

Integrating Whose Nation? Tourists and Terrorists in 'Roja'

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How? China today is *not* a member of the GATT, though China is seeking membership of the GATT, the IMF and the World Bank, for its own reasons. China is in an economically strong position. Moreover, the Chinese economy, to the extent its politics is controlled by one party and its distribution system is partly in the hands of the state, can get away with lots of economic regulation contrary to the GATT. Public distribution of food or of drugs is a case in point. India—an open society—cannot get away with the sort of authority that the Chinese government wields, and is likely to continue to wield.

More particularly, what great harm can come to India if we fail to ratify the GATT agreement insofar as TRIPS is concerned? The *only* area where sanctions can hurt India pertain to oil imports. The GATT, or the MTO, has *no* control over the oil trade. We can always have bilateral trade, import oil, export whatever the oil exporters need. Indeed, even the developed countries are unlikely to worry over much about trading with us, GATT or no GATT.

What else can be done? We need to promote greater 'regional co-operation'. For that, we need to first start with the SAARC countries, for which a first step would be the normalisation of relations with Pakistan. One prerequisite to *that* would be the grant of a substantial measure of local self-government to the Kashmiris, under the extant J and K Panchayati Raj Act. We can thereafter extend this (regional) co-operation to the Indian Ocean, including both African and east Asian countries (like Malaysia, Indonesia).

For this extended co-operation, we would need to make certain sacrifices. Again, as a first step, we need to 'protect' (via tariff) our growers of vegetable oils and natural rubber; but once the level of protection has been determined (by, say, the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices), we should open up our frontiers to the import of vegetable oils and rubber from the neighbouring countries. That, incidentally, makes lots more sense than opening our borders to the import of expensive capital goods (like power generating equipment, against foreign capital).

This is something our parliament must try to understand. The government has systematically scuttled the idea of a JPC to discuss the provisions of the GATT. Parliament should now *insist* on a JPC to go into all the ramifications of the four separate treaties, before agreeing to the ratification of the GATT, before knuckling down to pressure for amending the Indian Patents Act.

Would the Indian parliament rise above petty squabbles on non-issues, and finally emerge as a defender of the economic sovereignty of the country? One has to wait and see, the defection of part of the Janata Dal notwithstanding.

Integrating Whose Nation? Tourists and Terrorists in 'Roja'

Tejaswini Niranjana

The claiming of the nation by the new middle class and the series of exclusions (of dalits, of Muslims) it produces as natural feeds into the agenda of Hindutva. The portrayal of 'mainstream' and non-exceptional characters in commercial cinema provides one point of access to this complex configuration.

JANUARY 1993. A cinema hall in Hyderabad. The Telugu version of Maniratnam's film *Roja* is being shown. Every show displays the 'house full' board, and every seat in the theatre is occupied. From the opening minutes of the film, the morning show audience (mostly male, middle and lower-middle class, possibly college-going) indulges in loud cheering and shouting, their slogans calculated to strike a special chord after the destruction of the Babri masjid just a few weeks previously: Jai Sri Ram, Pakistan Murdabad, Bharat Mata ki Jai.

November 1993. Another cinema hall in Hyderabad. *Roja*, which has won the National Integration Award, is showing in its dubbed Hindi version. The house full board has been put up. The dress circle audience is more restrained now, although there is seemingly spontaneous and sustained clapping on several occasions throughout the film, which is now billed as "a patriotic love story". Perhaps it is entirely a coincidence that the Hindi version has been released just after the Hazratbal siege, during the parliamentary elections in the northern states, and just before the first anniversary of the Babri masjid's demolition.

