created an upheaval – particularly in Europe. The attention (in many cases with attraction and admiration) was not limited to Europe. The effects were felt in other continents too – America and Asia. The upheaval was not limited to a change in the political rule or regime. It was seen as a momentous social change of profound proportions. The fascists were seen to have undertaken an unprecedented social experiment to create a new type of society, a new regime, and a new man.

The fascists themselves of course thought that they were revolutionaries. Mussolini and Hitler declared that their aim was a revolution – a total revolution that would transform every aspect of life. Of course, Hitler also claimed that the Nazi revolution would be the last revolution Germany would witness – since there would be no need for

¹²⁰Parts of this speech and rally can be seen in the film **Hitler: A Career**.

¹²¹The RSS in many ways has copied this style. The distinctive uniforms, the parades, the salutes, the military style rallies are similar though not as efficient as the classical fascist spectacles. The RSS also tries to stage parades of various kinds around various festivals. The *Vijaya Dashmi* parade is traditional but now even the New Year by Hindu calendar is marked with a parade and street celebrations. SS organises its major rallies as spectacles with floats, gigantic flags, blowing of traditional battle horns, etc. Thackeray’s arrival at the venue and subsequent address is also a carefully choreographed event.

any more revolutions; that was precisely why he declared that the Third Reich would be a “1000 Year Reich”.

Other commentators too have described the fascist project as radical, though with the proviso that it was a radicalism of the right. ¹²² This radical element of fascism needs some examination and discussion since that is to some extent and in some ways responsible for the attraction fascism holds for various elements, as also for its mass appeal. Like most other characteristics of fascism, the radical nature too encompasses contradictory elements.

Unlike most other right wing movements, fascism is not conservative, though it does exhibit some conservative elements.

It is obsessed with rejuvenation and rebirth – not of an earlier regime or social formation but of a nation and nationality. As argued earlier this nation and nationality are imaginary and mythical.

Fascism attempts to create something new – something that does not exist, has never existed. At an immediate level it was and always is a response to existing conditions – conditions that are considered intolerable, demeaning, dehumanising (or rather emasculating), and humiliating. The promise that is held out to the masses in particular is of political stability, political determination – particularly in dealings with the rebellious anti-national elements (read revolutionaries – principally communists but any others as well), the ‘enemy other’, and the oppressing foreign powers. The existing rule according to the fascists was too weak and too spineless to effect the necessary changes. The changes are necessary to bring immediate relief – work, bread, and law-and-order as well as to rejuvenate the nation and the national people. Imagery of past regimes – mythical or ancient historical - may be used to hold up an example and to claim lineage with legitimacy, but what is advocated is a new regime, a new system of rule. Italy evoked the images of the Roman Empire and its primacy in the world as natural rulers as well as a great civilisation. Germany did not have similar historical example of global domination political, military, or cultural. Nevertheless, the Nazis did evoke images of capable emperors and generals (Emperor Frederick Barbarosa, for example). These images are

¹²²Talcot Parsons describes it as radicalism of the right. Griffin goes further and calls it a revolution from the right. (Both works have been mentioned earlier. Parsons used this characterisation in 1942 when fascism was peaking though caught in a devastating war; Griffin’s article is of 2000.)

purely symbolic and evocative. There is no effort to restore those particular regimes.

The fascists advocate, seek, and attempt a change. The content of the change is quite peculiarly radical. It is a severe restriction if not eradication of democracy. Mussolini was quite explicit in his **Doctrine** in the condemnation of democracy. He said that the majority cannot govern with wisdom merely because it is a majority. Numbers do not decide the desirability of a system of rule. He emphasised the inequality of human beings and insisted that masses through periodic consultations cannot come to the right conclusions. He went further and attacked the concept of the wisdom of any collectivity and its capacity to govern. The fascists are not opposed to a republic. Only in a republic can they advance any legitimate claim to their own right to rule. The opposition is to democracy and the limits democratic institutions, processes, and norms impose on their authoritarianism. The attack on democracy finds a receptive cord in the general population only in certain situations. Devaluation of the legislature is the prime condition that fosters anti-democratic sentiments. The inability of the legislature to meaningfully deliberate issues of vital concern to the people, to take decisions, to govern, to control and command the bureaucracy and other organs of the state machinery erodes the legitimacy of the legislature as well as of the electoral process that gives rise to such legislatures. The fascists capitalise on the erosion of faith in the legislative institutions and processes to attack democracy itself. It is also interesting to note that the fascists came to power in Germany and Italy not by gaining an absolute majority of seats or votes but through kind of parliamentary coups.¹²³ Hitler saw himself as the saviour of a world on the brink of disaster – the chosen leader who stood alone burdened by greatness, says the documentary film mentioned earlier.

