

respects to Shrimati Indira Gandhi .On that day Gurudwara Rakab Ganj Sahib was also attacked and the granthis inside were killed.The gate of the Gurudwara was burnt,It was all visible from Rashtrapati Bhawan.The whole day Army was not called and only in the evening the Army was asked for by the Govt. Ironically it was called from Meerut and not from Delhi Cantt., It only arrived on 2nd November 1984 the next day.And it is not known that who was responsible for the delay till date .When the Army arrived it did only flag march and no shoot at sight orders were given .

I remember that at that hour of difficulty B.J.P leaders Shri V.K.Malhotra and Madan Lal Khurana had met the President and told him that Sikh passengers in trains were being dragged and killed at Saifabad and Ghaziabad railway stations. Malhotra Ji took team of volunteers to Saifabad and saved many Sikhs. For three days Delhi was orphaned and there was no sign of law and order , thousands of Sikhs were massacred in Delhi and at other places in India only because they were wearing turbans .Many Sikh army Officers and Other Ranks were also killed in the Trains and other places.

This cruel reality cannot be forgotten and there are many unanswered questions that

- \* Why innocent were massacred ?
- \* Why the Police connived with the mob ?
- \* Why the army was not called immediately ?
- \* Who were the conspirators in the genocide of Sikhs ?
- \* We are still waiting for the answers !

**Tarlochan Singh**

Ex M.P . &

Chairman Minority Commission



## Critical Observation on Sikh Carnage

I was the Additional DCP for Delhi's North District when riots broke out following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by members of her security detail. I believe with the limited resources and staff at my command, I tried to protect members of the Sikh community and control the rioting mobs from targeting their victims. There was hardly any inter-district communication other than some information trickling down from the PCR-net – of rioting in other parts of Delhi simultaneously! I would have expected police in these parts too to have reacted and controlled the mob-violence as warranted.

In their book “When a Tree Shook Delhi” senior editor Manoj Mitta and Senior Advocate H.S. Phoolka have to an extent praised my role during the riots for ably controlling the violence that erupted outside the Sis Ganj gurudwara on Chandni Chowk in the city's old quarters, despite having just a few men with me.

*‘Unlike his counterparts in other parts of Delhi, Pereira did not disarm the Sikhs and leave them at the mercy of the mobs. Instead, he persuaded them to go inside the gurudwara by promising to provide them security. He kept his word and dealt with the mobs sternly despite having a meagre force at his command.*

*‘It took a lot of courage and ingenuity to do so. Once he got the Sikhs to go indoors, the mobs from both directions were emboldened to pelt stones with greater vigour. All that Pereira and his men could do in return was threaten to fire with their revolvers.*

*‘In a gritty display of policing, they managed to keep the crowd at a safe distance from the gurudwara till a small reinforcement came along with tear smoke ammunition.’*

*When the officer saw a mob looting a watch shop owned by a Sikh at Chandni Chowk, he ordered his men to fire at the miscreants. A constable fired three rounds, killing one rioter instantly.*

*‘Driving home the rule of law, Pereira announced then and there a reward of Rs. 200 to the constable, making sure the reward was heard by everyone as he announced it on a loud hailer. The firing and the reward had the desired - and expected - effect. Sis Ganj Gurudwara was saved as the mobs melted away.’*

Even after thirty years as the dust refuses to settle over the carnage of 1984, my own thoughts go back to that day 30-



years ago when I almost strangled the first journalist who strayed into Delhi's north district and into my path, just five days after the carnage had commenced. "Where were you guys all these days?" was the question I yelled at him. "Where were you when I opened fire, killed people, before people started killing Sikhs!?"

I have held my silence in all these years, the only statement ever given by me being before the Ved Marwah in-house police department's fact-finding enquiry – then directed by SS Jog, who replaced Subash Tandon as police Commissioner soon after the riots.