This is surely a phenomenon—a box-office hit (in urban markets, at least) film that evokes from its audience not whistles and comments on the heroine but displays of 'nationalistic' fervour. The response is enabled in part by identifying the nation with the heroine, who is then alternately motherland and lover/devoted wife.¹ It is also enabled by the imaging of the really modern (read secular) as the truly Indian, an imaging which presents the middle class Indian male not as someone we want to emulate but someone who *is* us. The sighs of admiration invoked by some of the hero's actions (as in the scenes with the militants), which are 'realistic' rather than superhumanly heroic, seem actually to be satisfactory sighs of self-recognition. Not so much "We won't be able to do what he did" but a righteous "We would do

exactly the same thing under those circumstances".

In quite a few of his films (*Geetanjali*, *Anjali*, *Mouna Raagam*), Maniratnam has cultivated an audience primarily composed of the newly articulate, assertive and self-confident middle class that is also claiming for itself the spaces of nation and secularism premised on Hindutva.² What are the complexities of the mode of cinematic realism adopted by Maniratnam with the aspirations of this newly visible class?³ It is a realism that has for its immediate ancestors, the middle-brow Hindi films of the 1970s. But whereas the 70s film (*Rajnigandha*, *Guddi*, etc) presented wistful and affectionate pictures of middle class relationships (no grand passions, no melodrama), *Roja* deploys the mode very differently. The 'ordinary' middle class person is suddenly inserted into a national conflict, and what helps him/her is just being who they are: simple, decent, patriotic people who successfully appeal to the 'human' in both militants and army officers. Maniratnam's films are also different from another kind of middle-brow film, an example of which would be Saeed Mirza's *Albert Pinto ko Gussa Kyoon Aata Hai*, where the (lower) middle class protagonists are often portrayed as initiating or participating in some kind of social critique of existing inequalities. Maniratnam's middle class characters are unapologetic in every way, and the films celebrate rather than criticise their life-styles and aspirations.

HINDU AS SECULAR

The celebration of the 'new' middle class (and here our texts could range from commercial cinema to the pronouncements of the proponents of liberalisation) has as a focal point the question of national integration. As the Hindutva forces reoccupy the discourses of liberal humanism in India, an anti-colonial bourgeois nationalist project is refigured and the secular subject is reconstituted. The project is now one that bestows citizenship on the Hindu *as Hindu*,

the supposed 'tolerance of Hinduism' allowing it to function as 'truly secular'; in the demarcation of this new space of the secular, the 'communal Muslim' is defined through a process of exclusion.⁴ What everyone is now being urged to integrate into is the hegemonic Hindu nation, and all the groups which are out of the 'mainstream' are said to engage in violent activity intended to destroy the nation—the common project, as the media would have it, of the Kashmiri militants, Khalistanis, ULFA, PWG, LTTE and others, a project in which it is claimed that these groups actually work together. The hegemonic definition of the nation today may not overtly manifest itself as Hindu; I would like to contend, however, that the claiming of the nation by the new middle class and the series of exclusions (of dalits, of Muslims) it produces as *natural* feeds into the agenda of the forces of Hindutva, and that the portrayal of 'mainstream' and non-exceptional characters in commercial cinema provides one point of access to this complex configuration.

Appropriately for what it sets out to do, *Roja* has two beginnings.⁵ One shows the Kashmiri militant Wasim Khan being captured by Indian army soldiers after a fierce gun-battle and a chase; in the haunting soundtrack another theme is picked up: beauty of nature, as in birdsong, fading into gunshots, and followed by a generic middle eastern—read Islamic—keening. The other opening sequence depicts, with an eye straight out of *National Geographic*, the waterfalls and coves and shining green fields of the village of Sunder Bhanpur (somewhere in India), with the heroine *Roja* singing and romping through the landscape. In this rapidly-presented sequence—its slickness that of a TV commercial—we see *Roja*, sometimes with her youngest sister, driving a tractor (for fun, since they do not 'work'), playing pranks on the older villagers, dressing up in men's clothes, wearing a graduate's convocation robes, and dancing through a field where women are transplanting seedlings (as in other Maniratnam films, actual labour serves as a backdrop that enhances the light-heartedness of the heroine). Then we see her and the other girl driving a flock of goats down a hill (not work, but play again) and across the road to block the vehicle of the hero and his mother so that he can be scrutinised before he enters the village. As I had argued in an earlier article on Maniratnam's *Geetanjali*, his heroines appear to be uninhibited, high-spirited, self-assertive, never at a loss for words. These are women whom in a certain sense feminism has made articulate, but they are recuperated into the very spectacularisation that feminism would like to challenge.⁶ Interestingly also, *Roja*'s high spirits, like *Geetanjali*'s, seem to be made possible by the exemption of the heroines from 'real work'.⁷

