

I LIVE IN BEHRAMPADA

Screenplay / Post edit script

46 minutes video documentary shot on hi-band U-matic in 1993.

The interviews are mainly in Hindi and occasionally in Marathi and English.

In one version the commentary is in English and on another it is in Hindi.

A pan shot in long from a densely laid hutment to the exit gate of a commuters train station.

Middle class office goers are rushing out of the station.

V.O.1: Look, that is Behrampada, the trouble spot.

V.O.2: Oh! It is so close to the station, yaar!

A pan shot from the railway overbridge with the commuters in the foreground to the top angle wide shot of the low rise rickety huts. Late morning bright light.

V.O.3: Don't act too smart, Behrampada is next door. They'll cut you to bits.

V.O. 4: I see, so this is Behrampada!

Static long shot of the station building - a beautiful victorian structure. Commuters are making a crowd.

V.O.5: What is this Behrampada that everyone is talking about?

V.O.6: It's a dangerous place.

Extreme long shot of a wasteland. At the far end border of the wasteland some huts are laid like toy houses. A busy commuters road runs between the slum and the wasteland.

V.O.7: They act so bloody innocent, but they are busy making bombs in there.

Pan shot of newspaper cuttings in Hindi, English and Marathi with headlines:

Two more dead bodies found in Behrampada

Action against Behrampada criminals

Pakistanis found in Behrampada

Fragile peace shattered in Behrampada

Behrampada is a hot spot

Fresh rioting claims six in Behrampada

Exterior. Mid shot of a middle aged vendor woman wearing red. The colour red suits her temperament.

Red Woman (in close up): You throw bombs, commit atrocities and then you malign our Behram... Why? What have we ever done to you? Answer me!

The Interviewer: Is no one able to go to work?

Red woman: No one is able to go to work, even established workshops have shut down. I've no husband - I used to earn some 10 rupees... but it's been two months.

The Interviewer: What do you do?

Red Woman: I carry sand, sell fish or bananas. I've five children. How can we survive? I get no shelter from anyone - no mother or father or sister or any such. Go here and they fire you and go there, they arrest you. You hear about this nuisance all the time. What is there for a woman like me to do? If others in the clan were doing well, one might borrow some money. But even good businesses have been ruined. If our people stir out, the police get suspicious... We can't move about freely. There is no way out. Even the well-to-do shops have collapsed.

We are harassed all the way. Why do you make us suffer like this? How have we hurt you?

Must you abuse us in this manner? How have our people ever harmed you? If you are bent upon in fostering this enmity then remember - You have to live here, and so do we. We are brothers. We are sisters. Getting instigated by the others and spreading distrust... how long will you keep up this hostility?

Tell me, why are you bent on destroying this country.

Cut to handheld track shots of the narrow and shadowy lanes and bylanes of the slum. Children run around excited by the presence of the camera. The technically exterior day shot inside the sun-deprived slum looks like an interior shot. The title cards are super imposed on the ambient shots.

I LIVE OF BEHRAMPADA

This film is shot between 5th and 11th of February, shortly after the second phase of Bombay riots.

After the title card assorted iconic shots of the city - the commuters train tracks, railway station, Victoria terminus, queen's necklace, busy traffic, and film and advertisement hoardings. Background track of old Hindi movie song: *yeh hai Bombay, yeh hai Bombay; meri jaan.*]

Commentary on the above shots:

Bombay - the trade capital of India. The biggest metropolis. A destination which charms, tantalizes and holds on to people. Many come here. But few leave. The 1991 census reveals that greater Bombay's population has shot up from 82.27 lakhs to 8.67 lakhs. Nearly 250 families arrive in Bombay every day to woo fortune. For here dreams are for sale. And if the city gives it also demands of its people. It is believed that the city's uniqueness, vibrancy and endless adrenalin are sustained greatly by its migrants.

Bombay - the city much adored, passionately loved and also scandalously abused.

Shot of a graffiti in Hindi:

NO MORE BEGGING; FIGHT TILL END – ON TO AYODHYA

Cut to shot of a television programme showing the Babri masjid demolition. A middle class family, with members from three generations, watch the evening news.

Commentary:

December 6, 1992, the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was ruthlessly demolished. When the sun rose on December 7, communal riots were already raging throughout the country. Painful memories of the country's blood-stained partition in 1947, that were being gradually exorcised, came flooding back. The country was once again a people divided on the issue of religion. But with one difference, one of the most riot-savaged places now was Bombay. The same Bombay that had withstood, remarkably better, the bitter divide in 1947.