Despite the fact that I deposed before no Government appointed Commission, nor was I considered worthy to be summoned by any that enquired into the Sikh riots, tid-bits did appear in the media – about some of us having done our duty as expected. That when Delhi Police was in the dock facing Parliamentary castigation for the carnage, it was the name of yours truly that headed the list weakly presented to the powers that be, to help bolster up an undefendable "Delhi-Police case" in Parliament. This, in an attempt to tell that Delhi police did act, that officers did show initiative without waiting for orders from superiors! One is told there is proof to this effect in the record of Parliamentary debates in the immediate aftermath of the 'riots', and in Reports of some of the earlier Commissions, now also available on the internet.

The journalist's answer to my yellings was a candid "well, nothing happened in the North – at least not in the scale as things occurred elsewhere in Delhi". The perception, to an extent acceptable, though factually and substantially wrong! Things did happen in North Delhi, but were controlled to the extent possible, by a handful of committed police officers and men who acted with tremendous grit and courage to justify the uniform they wore. None of these who controlled the riots and saved lives of Sikhs got any recognition for it, nor were they rewarded – as were perhaps some of our colleagues elsewhere; some even with gallantry medals for killing scared and paranoid Sikhs who unfortunately opened fire on the police in their own self-defence.

**Maxwell Pereira**  
Indian Police Service (Retd.)



## 1984 riots

# 30 yrs. of Commissions & Omissions

**Why it is relevant even after three decades to talk of the denial of justice to the victims of the anti-Sikh riots. Apart from justice, punishment is meant to act as a deterrent, so a message goes that no one is above law.**

In January 1985 in an interview to a leading magazine on the anti-Sikh riots, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi stated: "Inquiry would not help as it would rake up issues that are really dead". He was commenting on the demand for inquiry into the massacre of 3,000 Sikhs in the Capital of India and about 7,000 across the country.

For Rajiv Gandhi the issue was "dead" within two months of the massacre that took place in day light on the streets of Delhi. Between the noon of November 1 and November 3, a Sikh was killed every minute. During these 2,880 minutes, 2,733 (official figures) Sikhs were killed in Delhi alone.

The Home Minister had given a statement in Parliament that 600 Sikhs were killed across India. In response to this statement, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then Leader of the Opposition, had released a list of 2,700 killed in Delhi alone. Over 50,000 people were languishing in relief camps.

### **Probe begins**

Six months later, the Rajiv Gandhi government agreed to appoint a Commission of Inquiry as a part of political negotiation between Sant Longowal, then Akali Dal president, and Rajiv Gandhi. For any democratic government, enforcing the rule of law should be paramount, but for the Rajiv government it was only a political move to appoint a Commission of Inquiry.

The terms of the Mishra Commission of Inquiry, which was constituted with a sitting Supreme Court Judge, J Ranganath Mishra, were not the usual terms of reference which are to find out how the massacre happened; who took part in it; who are to be prosecuted; role of law-enforcing agencies; and action to be taken against them. In short-to fix accountability for the death of innocent citizens. On the contrary, the only term of reference of the commission was to enquire into "allegations if the violence



was organized”.

We requested Akali Dal leaders to get the terms of reference changed, but for reasons best known to them, this did not happen. The commission began its proceedings with these flawed objectives. Human rights groups were left with no choice but to participate in these proceedings.

An umbrella organisation of human rights groups was constituted for this purpose named the Citizen's Justice Committee (CJC). With Justice SM Sikri, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, as its president and I as secretary. The Mishra Commission started its proceedings in July 1985 and submitted its report in August 1986. The report was published and tabled in Parliament in February 1987. In his report, Mishra stated that it was not a part of his terms of reference to identify any person. These findings came as a bombshell as after holding a long and tedious inquiry for over a year, he simply recommended the formation of three other committees to do the real job.

Earlier, the Police Commissioner had deputed Additional Police Commissioner Ved Marwah to inquire into the role of the police. Ironically, the allegation of police complicity of the Commissioner of Police and Senior Additional Commissioners were assigned to an inquiry by an officer junior to them, nonetheless Marwah did conduct the inquiry as mandated.