There are other elements to the radicalism of fascism. One of them is the organisation of the economy. As mentioned earlier, fascism believes in private property. The doctrine of private property and private entrepreneurship is quite in keeping with the social Darwinism fascism adopts as a key concept. The markets however do not get a total free play under fascism. The markets operate and are arenas for realisation of surplus. They do not however determine the structure of the economy,

¹²³Ebenstein in his introduction to the section on fascism (titled *Fascism: Government by Force and Lies* in **Modern Political Thought: The Great Issues**, mentioned earlier) characterises fascism as a post-democratic phenomenon and a reaction to democracy.

the investment patterns, or the production priorities. All available literature (cited earlier) suggests that the capitalists garner profits but do not have a decisive say in determining investment or production. This right is reserved by the state. There is no unanimity amongst scholars about the nature of fascist economic thought or even about its existence.¹²⁴ It is clear, however, that the state – in Mussolini's thoughts the supreme human institution with almost supra-human attributes and capacities – is in control of the economy. In the corporatist (or corporativist) model of economy, the state makes the overall policy decisions about sectors of economy and enterprises, the capitalists manage the particular enterprises and are entitled to the profits, while the workers through their state-controlled organisations maximise productivity and efficiency. This was a radical step. State intervention or control of the economy was not then an accepted practice. The only country to have practiced it was the USSR, which had eradicated private ownership of enterprise and capitalism. Mussolini's pattern of state control of economy and direction of economic activity predates Roosevelt's New Deal. Notions of regulation of markets, state supervision of economy, central planning at that time were unacceptable concepts outside the USSR. Total freedom to capital, individual capitalists and firms was the norm. In fact, in the USA the New Deal was termed a fascist step by advocates of total freedom to enterprises and markets, despite the recent experience of the crisis. On the other hand it is also suggested that President F D Roosevelt was enamoured by Mussolini's somewhat successful efforts to regulate and direct the economy through the medium of the state, to control the chaos of the markets, to tackle unemployment, and to discipline labour.

The fascists were also radical in their elimination of the unions, of all other independent organisations of the working class as well as other sections of the society. They brought the entire society under the control of the state and the fascist party. This also endeared them – at least for a period – to capitalists all over the world. The capitalists saw fascism as an effective way of dealing with the threat of communism and

¹²⁴A very useful survey despite the ideological sideswipes it takes is The '*Political Economy of Fascism: Myth or Reality or Myth and Reality*' by David Baker. This is titled a 'work in progress' and is a paper presented to the Political Economy Research Centre (PERC) Research Seminar on March 10, 2005 at University of Sheffield. The author prohibits quotations from the paper since it is a work in progress though the paper is/was available on the internet. (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/~perc/sems/bakerpaper.pdf>)

proletarian revolution in the long term and labour 'indiscipline' and 'blackmail' immediately.

There was perhaps one more aspect to this. The severe crisis of 1929 had shaken capitalism to its very foundations – and that too in the strongest and most successful capitalist countries. This had also jolted capitalist ideology. Attraction for socialist thought – particularly its critique of capitalism, and admiration for the Soviet Union had increased in some sections of the society. (In the US the period has been referred to as the Pink 30s. Many prominent literary, artistic, and intellectual figures exhibited receptive fondness for leftist thought in this period.) Those opposed to the socialist vision probably thought the liberal formulations were insufficient to counter the ideological offensive of the left. In fascism they perhaps found a strong enough opponent of socialism with the added advantage that the fascists were capable of meeting the socialist challenge in the streets (through violent confrontations) without always relying on the forces of the state to do the job.¹²⁵