Throughout the above audio b/w photographs of the riots – acquired from press photographers - appear. Military and para-military forces in action in the ravaged city is pre-dominant in these images.

Commentary continues:

Between December 7th to 11th, over 200 people died in Bombay. Then the storm abated. The city staggered into the new year - grieved, shocked, introspective, indifferent or merry but overall with a sense of relief that the worst perhaps was over.

Shots of the daily life in the city: Juhu beach with morning walkers, commuters on the way to work, busy traffic in the business district. The assorted shots end with a hoarding issued by the traffic police department:

Let's turn back to the city we loved

Commentary resumes:

This confidence was misplaced. Exactly a month after the carnage at Ayodhya, even as the country searched for sanity, Bombay exploded again.

Shot of the newspaper cuttings with the news of fresh violence in Bombay.

Commentary:

The rot had set in. The second phase of the riots started on January 7th.

B/W press photographs - a woman lost in the curfewed city, a crouching Muslim man peeping out of his hut with an armed police in the foreground, charred vehicles, rotting dead bodies, leaping fires etc. along with an ocean of fleeing crowd at the long distance railway terminuses.

Commentary:

By Govt. admission, over 500 people died and Rs. 1,000 crores worth of property and trade was destroyed. Nearly 3 lakhs people fled the city, several to return to rural Maharashtra for their meager source of income was gone. Bombay was scarred brutally and stripped of its badges of generosity, cosmopolitanism and broad mindedness.

Extreme long shot of the pristine looking Haji Ali darga.

Commentary:

In short Bombay was disfigured.

Top angle pan shot over a cluster of rickety huts.

Commentary:

In the media blitz that followed, a slum called Behrampada was singled out for a stamp of notoriety. But for some of those who live here - in the eye of the storm - controversies cannot erase reality. And reality means a laboriously scooped-out and reclaimed patch of land which they call home.

Mid shot of an octogenarian woman, immaculately dressed in crisp white at an outdoor space. She is surrounded by other women of the neighborhood. They appeared safe and comfortable in their community space surrounded by their own people.

The interviewer: How many years have you lived here?

Old woman in white: I can't say for sure... but since my son, Mohammed Ibrahim, was five.

The Interviewer: How old is he now?

The old woman in white fumbles.

The Interviewer: Don't any of you know?

The neighbors: Forty and eight.

The interviewer: Forty and eight – the age of your son? And he was five then? So what did Behrampada look like then?

Old woman in white: There were just four huts. There was Kelabai, me, Amir. bi....and Kishtu's mother, she is dead now. She was Christian. Kelabai had two buffaloes. All around us was the creek. Only a narrow tract of solid land in the middle.

The interviewer: How did you manage, then?

Old woman in white: There was this tiny plot, marshy and uneven, full of stones. We fetched stones from near the railway tracks... and filled in the land.

The interviewer: Who did the filling?

Old woman in white: We did, with our own hands. They came, she came, he came, -- all who came did their bit. And as the public got consolidated the place got settled. The land got made.

Cut to

Assorted shots of the outer boundary of the slum under the harsh noon light. At some border lines there are clear signs of urban development – highway, corporate offices, railway terminus, co-operative housing etc. and some other borders are dotted by rickety huts resembling opened up hemline in clothes.

Commentary:

Yesterday's marshland is today then one of the prime developing area of the city. The cluster of four huts metamorphosed into a massive slum of nearly 50,000 people. Behrampada starts from the east border of Bandra station., one of the busiest suburban junctions of Bombay. Bordering the slum on the other side is western highway no. 8- a vital nerve center of the extended city. The station. and the highway are connected by a road called Anant Kanekar Marg which lies adjacent to Behrampada. On the northern side of the slum, land is being developed for a major railway terminus - Bandra terminus. To its north east Behrampada faces rows of buildings - which constitute the middle income group colony, the lower income group colony and the railway colony. The residents of these buildings have voiced a number of complaints against the people of Behrampada.

Cut to a terrace of a three storied building in LIG (lower income group) colony - a young man in the foreground and huts of Behrampada in the background at ground level.

Young man of LIG colony: They threw petrol bombs.

Interviewer: -- Here?

Young man of LIG colony: No, at that building on the corner.

Another building of LIG colony - a group of women of varied age gather at the courtyard.