Rishi Kumar, the urbane hero, has come to 'see' *Roja*'s sister, since he wants to marry 'a girl from a village'. Not only that, he would like his bride to be from the beautiful village with which he has fallen in love ('I love the very soil of this place', as he says later). But clearly he will not marry just anyone—when the match with *Roja*'s sister falls through because she wants to marry someone else, he turns immediately to *Roja*, whom he has glimpsed twice up to then. *Roja* addresses her father as daddy, has a television set at home, is accustomed to talking on the telephone; except that she does not know English, she is quite at ease in urban surroundings, adapting without difficulty to *Rishi*'s upper middle class home and milieu. *Roja* is not therefore in the genre of the 'village-belle' of Hindi and other regional cinema. Her old world and her new one are in an almost seamless continuum rather than opposed to each other. Given the rapid urbanisation of the rural upper class/castes, English is no longer a sufficient marker of cultural difference or even a marker of non-Indianness. Instead, 'English' can be acquired through the training in consumerism; what is more curious, English is closely associated not with the non-Indian but that which is not only assertively Indian but clearly nationalist: as indicated by the words which signify *Rishi*'s profession and his daily activity, a point to which I will return.

NEO-TRADITIONALISM

What the village stands for in *Rishi*'s eyes is clearly a newly formulated traditionalism: the 'ethnic' wedding (so much unlike the hotel or function-hall reception now seen as so tasteless by the upper middle class), the colourful clothes of the old women who dance for the couple, or the sexual frankness of the 'rustic' wedding song (which is sung in playback partly by the rap musician Baba Sehgal). All this ethnicity is not at variance with *Rishi*'s cosmopolitan modernness; on the contrary it helps strengthen its self-confidence. Except for the dhoti-kurta of his wedding day, *Rishi* usually appears only in jeans and shirt or sweater. On the other hand, the Kashmiri militants always appear in clothes marked as ethnically Muslim; their ethnicity reveals them as anti-modern (therefore anti-national or anti-Indian), intolerant and fundamentalist, while Hindu ethnicity as displayed by the chief protagonists is merely part of the complexity of being Indian. The Hindu wedding rites are normalised so that we do not even notice them or mark them as 'religious', just as we do not really see *Roja*'s frequent attempts to pray to her idols as significant to the story. The militants, especially *Rishi*'s main captor Liaqat, however, are always shown praying—an action shored up by intercutting and by the soundtrack in

such a way as to make it seem not only an assertion of religious difference but a menacing or sinister portent. Whereas their religiosity is always portrayed as grim and humourless, *Roja*'s prayers are funny and endearing, inviting the audience to identify with her hopes and anxieties.