The radicalism of fascism was not merely instrumental, institutional. The fascists wanted to create a new society, a new community, and a new man. The fascists sought to create a new community of people, of new people. Hitler saw the new people as people with determination, no longer ashamed, no longer plagued by degradation, weakness, loss of faith, but a people strong once again. The fascists attempted to create a national community with which the individual would merge completely and become a new person. The new person would overcome degeneracy; would be lean, lithe, swift, and hard as steel.¹²⁶

The other crucial radical element is of course the concept of the nation – the mythical nation. This nation that was being born was almost a divine entity. It was more than its nationals; it was not just a collectivity of its citizens. It had a life of its own, a will of its own.

The fascists are also radical in their conception of culture. This embraces their notions of time that becomes mythical and historical-magical, of space that is enslaved and yet overawes through grandiose

¹²⁵In the late '60s and early '70s many otherwise liberal persons were attracted to the *Shiv Sena* because it seemed a force capable of fighting the communists in the streets. This was perhaps one reason of the electoral alliance of the *Praja Socialist Party* (PSP) with the SS.

¹²⁶The documentary film **Hitler: A Career** referred to earlier has many excerpts of speeches by Hitler as well as other Nazi material that advocates these goals.

loftiness, of daily cultural practices that become hierarchical and the formal expressions in art and architecture. The imaginary, resurrected, purified, or recreated cultural practices of the genuine nationals become privileged over all others. Other practices are considered depraved, degenerate, or perverse. Obviously, freedom of expression has no place in such an atmosphere. All art becomes grandiloquent, designed to dwarf individuals and to overawe them. It becomes a spectacle. The fascist spectacle has a strong component of the (imaginary) historical-magical. It is mystical. It also built up cults of blood, darkness, and fire. In Italy, and to some extent in Germany, it copied Caesarean spectacles and evoked occult powers.

The fascist did not limit their activities to ideological sermons about these ideas. They tried to put these into practice, however crudely. In fact, the fascist relied far more on activity – continuous directed activity that was not critical or reflexive but almost thought-numbing. The glorification of physical culture and creation of athletic strong bodies through strenuous exercise and activity that was also organised at a collective mass level was an important component. The very materiality of the physical activity with its physiological impacts also limited thought. At another level the fascists organised numerous group activities which combined the physical activity and collective spectacles. They also intervened in the civil society – in all aspects of life – from providing help to members and supporters in petty matters to organising some services that were beyond their reach. There was a heavy concentration of attention on children and youth in both Italy and Germany. The effort was to organise their leisure time, to make them socially responsible, and to indoctrinate them – in love for the ethnic and ethno-centric nation, hatred for the enemy other, and glorification of violence. The fascists also organised – despite their essentially sexist, patriarchal, and male chauvinist views, the women, and in particular the young women. The RSS in India has copied all these activities and even extended some. The Sangh Parivar has penetrated the Adivasis as a social group with careful planning and design. It has also stabilised its presence in the educational (particularly primary and middle level also in the villages) and health service sectors. In a way the fascists attempted an ideological struggle and domination in the 'molecular' form in the Gramscian sense.

A strange radical element of fascism is its opposition to reason.

Rationality of any kind becomes an anathema to fascism. Liberalism, tolerance, universal humanity, notions of equality are also similarly rejected. The radicalism of fascism has this strange character. The fascists do seek to restructure polity, economy, social relations, cultural life, individual relationships, even the anatomy and physiology of the human being. They do it in the directions discussed above. This radicalism too can create a hypnotic mass hysteria, and mass adulation. The two leaders of the classical fascist states – Mussolini and Hitler – were also charismatic personalities. They embodied the strong patriarchal leader who would think for the masses and direct them. The cult of the leader was easier to build given their presence and personal direction of all aspects of the fascist organisation and regime. It may not however be correct to state that fascism requires charismatic leadership in all situations. The more or less abstract leadership of the organisation itself can play the role of the supreme leader even as a council.