LIG women in the courtyard: I live on the corner house. Mahanagar even carried a photo of my flat. On the 6th... I think, it was a Friday... I saw 70 or 80 people dressed in black. I had a headache, so I was outside at first... but when I went in, I saw them getting ready. I said: those people are going to attack us. It was curfew time. Luckily at around 2.30 p.m. the police arrived and they were taken care of.

Cut to inside of a flat in MIG (middle income group) colony. Journalist Harish Bhanot in his drawing room.

Harish Bhanot in his drawing room: Why is it that lakhs of people living in Bandra east cannot use the station road, the only access to Bandra east station. I cannot come back in the evening. Because on that stretch of the road there are 6 or 7 very narrow lanes coming out on the road which is 15-20 ft. wide only. They come into the road and... when it is dark how am I to know that there is nobody there to stab me.

Cut to

Shots of the exterior of the slum – middle class office goers pass by hurriedly and Muslim residents of the slum enter into their lanes. Their paths cross fleetingly.

Commentary:

Allegations against Behrampada fill the air. And this virulent, no-holds-barred campaign is led by papers such as Navakaal and the Sena mouthpiece, Samna. In its mildest exercise, Samna dubbed Behrampada, 'Harampada'.

Cut to a mid-long shot of a group of men in the courtyard of another building in LIG colony.

A resident with a distinct South Indian accent: Bring in any number of CRP men, the police, the army even... it will stop briefly, but will flare up again. Until we get rid of Behrampada... chances for peace in Bombay are dim.

Cut to

Old woman in white (in tight close up): It wasn't like this in our time. Hindus and Muslims sat, ate, drank and lived together. We hardly knew who was Hindu, who Muslim.

Cut to

LIG women in the courtyard: It all began after the Babri Masjid event. There was no trouble in recent years.

The interviewer: Was there any enmity earlier?

LIG women in the courtyard: Not at all! We have known people from Behrampada quite well. So many students came to me for tuitions. We never imagined anything (like this) could happen here. At least not in Bombay, not Hindu-Muslim riots.

Cut to

Assorted shots of various sites in the vicinity – the Hindu temple, the Muslim religious flags, the overpopulated bazars, narrow bylanes inside the slum, the adjacent marsh land, the garbage dumps, the vultures etc.

Commentary:

But the animosity and distrust among the neighbors is a recent phenomenon in the area. Certainly emotions have spiraled after a chain of incidents that occurred in the wake of Babri masjid's demolition on Dec 6.

On Dec 7 the residents of Bandra East woke up to the news that the idol of Ganesha in a nearby roadside shrine had been beheaded the previous night. There were no eyewitnesses and the police arrested no one. But the residents in the neighboring bldgs. were convinced that the Behrampada people had retaliated and thus responded to the demolition of the Babri masjid.

Soon, not just Bandra, but the entire city was engulfed in the tension that ensued.

Although there are not many across the divide who are willing to even listen,

Behrampada residents have their own explanation. They are sure that the idol had been mutilated by people with vested interest. These interests would be best served by defaming the entire community at Behrampada.

At the end of the day on Dec.7, the Police recorded an incident of Hindu-Muslim clash. 4 Muslim boys and 1 Muslim woman died in the police firing that followed. Five days later, the bodies of 7 Hindu people were found in a drain adjacent to Behrampada. The site is next to Anant Kanekar marg, the main road. Again, there were no arrests. But unofficially the verdict was out: everyone was pointing towards Behrampada. Overnight the slum of 50,000 people was held guilty for the 7 dead bodies found in its vicinity. Thus, when the whole city was reeling under the spell of violence, an inconspicuous slum called Behrampada was shot into notoriety.

Cut to shots of a Friday namaz. The congregation of the male devotees in the narrow courtyard of an extremely modest masjid overflows to the adjacent road. A young cleric leads the prayer with a sense of premonition and fragile defiance.

The stigma continued as tension mounted. The storm broke on January 15 when bombs were hurled from the adjacent bldgs. on the Friday namaazis in Behrampada.

Interview with an old man with flowing white beard.

Old man with flowing beard: It was Friday, the 15th. People were arriving for namaz, as is customary. The namaz had almost ended, only a few seconds remained, the first bomb burst, causing havoc. People ran helter-skelter. Many rushed home. About 100 people took shelter in the mosque. At 6.30 p.m. the army arrived and escorted them home.

A low quality hotshot coloured photograph of a 18 year old boy. As his mother starts speaking we slowly dissolve to her.