Rishi's occupation is 'cryptologist', a word uttered in English and left unexplained, until he tells *Roja* in passing that she should get 'security clearance' since he deals with 'confidential matters' involving 'coding and decoding' (all these phrases uttered in English). *Rishi* is shown a few times in front of a computer monitor and keyboard, ostensibly working on decoding a message. His work, directly related to the security interests of the country, is presented to us as truly nationalist; and, interestingly, his nationalism is not anti-western but (although never stated) is anti-Muslim. When *Rishi*'s boss who is supposed to go to Kashmir to help the army falls seriously ill, he asks *Rishi* to take his place. His 'You don't mind going, do you?' is answered by *Rishi*'s 'Of course, not. I'll go anywhere in India. Isn't Kashmir in India'? (Loud audience applause.) *Roja* insists on accompanying her new husband, although she has initially rejected all his advances due to a misunderstanding. So like many earlier Hindi film honeymooners, they arrive in 'Kashmir'. But to an official welcome, to be put up in a five-star hotel where there are obviously no other guests. As they are driven through deserted streets, *Roja* asks why the town looks so empty and *Rishi* merely answers 'curfew'. When asked why there should be curfew, he uses a favourite word: 'security'. No other explanation is necessary or even expected, either by the plot, the heroine, or the audience. Hardly any ordinary Kashmiris are shown in the film, except for a newspaper boy and some people selling souvenirs. In two fantasy/song sequences, we do see Kashmiris—either women or children dressed in elaborate costumes. All the other Kashmiris (with one exception) are militants, and male.

The romantic song-sequence—snow-capped mountains, placid lake, green fields—functions as a double allusion: an allusion to loss, evoking previous Hindi films set in Kashmir (the industry now being deprived of a locale that could be used in any film to create instant magic); and indicating to the middle-class tourists from other parts of India that they can no longer visit Kashmir, a place of ravishing natural beauty—as the camera insistently points out—that should be rightfully 'ours' but has now been made inaccessible by the activity of anti-nationals. A person like *Roja* who is visiting Kashmir only because she is married to *Rishi* cannot freely look around like the tourists could. As the palmist-guide Chachchu Maharaj says: '*Tum tourist hoya terrorist ho*'? adding himself that only ter-

rorists come here now. When Roja breaks open a coconut as offering to the temple idol, the sharp sound brings security guards running. Roja's comment is telling: "Can't even break a coconut in Kashmir"

Coming in search of Roja, the hero is kidnapped by the militants who have been following him, and who demand in exchange for his release their captured leader Wasim Khan. Roja has already gone to the police along with Chachchu the palmist, to report that 'raakshas jaise aadmi' took away her husband, who is a *deshpremi*. The aid of the state is invoked for the 'good citizen' against the militant 'demons'. Roja although all she demands is her husband's return ('I don't care about the country'), is patriotic by implication, through her representation of both Rishi and the militants. As she screams at the army officer who is in charge of the case when she hears that Wasim Khan is not to be released, "Would you say the same thing if a 'mantri ki beti' had been taken hostage? Is a mantri ki beti more important than my husband"? The audience is appreciative of the allusion to recent history, for was not the minister concerned both Kashmiri as well as Muslim whereas the 'Indian' Roja and Rishi are neither?

REJECTION OF THE STATE

Rishi's patriotism is driven home through two dramatic acts performed by him in captivity. First, when his captors want him to speak into a tape recorder and ask for the release of Wasim Khan, all he says into the machine is a firm "Jai Hind". Even after repeated blows which leave his face bleeding, he continues to say the phrase over and over again, making the audience cheer aloud. When the news arrives that the government has refused to release their leader, one of the militants picks up an Indian flag and rushes outside holding a flaming torch, with which he sets fire to the flag. Rishi leaps through a window, shattering a glass pane, knocks over the militant, and throws his body onto the burning flag, driving the audience delirious. Having put out the fire, Rishi rises to his feet, partially aflame. In his jeans and sweater, with the flames licking his clothes, he looks uncannily like the full-colour pictures with which the media glorified the upper-caste/class anti-Mandal agitators in 1990, agitators who claimed that they were truly secular because they did not believe in caste but only in merit. Whereas in the anti-Mandal agitation, caste-difference was coded as lack of merit, in *Roja* religious or ethnic difference (specifically Islamic) is portrayed not only as anti-national but as lack of humanity. It is the burden of the film to create the convergences between the *human*, the *secular* and the *nationalist*. As Rishi 'burns', the soundtrack rises to a crescendo, the words (from a poem by the nationalist writer Subrahmanya Bharati)

blending into a triumphant chant. Throughout this sequence intercut shots show the militant leader Liaqat deep in prayer inside the building, unconcerned about the struggle over the burning flag outside.