Rahul Bedi, a journalist, had filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court in the third week of November 1984 on how two senior most Additional Commissioners of Police and a Deputy Commissioner of Police ignored the information given to them by him [Rahul Bedi] about the Trilokpuri massacre, which had resulted in the killing of 400 Sikhs. The government took the stand before the High Court that the Ved Marwah inquiry had been constituted and therefore the court should not entertain the writ petition. Unfortunately, going by the assurance of the government, the court dismissed the petition.

In October 1985, Marwah completed his inquiry, however, he was directed not to submit the report. It became clear why, when he later informed the media that he had identified many police officers for complicity and gross negligence. He was also directed to hand over all his evidence and papers to the Mishra Commission, who would identify the guilty police officers. Marwah passed on all papers to the Mishra Commission. However, certain important papers out of that record are missing. When I asked Justice Mishra in his chamber about those papers, he informed me that those had been destroyed by the police under instructions of the government.

Mishra in his report refused to do his job and identify the guilty whereas Marwah, who identified guilty law enforcers, was asked to discontinue his work. Yet, regarding the killings in Kanpur, Mishra



held then District Magistrate Brijendra Yadav responsible for the killing of 125 Sikhs in Kanpur. An Army officer, Captain Bareth, had submitted his report to the Mishra Commission that Yadav stopped the Army from taking any action against the mob which was indulging in killing, looting and arson in the presence of the Army. The Army wanted to take action but Yadav ordered it not to. The Mishra Commission recommended action against Yadav, but interestingly, Yadav got three promotions after that and retired from the post equivalent to the Chief Secretary.

Curiously, Justice Ranganath Mishra became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and was made a Rajya Sabha MP by the Congress after retirement.

In February 1987, when the Mishra Commission report was tabled in Parliament, almost two years and four months had passed since the carnage, but even the number of citizens killed was not known. We had submitted a list of 3,878 before the commission but Mishra recommended the appointment of another committee to ascertain the number of killings.

The Ahuja Committee was appointed to do this job. Ahuja submitted its report in August 1987 and put the figure at 2,733 in Delhi alone. It took the largest democracy in the world three years to even put a figure on its citizens who had been murdered in a span of just two days.

### **More committees, little action**

The other committee appointed on the recommendation of the Mishra Commission was the Kapoor-Mittal Committee to inquire into the role of the police which was really the unfinished task of Ved Marwah. In 1990, this committee identified 72 police officers for connivance and gross negligence and recommended forthwith dismissal of 30 police officers without any inquiry. None of these officers has been dismissed and not even a major penalty has been awarded to any one of them. This committee also found the allegations of Rahul Bedi correct and had recommended action against Sewa Dass and Nikhil Kumar. Far from action, they were promoted, not once but thrice.

Among the three police officers named by Rahul Bedi were DCP Sewa Dass who got three promotions and retired as Special Commissioner of Police and Additional Commissioners HC Jatav and Nikhil Kumar. Nikhil Kumar also got three promotions and retired as DGP. Later, he became a Congress MP.

The other committees were to recommend the registration of cases. Three successive committees were appointed to complete this task-Jain-Banerjee Committee, Poti-Rosha Committee and Jain-Aggarwal Committee. These committees recommended registration of cases, but their reports were not fully



implemented.

The Dhillon Committee was appointed to recommend measures for the rehabilitation of victims. This committee recommended that business establishments which had insurance cover but were not given insurance claim on the technical ground that riots are not covered under the policy, should be paid compensation. The government did not accept this recommendation and all such insurance claims were rejected in spite of having insurance cover.

The ninth committee-Narula Committee- was appointed in December 1993 by the Madan Lal Khurana government and this committee recommended the registration of cases against HKL Bhagat, Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler. The recommendations were not fully implemented.

The 10th committee was the Nanavati Commission, which was appointed in January 2000. It submitted its report in February 2005. On its recommendation, cases were registered against Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler, and compensation was announced. The Prime Minister package amounting to Rs 717 crore was declared. One of the clauses of the package was to give employment to the children of victims, which has not been implemented yet, and almost Rs 200 crore from the said amount is yet to be distributed. Of this, the Modi government has declared Rs 166 crore to be distributed to victims by giving them Rs 5 lakh for each person killed. Under the law, punishment and compensation both are a must, one is not a substitute for the other.