The mother: He worked as a painter and managed to bring home everyday some 50 to 100 rupees. He had gone for namaz, which wasn't yet over; when suddenly we heard the noise. Those people were clapping and then hurling bombs... from the over bridge of the station and also from Naupada, and all around.

A soiled passport size b/w photograph of a middle aged man.

Voice over: This is Khudaya Khan uncle. He was shot on Friday. He had just come home after offering namaz and was going upstairs. There are two stories in his house. They fired at his back...from behind the compound wall of Gulmohar, and he died immediately.

Cut to shots of police pickets deployed in the vicinity.

Commentary:

As the terrified Namaazis scattered in all directions to avoid being hit, the Police drew its own conclusions- that the Police picket was about to be attacked. They promptly opened fire. Shots echoed in even those sections furthest away from where the namaazis were congregated.

B/W photographs of wounded women and children. The flat and frontal photographs have a distinct look of evidence documents.

The dead and injured included many women and children who traditionally do not offer public and collective namaz.

Shots of the local police station.

Commentary:

On January 15, as dusk fell 41 Muslim youths from Behrampada were arrested. The police authority limited their combing operations to Behrampada. It balked at the idea of searching the adjacent bldgs.

Cut to two young men in Behrampada. One of them has one arm in plaster.

Youth 1: We were taken to the police station and beaten. They made us bend over. They said, bend it like the way you do it during namaz. They beat us in that position. Then they threw us into lock-up.

Youth 2: They were breaking down our door. My mother was forced to let them in. They demanded our weapons. Why would we have any? They tossed the clothes out of the cupboard and looked all, but found nothing.

Cut to

The chamber of Majid Memon, noted criminal lawyer.

Advocate Majlis Memon: Now see the foolishness on the part of the police men. They say in the wide crime no. 46 of 1993 - The place of offence is mosque, near about mosque. They write that 4000 to 5000 Muslim *dangekhore* - they call them Muslim dangekhore (suckers of violence). They show the time precisely the time of the Friday prayers. Now the congregation at the mosque obviously was to say Friday prayers... nobody can dispute that. Now they say that this collection of 4000 to 5000 Muslim mob was for purposes of committing offence which can never be accepted by the court.

Shots of churred bamboos that once held the roof of the huts and burnt household objects like cassettes, books, trunks, iron, utensils etc. Some children play and some other defecate in the site of the ruin. One woman shuffles through the ashes looking for something minute.

Commentary:

Even before the effects of the masjid firing had abated, violence was unleashed on Behrampada once more. At midnight on 1st February, 54 huts were set on fire. Shortly before the fire was started the electric supply to the whole slum was inexplicably cut.

Cut to a middle aged man standing in the middle of the burnt huts.

Ramji Istreewala: I was ironing clothes till 12 that day... When there was this loud noise. We couldn't tell what it was... suddenly all the lights in our huts went out, bombs rained down from the terrace. Everyone fled, but the three of us stayed on. Then our place caught fire. Abandoning clothes and iron...I ran out in my lungi and shirt, towards that corner.

Interviewer: When people see this film, they may say that... as a Hindu, you were scared into saying all this.

Ramji Istreewala: That's not true. I'll say it in the high court as well. I've live here for 40 years... that's my hut, there.

Cut to

Harish Bhanot in his drawing room: Now I come to on 1st of February. I landed home at 2 minutes to 11, 11'o clock was the curfew time, at that time. I came, my wife was at the gate, my son was with me who had come from Delhi. And she said 'good... thank god you have come. There was a blast only a while ago, 10 minutes back.' I said does not matter. As I was saying this there was another blast... in the same corner which is a chronic trouble point for us. Whether it is done by bldg. 30 or not that is not my concern because I can't see them.

So, there was another blast. And that was the time some boys came out of those surrounding bldgs. From my window I could see they did not have anything. They were fighting with stones. Three policemen and they. Policemen were blowing whistles. By and by the crowd swells to about 4/5 hundreds.

Interviewer: Which side?

Harish Bhanot: This side - Hindu side. And from the other side fire bombs and bottles were coming.

Interviewer (disrupting his flow): Fire bombs and bottles were coming from which side?

Harish Bhanot: From the Behrampada side. That was the time some boys came from the Hindu side, the chawls. And two of them, I am told, walked in and they threw something. Afterwards there was fire. Who was responsible for setting those huts on fire, whether those huts were habituated at that moment or not is not my concern because I could not see them. But I do know that the fire brigade then went on to that place and next morning I did see that those huts had been reduced to ashes.