Another mark of Rishi's patriotism is his effort to convince the militants that their activities are misguided. In a series of conversations with Liaqat, he elicits the true cause of the militants: "*Yeh jihaad hai, Kashmir ki azaadi ke liye*", he is told. Much later, Liaqat again declares to him: "*Jihaad—holy war hai—Hindustan ke saath*". Not only do 'they' not use the secular name 'India', they also constantly invoke the name of god and religion in support of their actions. "If you try to escape", says Liaqat, "I'll kill you, *khuda ki kasam*".

At the end, however, Rishi does escape, with the help of Liaqat's sister (mute throughout the film, but always depicted as shocked/weeping/distressed at the militant's rough treatment of their captive, and at the death of her youngest brother).⁸ In spite of Roja's determined appeals to the army and to the minister who arranges to have Wasim Khan released, the exchange of prisoners does not take place, and Rishi although he is an employee of the state, does not depend on the state for regaining his liberty. Roja pleads with the minister who is inspecting the army in Kashmir: My husband is not a big man, but "*Bharat ki praja to hai*", and we need security. The middle class, in claiming its complete identification with the nation, has to demonstrate that demands made on the state are not met. The new class has to show its self-reliance instead, for the state apparatus is outworn, out of date, however large and impressive it may seem. This middle class imperative to detach itself from the state to mark its coming to maturity can also be seen as a rejection of the Nehruvian state which had been compelled to write into its policies a vision of democracy and egalitarian socialism.⁹ Among the consequences of these failed policies, the middle class would argue, is the situation in Kashmir, which can no longer be dealt with by the state but only by individuals like Rishi who has shaken Liaqat enough to let him go even when the militant has a rifle trained on him. Liaqat is shown to have been made *human*, through suffering and through Rishi's goodness (i.e. patriotism). Go, he says, "*ugravaadi aansu ponchega*". Rishi's patriotism, I would contend, is not state-centred; in fact, the state in this film is one that has failed in all respects—it cannot defeat the militants, cannot rescue its employee, a failure that can be made to justify a middle class rejection of it in favour of liberalisation and free enterprise.

And what of Roja? In spite of the film bearing her name, the central character is clearly the cryptologist Rishi Kumar. But Roja is integral to Rishi's vision of love for

the nation. In the song "*Roja jaaneman*", for instance, in Rishi's reverie the rose (red/green) he sees outside his cell merges into the figure of his bride (who is especially towards the end of the film dressed in green sari/red or saffron blouse or red sari/green blouse. In turn the beauty of the Kashmiri landscape blends into the physical beauty of the heroine, who appears in this particular song-sequence dressed in Kashmiri clothes and jewellery, followed by little children also wearing Kashmiri dress. The early autonomy and assertiveness shown by Roja before marriage all but disappears in the sober woman who attempts to win back her husband's life, and whose agency actually comes to naught. Rishi appears to have chosen well: his bride has enough English to understand his "I love you" and enough domestic skills to make *malai ke laddu* for his boss. 'Modernity' and 'tradition' come together unproblematically in/for the authentically secular new middle class (Hindu) subject who—marked as 'Indian'—has transcended communal difference just as s/he transcended caste, reserving the isolated second term 'tradition' for those who can then only be fundamentalist, communalist or casteist.¹⁰

Notes

[Thanks to K Srilata, Anita Cherian and Rekha Pappu for discussing with me their impressions of the film, and to Satish Deshpande and Mary John for their comments on an earlier draft.]