In February 2014, the Arvind Kejriwal government appointed an SIT to reopen and reinvestigate 237 cases which had been closed by the police as “untraced” and never sent for trial to the court. After Kejriwal’s resignation, this SIT was stalled by the UPA government and now continues to be stalled by the NDA government.

### **Punishment as deterrent**

Why is it relevant even 30 years later? Punishment to the guilty is meant to deliver justice and also to act as a deterrent for the future. A message needs to go that no one is above law in this great democracy.

But for our successive governments, this issue is not on their agenda. For Rajiv Gandhi’s Congress government it was “dead” since January 1985 itself, and now for the BJP-Akali government, it has been “dead” since the last five months. They have not taken any step to secure punishment for guilty and to deliver justice.

When we talk about time having elapsed, I remember Simon Wiensental, the famous “Nazi hunter” and a victim of the Holocaust, who followed Nazis for 63 years

(1942-2005) till his death for the atrocities committed by them against Jews. Ustasha Dinko Sakic, a Nazi commandant, was prosecuted and sentenced 50 years after



the World War, as crimes against life have no limitation in any country. We will pursue justice with the same spirit, for it is innocent citizens who are dead, not the law.

### **What the probe panels recommended**

**Justice GT Nanavati Commission :** It enhanced cash compensation to victims, but no criminal cases were registered. It indicted several Congress leaders.

**Ved Marwah Commission :** Nearly completed inquiry, but was directed not to proceed further as Ranganath Misra Commission had been appointed.

**Misra Commission :** Records of the Marwah Commission were transferred to it, but it was alleged Marwah's handwritten notes containing vital information were not given to the commission. It stated it was not part of the term of reference to identify any person and recommended the formation of three committees.

**RC Shrivastav Committee :** Looked into police mechanism to prevent disturbances. Suggestion for three more police sub-divisions in Delhi and 25 police stations was accepted, and Rs 31 crore sanctioned.

**Dhillon Committee :** Headed by Gurdial Singh Dhillon, it recommended businesses that had insurance but were not compensated as riots were not covered by insurers should be compensated. The government did not accept it; suggestion on cash compensation was accepted.

**RKAhuja Committee :** Put the death toll in Delhi at 2,733.

**Kapoor-Mittal Committee :** Appointed to probe into the conduct of the police. While Kapoor submitted a general report, Mittal identified a dozen police officials who had done a creditable job and recommended action against 72 police personnel.

**Jain-Banerjee Committee :** It recommended cases, but none was registered. Sajjan Kumar's co-accused obtained a stay on the committee's functioning.

**Potti-Rosha Committee :** It recommended the registration of cases against Sajjan Kumar and examined over 1,000 affidavits and recommended 30 cases for prosecution. Sajjan Kumar secured anticipatory bail. The members resigned.

**Jain-Aggarwal Committee :** Recommended 48 cases, including against Congress leaders HKL Bhagat, Sajjan Kumar, Dharamdas Shastri and Jagdish Tytler. It wound up in 1993 with no action taken.

**Narula Committee :** Wanted cases against Bhagat, Sajjan, and Tytler.

### **Only 30 convictions in 30 years**

#### **Death toll in Delhi**

As many as 2,733 people died at the hands of frenzied mobs in the Capital of the country.





### **Conviction rate**

A mere 13 cases of murder have seen convictions and only 30 persons have been convicted in the past 30 years.

### **Cases registered, and closed**

In Delhi, 587 cases were registered, of which 237 were closed by the police and marked as “untraced” (legalese for no progress in investigation). A Special Investigation Team formed by Arvind Kejriwal during his short stint as the Chief Minister of Delhi was meant to reopen every such case. “Of these 30 persons convicted, almost all are now on bail or their convictions have been condoned by higher courts,” says Jarnail Singh, author of the book “I Accuse... The Anti-Sikh Violence of 1984”.

