## Modi, WEF and Davos Hari Sharma

There were news that Narendra Modi, still the Chief Minister of Gujarat, was to be an invited guest at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2008. Pankaj Patel of Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and D Rajgopalan, Gujarat's Principal Secretary of Industries, had made proud announcements in the India media.

Thanks to a timely intervention by Dr Omar Khalidi of MIT Boston, a campaign was launched to get the invitation rescinded. A letter highlighting Narendra Modi's crimes in Gujarat, signed by over a hundred academics and professors in North America (scholars on India) was sent to some members of the WEF Board. Eventually, Mark Adams, Communications Director of WEF confirmed recently that Modi is not invited to WEF Davos Summit in January 2008. "No comment" was his reported response when asked if Modi was ever invited!

But the tragic fact remains that Narendra Modi, the architect of the gruesome genocidal mass murders of Indian citizens in 2002, is still the Chief Minsiter of Gujarat - full five years and more since that shameful blot on India's face.

Whatever happened to the spycam expose Ashish Khetan of Tehelka magazine had heroically, courageously done a few weeks ago? Would the wheels of properiety and justice ever move in India?

This is what Tarun Tejpal, the editor of Tehelka, wrote not too long ago :

It's extraordinary that more than a week after the Gujarat massacre expose, the prime minister and the home minister had not made a single statement. For the first time in the history of journalism, mass murderers were on camera telling us how they killed, why they killed, and with whose permission they did it. Nor were these just petty criminals; these were fanatics, ideologically driven, working the most dangerous faultline of the subcontinent, revealing the truth of a perilous rupture fully capable of tearing this country apart. But that was clearly not enough for the good man of Race Course Road. Had the CII burped loudly, the PMO would have issued a clarification. Had they then organised a seminar on the untimely burp, the prime minister would have addressed it. (Note: the CII refers to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. hs)

It may be unfair to pillory the prime minister, a man given responsibility without power, the honest man sitting atop a dishonest hillock. Let us then look at the grand strategists of the Congress who cannot win an election themselves but know the secret of winning elections for the many. On their perverse abacus, exposing Modi's hand in bestial murders and rapes was designed to convince the Gujarati Hindu that this is precisely the kind of leadership it wanted! It never struck them that they could use the evidence of violence to shape a stirring dialogue against it.

THE FACT is the Congress is today run by petty strategists who no longer know what it is to do the right thing. They possess neither the illuminations of history, nor a vision for the future. They fail to see that once great men sutured a hundred fault-lines—of caste, religion, race, language, class—to create the idea of India out of a diverse, colonised, feudal subcontinent. Foolishly they preside over the reopening of these fault-lines, unable to see the chaos that will ensue. They do not know how to wield morality as a weapon in politics, and they lack the courage to walk any high road. At best they are vote accountants who waver between the profit and the loss of various elections.

The present Congress brings grief to the liberal, secular, democratic Indian who needs a political umbrella under which to wage the civilisational battle for India's soul. By not saying the right thing, by not doing the right thing, it weakens the resolve of the decent Indian, who lacks the stomach for conflict and seeks affirmation of his decency. The vacated space is then colonised by poisonous ideologies based on exclusion and a garbled-pseudo-religious, pseudo-historichunt for identity.

And all this is happening while the elite Indian behaves like the elite American during the gilded age, the 1920s–glitz, glam, champagne times –even as the ground shifts beneath its feet. The latest statistics show the numbers living in abject poverty are actually growing in five major states. In 30 percent of India's districts Naxalite insurrections, rising from crushing poverty, are on the upswing. Can Manhattan and sub-Saharan Africa exist in the same space endlessly? The fact is India needs not just economic tinkering but great political vision. And there are no signs of it. The apathy of Gujarat tells us that the most complex country in the world faces its most complex challenges ever.  $\Box\Box\Box$