- 1 In earlier films such as Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* the identification was sought differently. Imaging the heroine as mother and as nation seemed to remove her from the realm of sexuality; this is not true of *Roja*, where the axis is lover-nation rather than mother-nation.
- 2 Interestingly, G Venkateswaran, the film producer who is credited with the success of Maniratnam and who is the producer not only of *Roja* but also of earlier Maniratnam hits like *Nayakan*, *Anjali* and *Mouna Raagam*, was the promoter for the cancelled Michael Jackson shows in New Delhi which were supposed to have been held on December 8 and 10, 1993, in which he had invested over a crore of rupees. See report in *Indian Express*, November 28, 1993. As I try to argue in this paper, nationalism is not predicated on anti-western sentiment.
- 3 As pointed out by Rajeev Velicheti ('Women, Violence and Telengana in Contemporary Telugu Cinema', presented at the Anveshi/Subaltern Studies Conference on Subalternity and Culture, January 1993) and Madhava Prasad (*Roja: Loving the State*, unpublished paper), Maniratnam's audience has come to expect technical finesse from his films, especially the 'aural and visual verisimilitude' which we had long associated with the 'English' film (Madhava Prasad).
- 4 For a more comprehensive discussion of some of these ideas, see Susie Tharu and Tejaswini Niranjana, 'Problems for a Contemporary Theory of Gender' (forthcoming in *Social Scientist*).

- 5 The parallel narrative effectively sets out the oppositions—the grim, grey, inhuman world of the militants (always dressed in brown, grey and black) and the joyous life-affirming world of Rishi and Roja (imaged in bright colours or pastel shades: red, green, blue, saffron, or white, lemon, pink).
- 6 See my 'Cinema, Femininity and the Economy of Consumption', *EPW* XXVI:43 (1991).
- 7 Clearly, earlier commercial cinema also portrayed frolicking heroines exempt from the compulsions of the everyday world. What I'm trying to mark here is the difference in Maniratnam's young women, given the *realism* of the film's narrative style which distances it from dominant Indian commercial cinema, and which makes the women both 'real' and 'natural'.
- 8 No other woman is shown among the militants. The Kashmiri Muslim woman must renounce the militants in order to claim both

- 'humanity' and 'Indianness', more easily available to her, the film suggests, because of the intrinsic qualities of her gender. Perhaps this is tied to the reproductive politics of communalism, which allows for the 'redemption' of the Muslim woman who can bear a child to a Hindu.
- 9 My argument, therefore, differs substantially from that of Madhava Prasad, who asserts that the viewer of *Roja* is induced to adopt the point of view of the state.
- 10 The Hindi version of the film flattens out and clarifies some of the ambiguity of the Tamil and Telugu versions. Obviously, the question of 'patriotism' would be attached to very different debates in the context of Tamil Nadu politics. When the film was released in 1992 in Tamil Nadu, many people are supposed to have seen it as an exorcism of the collective guilt felt by Tamilians over Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in Sriperumbudur the previous year.

Haripura no menfolk were in sight in these villages.

II

Valia taluk has nearly 80 per cent Vasava tribal population. The remaining 20 per cent is composed of Rajputs, Patidars and Rajput Muslims known as Molesalaam Garasias. In terms of resource distribution, these 20 per cent have roughly 80 per cent of the land and the 80 per cent tribals have just 20 per cent of it.

Prior to Independence, Valia was part of Rajpipla princely state. It had thick forests and was inhabited by adivasis. Under the guidance of the British, the prince of Rajpipla had begun selling forests and land to non-adivasis in order to enhance his income. Adivasis who lived on forest products lost them as the forests were cut down. The land cleared of forests came under private/personal ownership. The concept of land changed and the adivasis were gradually reduced to being agricultural labourers, totally dependent on the non-adivasi landowners.

After Independence, the government introduced the 'land to the tiller' law. This law had very little beneficial effect on the adivasis. 30,000 acres of land around Rajpipla was declared *ex parte*. Thus there arose in the former Rajpipla state a nexus of non-adivasi landlords, forest contractors and the politicians. These three began bleeding the adivasis. The only source of livelihood for the adivasis was agricultural labour. They were forced to give free labour, were insulted, beaten and exploited.