### **‘Why no action?’**

The Kapoor-Mittal Committee, appointed in February 1987 to inquire into the delinquencies and conduct of the police, recommended action against 72 police personnel and the dismissal of six officials, but nothing has happened. “Why?” asks author Jarnail Singh, who lives in Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi.

### **Compensation, less for some**

In 1984, the compensation for those killed was Rs 10,000. In 1987, another Rs 10,000 was added. In 1996, Bhajan Kaur won a case against the Delhi Administration and Rs 3.3 lakh was given, but only to Delhi victims. In 2006, Rs 3.5 lakh was given as relief following the Nanavati commission report. The Modi government has announced another Rs 5 lakh. Meaning, affected families in Delhi would get Rs 12 lakh for each of their dead and those outside Delhi would get Rs 8.7 lakh.

### **No balm**

In case of injuries, each victim was given Rs 2,000 in 1984. Another Rs 1.25 lakh was paid after the Nanavati Commission’s recommendation.

### **Property loss**

In 1984, property losses were compensated with Rs 10,000 in case of total loss and Rs 5,000 in case of partial damage. It was enhanced to Rs 90,000 and Rs 45,000, respectively, following the Nanavati Commission report.

### **H. S. Phoolka**

Human rights lawyer  
who has been fighting legal battles  
for the anti-Sikh riot victims



## Irrefutable Facts : Carnage 84

(Forgiveness is our Creed – Forget we never)

Numerous researchers, observers, commentators have written a lot on the unabated and unchecked gruesome violence against the Sikh community in the first week of November 1984 after the tragic assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi, Many are writing and expressing concern even after 30 years of the carnage. The reasons are obvious. What happened in 1984 in Delhi and some other parts of the country was not only unprecedented and outrageous, but was also abetted and supported by the state authorities. The victims after three decades of the event the victims are still awaiting for the justice and redress.

In spite of government's efforts to suppress the truth, various reporters and investigations conducted by civil society organisations like PUCL, PUDR, Citizens for Democracy, People's relief committee, the facts collected by journalists and also from government appointed commissions / committees, by now it is clear that over four fateful days about 10000 Sikhs were hunted, humiliated and massacred in an organised killing spree. In Delhi alone over 3000 Sikhs were murdered, women gang raped, properties looted and over 70 Gurudwaras burnt. The carnage was so all pervasive that no Sikh irrespective of his position felt safe. In fact the process started with stoning on the convoy of none other than the President of India, Giani Zail Singh.

A number of investigative and analytical reports have brought out that the then ruling party, Congress(I) and to an extent government's assertion, that the violence was an unplanned response to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two Sikh bodyguards, holds no ground. Investigations have revealed that there was an impeccable pattern according to which the violence erupted and that the mobs like disciplined cadres kept to that model and implicitly obeyed the directions of their masters, the Congress-I functionaries.

In a recent article in Caravan, Hartosh Bal quoting Avtar Singh Gill the former Secretary Ministry of Petroleum, brings out that the violence was indeed orchestrated and that the clearance came from the top. Gill is quoted as saying:

“ on November 1, 1984 Lalit Suri of Lalit Hotels who used to come and see me often, dropped by. He was the errand boy for



Rajiv Gandhi and since he often needed some work done, he was close to me. He came to me in the ministry and said, clearance has been given by Arun Nehru for the killings in Delhi and killings have started. The strategy is to catch Sikh the youth, putting a tyre around his neck, douse him with kerosene and set him afire.

“This will calm the anger of the Hindus”.

Gill is also quoted as saying that, ‘Suri told me that I should be careful though my name is not in the voters list, the Delhi Gurudwara voters list. They (rioters) have been provided this list.’

This will end on the third (of November).

This revelation confirms the observations made in the report, “Truth About Delhi Violence” prepared by Citizens for Democracy in January 1985. It says :

“Several meetings were held all over Delhi- Central, Outer and Trans Yamuna area - in the late hours of the 31st October 84 to give final touches, as it were, to every minute detail that nothing was left out to successfully exterminate the Sikhs. It was as if that brigades were going to attack an enemy territory.