Cut to a young woman with three children in front of their burnt hut. The apartment buildings can be seen behind her.

Young woman with three children: They didn't let the fire-engines in. They said: don't go, it's just a wedding celebration. Once everything was ashes, then they came to douse the fires.

Interviewer: From where were the bombs thrown?

Young woman with three children: From the terrace, up there.

Interviewer: Which terrace?

Camera tilts up from the woman at the ground level to the terrace of the nearest apartment building, pans across the terraces and comes down to the woman as she continues to speak.

Young woman with three children: Right here... the first bombs came from here. And then the police, too, were posted up there. Just because Muslims live here... they wouldn't allow us to douse the fires.

Interviewer: How could they stop you?

Young woman with three children: They were firing at those who tried. What could the Muslims then do. They would die of police firing. Still two people hit by bullets... died on the spot. Six were injured.

Cut to the interior of the local police station. An official holds a crude country bomb and demonstrates its function. Other officers surround him.

Police station official: This is a petrol bomb. You pour the petrol like this, and light it. Once it starts burning, you pour more petrol to make more flame and then you chuck it at the other's hut...and the hut catches fire. (he makes a gesture of throwing from a height to a lower level).

Shot of baskets full of crude bombs displayed at the police station and close shots of burnt household objects.

Commentary:

The fact that a large number of houses in Behrampada were savagely destroyed, has failed to strike a chord of sympathy. The Building-residents were convinced that the slum dwellers themselves committed the arson. In the eyes of their neighbors the victims and accused are, ironically, identical.

Cut to

LIG women in the courtyard: It all began on the 1st. Bombs were thrown just behind our building. The first ones fell on the railway quarters... and then here. Would we attack our own building? Then they threw bombs at the police, one police was injured. That must be what created the problem.

: Nobody here has ever started riots...or thrown anything. We have not initiated riots, we won't stop them.

: We just want access to the station.

Cut to the old Muslim man with flowing beard near the mosque.

Interviewer: People here must have done something?

Old man with flowing beard: Nothing – we have not been doing a thing. The police are right here, all around... ask them yourselves. It was all one-sided. We were totally helpless. All sorts of things happen. People look on calmly. Even if someone here dies, they blame us. And Behram is down here, they are up there. Can the ones below attack those who are above?

Cut to the women of LIG colony.

Interviewer: How do you think those huts burnt down?

LIG women in the courtyard: We feel it was their own doing. May be some bombs they threw landed on their own huts.

: Maybe. It certainly had nothing to do with us. We are ordinary, middle-class people.

Cut to Sheikh Liyaqat, a socially active resident of Behrampada.

Sheikh Liyaqat: Was anyone there hurt, any buildings damaged? Our property has been damaged, our people hurt. Houses inside our boundary walls were burnt... yet they blame us. Our homes are rickety enough. Do you think we would burn them down just to watch the fun?

Cut to popular xenophobic posters and wall writings in Hindi and Marathi in public places.

Commentary:

Clinging on to the myth that Muslims are a savage lot, Hindus today are eager to guard their community against any spillover of crude violence. And spurred by repeated propaganda that a non-violent Hindu is at risk, the majority community here seeks protection. The Hindutva brigade's pungent rhetoric is reassuring to the ears of those living in the apartments around Behrampada.

Newspaper cutting with the news of the arrest of local Shivsena leader, Sarpotdar, on the charge of rioting, along with his photograph.

Commentary:

Feelings ran riot when the local Shivsena MLA and perceived Hindu protector Madhukar Sarpotdar was arrested. The majority community pulsated with a sense of injustice.

Cut to an elderly man in the group of LIG colony men.

Elderly LIG man: Let me be frank in Khernagar and in this entire area... it's thanks to Sarpotdar that we're alive. Did any of these big-shot, the Congress leaders ever come? Did our very own Sunil Dutt bother about us Hindus? Don't we have feelings?

Cut to

LIG women in the courtyard: It is the leaders like Sunil Dutt who incite these people. They are given all sorts of facilities and comforts. All these days of curfew, we weren't even given milk and they were regularly sent milk and provisions. If the government is for all, then why not for us?

Cut to

Elderly LIG man: Every politician speaks only on their behalf. Who cares about the Hindu side? Since December 6, has anyone tried to help us? Those who do try are victimised, arrested. What is this?

Cut to

Sunil Dutt, Local Congress Member of Parliament and a popular film star of yesteryear in his office.