The adivasi land could not be alienated by sale to non-adivasis and even to sell it to adivasis prior permission had to be obtained. However, this law came too late. Secondly, only the government could acquire adivasi lands which it did rapaciously. 6,000 acres of land was cordoned off for industrial purposes. The adivasis were thrown out of the government-acquired area with little or no compensation.

There have been some efforts on the part of politicians to channelise the disgruntlement among the adivasis. Indubhai Yagnik of Kisan Sabha had protested in 1948-49 against the *ex parte* judgment mentioned earlier. Among the adivasis there were two types of leaders. One, the tribal elite who looked for their own upward mobility by being brokers between the non-adivasi and adivasis. These leaders were not interested in the wider cause of the adivasis. They sided more with the non-adivasi contractors and bureaucrats. They sided with the non-adivasis in order to exploit the adivasis even more. Their ambition was to acquire a bungalow, land, maruti, education and job. The second type of leadership was of those few who rose from time to time to fight against the exploitation of the adivasis. These leaders fought for minimum wages for agricultural labourers and protested against the government take-over of the adivasi land for

Suppression of Valia Tribals

Lancy Lobo

In Valia taluk of Bharuch district, the tribals are caught between the police, powerful landlords who employ hired goondas and politicians who co-opt the tribal leadership.

I

ON May 28, 1993 17 vehicles with about 150 police personnel came thundering to a sleepy village, Maljipura, in Valia taluk of Bharuch district. Along with them were three other vehicles full of civilians. Maljipura has 35 households (all Vasava tribals) with around 200 people. The houses of three brothers were surrounded by the police with their guns pointed at the houses. "Chhotia come out, you are dead", shouted one of the civilians. A police official hurled a series of abusive words. After some time Bhimsingh, Chhotubhai's brother, aged 32, came out offering his hand in greeting to the DIG. Bhimsingh who had studied law and was taluk panchayat president was not an ordinary tribal. Instead of a hand, what Bhimsingh got was a butt of the gun on his shoulders. "Where is Chhotia?" (Chhotubhai is the sitting MLA of Janata Dal.) Bhimsingh said that Chhotubhai was away from home for days. Even before he completed his sentence, Bhimsingh received some vicious kicks. He was pushed aside and five policemen with rifles entered his house, pushed everyone out of the house, vandalised the furniture, radio, tape recorder and utensils. Not finding Chhotubhai, they insulted his wife Shantaben. Bhimsingh's wife, an educated woman, not able to tolerate this police brutality against her husband spoke out: "We are not thieves or dacoits..." As she was speaking, she was hit with lathis. Her daughter Ela was the next target. They held her hands at her back and tore her blouse. Then they caught the workers of Chhotubhai,

made them stand in a line and beat them up. They did not spare even a handicapped youth. Then they scattered into the hamlet. In the meantime, the males of the village had run away as is generally the case when the police come to the village. Women closed the doors and remained inside. The police broke open many a door, damaged bullock carts and terrorised the village for about an hour. They came back to Chhotubhai's house and broke his pumpset, tore open the telephone wires, flattened the tyres of his motorcycle and maruti car, carried the grain and groundnut crop and bundled them into the government vehicles.

The police party proceeded to Haripura. They began firing here and there for fun. A man, Nanubhai, who was with his sister grazing cattle, collapsed as he was hit on the leg by a bullet. No one dared to come to his help except his sister and she was helpless. Nanu died six hours later and the sadistic police watched his slow death with ugly comments. The body lay there till the following morning. After 27 hours a young woman from Maljipura dared to cart the body to the Jhagadia police station. The police refused at first to register an FIR. They told her to cremate the decomposing body. But she was adamant and wanted a post-mortem done. "This man is dead because of the police firing and it is not a natural death", she said. SEWA rural hospital performed the post-mortem and the body was taken by ambulance to Haripura and cremated by womenfolk as the menfolk had run away. Even after a week, when some social activists visited Maljipura and