From collection of kerosene and incendiary material for dousing the men before they were burnt;

to collection of killers both from villages outside the areas of attack as well as from among the more amenable neighbours;

from fixing the hour of attack to be launched simultaneously everywhere in Delhi in the forenoon between 9 and 11 AM;

to organising the attack and deciding if it should be repetitive or two pronged as in a war depending on the size of the mob;

from identifying the jhuggis and houses of the Sikhs from amongst the forest of jhuggies and houses occupied by thousands of non-Sikhs;

to disarming the Sikhs and dissuading them from taking out their Prabhat Pheri; from fixing the sequence of the targets of attack;

to flouting the rumours - everything was done with amazing precision.

Gurudwaras were first to be attacked in every area of Delhi according to the plans, because they were supposed to be the arsenals of Sikhs and also the symbol of their collective faith and courage, so they had to be destroyed first.

The report, “Who Are The Guilty” prepared by People’s



Union of Civil Liberties and People's Union for Democratic Rights under Justice S.M. Sikri and Justice V.M. Tarkunde, in December 1984 itself said,

“We were told by the local eyewitnesses in all the areas we visited that well known Congress (I) leaders and workers led and directed the arsonist and the local cadres of the congress(I) identified the Sikh houses and shops.

A senior police official who for understandable reasons does not want to be named printed out “the shop signs are either in Hindi or English. How do you expect the illiterate arsonist to know whether these shops belonged to Sikhs or Hindus, unless they were identified to them by someone who is either educated or a local person”. In South Delhi buses of the DTC were used by the miscreants to move from place to place in their murderous journey. How could DTC allow its buses to be used by criminals”.

Manoj Mitta and H.S. Phoolka in their book “When a Tree Shook in Delhi” describe the details about the State support, connivance or even the sponsorship of the carnage. Justification was provided by none other than the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who in a public speech said “When a big tree falls the earth beneath it is bound to shake”

As a good number of reports, books and articles have exposed the truth repetition of the events and processes is not our intention here. Four things are clear, One what happened in November 1984. was not a communal riot as it was not one religious community versus other, it was state assisted massacre, Two, the Congress(I) was actively involved in that, Three, the administration and the police did not do any thing to protect the Sikhs rather they helped the rioters, And Fourth, there was deliberate delay in calling the military to deal with the situation.

Since justice has yet not been done, victims not redressed and lessons not learnt, it should be ensured issue does not die. Sikh Forum and many other involved civil society organizations and some crusaders for justice have been making use of every possible opportunity to raise the issue.

The Thirtieth Anniversary gives us and the Nation an opportunity for introspection. Half hearted apologies by government that too under pressure and unkept assurances for justice only adds to the betrayal by the Government. Needless to say even after 30 years the hurt and the anger and sense of betrayal remains in the community. The perpetrators, abettors and defaulting policemen remain not only free but in many cases have been rewarded. Investigation agencies continue to be manipulated to save them.



More serious, is the fact that it is not that state has not been able to deliver justice but, state itself has made all possible efforts to see that perpetrators are not brought to book.

Late S. Patwant Singh wrote, by refusing to send to the courts the few Congress functionaries who were identified as colluding in the mass murder of the Sikhs, the Union Government has betrayed a breathtaking lack of balance as of saving the skins of a handful of criminal elements within its folds is more important than the outrage hurt and disillusionment of 20 million Sikhs.

We take this opportunity to reiterate the demand and concerns of those who believe in the imperatives of democracy - rule of law, equality for all, respect for human rights and above all justice, that those involved in the carnage, and who backed the same, how so ever influential and resourceful they may be, are identified and penalized. No number of Commissions, inquiries or promises can either assuage the grief of those whose loved ones perished. No matter how long ago the crime (murder) took place and how much more time it takes it must be subjected to Law.

Hindustan Times in an Editorial, in August 2005 expressed, Justice in this instance is not merely about revenge, but the principle of moral rightness which ought to define the character of the society we live in. It is about the fair treatment of the hapless who were slaughtered for no fault of their own.

On this 30th anniversary, let us make it clear that we must not allow the anger to die down and keep the momentum for the cause of justice, harmonious coexistence and protection of human rights. This is necessary for prevention of such like atrocities on innocent people, which continue in various ways.

Perhaps it can be the most appropriate  
tribute to the martyrs of 1984 carnage.

**Dr. Amarjit Singh Narang**  
Founder Member,  
The Sikh Forum



## Sins of Commission

### How thirty years and nine official inquiries obscured the truths of the anti-Sikh violence of 1984

On Wednesday, 31 October 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her guards, both Sikh. In the ensuing violence, which lasted roughly three days, 2,733 Sikhs were killed in Delhi. Sikhs were also attacked in several other Indian cities, including Kanpur, Bokaro, Jabalpur and Rourkela. It remains one of the bloodiest and most brutal episodes of communal violence in independent India.

Over the next two decades, nine commissions of inquiry were instituted. Seven of these investigated specific aspects of the tragedy, such as the death count, which was officially established by the Ahuja Committee in 1987. Two of the panels—the Ranganath Misra Commission, constituted in 1985, and the Justice GT Nanavati Commission, whose final report was published in 2005—were required to look at the violence in its entirety.

The reports of those two commissions still make for startling reading. Each recorded testimonies from numerous victims and witnesses, and took depositions from some of those accused, including police officers who had been on duty in badly affected areas. Yet there is not just a complete mismatch between the testimonies recorded and the conclusions reached—the commissions' own observations contradict their findings.

For thirty years, it has been persistently claimed—partly on the basis of these findings—that the violence following Gandhi's death was an unplanned outpouring of grief. But the records of these commissions clearly establish one thing that damns such conclusions: the condemnable but largely spontaneous violence of 31 October transformed into a clearly orchestrated massacre that continued from the 1st to the 3rd of November.



For many years, survivors, witnesses and observers have suspected that the violence was orchestrated by the highest echelons of the Congress party. Cases have been brought against some Congress leaders - notably Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler - but so far no senior politician or police officer has been sentenced.

Fresh evidence that figures in this piece suggests the orders for the violence came from the member of parliament Arun Nehru, a cousin and confidante of Indira Gandhi's son and successor Rajiv. While this evidence is indirect testimony, it is strengthened by a considerable amount of circumstantial evidence available in the Misra and Nanavati reports.

\* \* \*

Shortly after 9 am, Indira Gandhi stepped out of her house at 1 Safdarjung Road to walk to her office in an adjacent bungalow, where Peter Ustinov was waiting with a television crew to interview her. A head constable was to heel, holding aloft an umbrella to protect Gandhi from the sun. Two other policemen and her personal secretary, RK Dhawan, followed.

The gate separating the bungalows was manned by two Sikh jawans, who had coordinated to be on the same shift. Beant Singh, armed with his service revolver, had exchanged duties with another policeman. Knowing a latrine was located near the gate, Satwant Singh, armed with a semi-automatic carbine, had stationed himself there by claiming he was suffering from dysentery.

A week earlier, both men had partaken of amrit, in a Sikh ceremony usually reserved for the most faithful. Their fervour was a direct consequence of Operation Bluestar. As Gandhi approached the gate, Beant and Satwant opened fire—five shots from Beant's revolver, 25 from Satwant's carbine. As soon as she fell to the ground, both men dropped their weapons, and were taken into custody. Gandhi was rushed to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, where she was declared dead later that day.

The two unarmed and no longer belligerent jawans were detained by personnel from the Indo-Tibetan Border Force in a guardroom, where they soon suffered grievous gunshot wounds. While Satwant was badly injured, Beant died. (Satwant was executed by hanging four and a half years later.)

\* \* \*

In its summary of that day's violence, the Nanavati commission wrote that the "first sign of such public resentment resulting in an angry outburst in Delhi" came around 2.30 pm, "when the public suspected that Smt. Indira Gandhi had succumbed to her injuries and