Sunil Dutt: Well, why I have not met them? Whenever I've tried to go, I've been stopped. At the MHADA Colony, where three children were hurt...by bullets, people blocked my way. They didn't let me speak to the women. Some 250 Hindu families from Meghwadi... had taken refuge in Jogeshwari East. I went there and took my daughter too along with me. We went with rations... but they abused us and made us leave. The whole attempt was to prevent me from meeting...my brothers and sisters of this community. For what if my ideas were to influence them? They want to control people's mind.

Cut to a narrow lane in Behrampada in evening light. Two neighbours, Shakila – a Muslim woman and Sharada, a Hindu appear like a pair.

Shakila: Obviously, no-one here votes for Sarpotdar etc... because we Muslims vote for Congress, not Shivsena. So the police and Sena joined hands to attack us.

Interviewer: Why should the police help the Sena?

Shakila: Sarpotdar is the local big shot. The police kow-tows to the Sena. The cops would attack first, the others would follow. They always used some kind of signal... like blowing a whistle, or throwing a bomb.

Interviewer: The police and the Sena together?

Shakila: Yes!

Cut to Umar Qureshi, a local Muslim leader and also a person with personal ambition in mainstream politics. He is owner of a grain shop and the interview takes place there.

Umar Qureshi: It is really a Congress - Shiv Sena issue. For no matter what we go through, how much we are made to suffer... one thing is a constant in our thinking,

in the community leadership - we have 'Congress' stamped all over us. The Sena is extracting some illegitimate benefit out of the situation. They know that we are Congress supporters. So their logic is – why don't we harass them so much that they run away from here. Thus this constituency which traditionally goes to the Congress will go to Shivsena.

Series of Congress election posters.

Commentary:

But as majoritarianism is aggressively and brazenly promoted by the BJP and the Shivsena, Muslims today are facing the fact that, the Congress party's self-serving calculated patronage has left them nowhere.

Cut to

Umar Qureshi: The Congress has its own tension... because it hopes to rule by promises alone. It wants us, the minorities to, keep living in this lowly condition. Moving up would end our problems - so the Congress wants us to languish here forever.

Cut to a slow pan over the slum from extreme top angle revealing the sprawl and contour of the 10 acre of Behrampada. Hindi film song plays on the radio – *kahi pe nigahe, kahi pe nishana* (the focus is somewhere the target is somewhere else...)

Commentary:

Electoral politics may have divided the area into Hindu apartments and Muslim slums, but within Behrampada another reality endures. Fear does not stalk the 12% Hindus who live here in tolerant coexistence. Majority-minority reversal in Behrampada is a peaceful statement.

A busy tea shop with the owner in the front boiling large amount of the brew.

Gajen Patel (Hindu Tea stall owner): I live here, inside the shop. My shop stayed open through all this trouble.

Interviewer: How many Hindu-owned shops are there?

Gajen Patel: Mine is the only one.

Interviewer: Any on the other side?

Gajen Patel: There were some, but those people got scared and fled. I've nothing to be afraid of.

Cut to

Raju Bhai (Hindu Trader in front of Gajen's tea shop): Only those who don't know Behram are scared. I'm here all day long. I practically live with the people of Behrampada.

Interviewer: For the benefit of the people outside please tell us some detail.

Raju Bhai: Outsiders will slowly realise these things ... through the press, or when people like me ...tell them there's no reason to feel insecure here.

Cut to

Shalini Shetty (Hindu housewife in Behrampada): Nobody has ever said: 'Remove your bindi'. In fact, whenever there is tension they advise us... to stay safely at home. I live here, we often sit together till 11 at night. Not once in these two months have I taken my bindi off.

Cut to

Sharada Chawde (Hindu housewife, neighbour of Shakila): They are like brothers to me, like sons. I have been here for nearly twenty years. Four of my children were born here. I came with one child, bought a hut for some 6,000 rupees. Now it is a cemented house. I've been here ever since. They are all like my kids, my brothers, my sisters.

Cut to shot of a family of children and adults huddled inside a modest room.

Commentary:

There are no photograph of the 32-year-old Abbas. The police shot him dead when he was trying to save a temple in Behrampada from being gutted. For his

mother, his wife, three children and a handicapped brother, who were all dependent on Abbas, memories are all that remain.

Cut to

Abbas's Mother: My boy heard the bombs and went there. Bombs were falling close to the Ganesh temple and he hurled them away. Yet some huts caught fire. As he moved towards them, the police fired at him. [she cries]

Newspaper cutting with the news of Abbas's death, headline:

Death of A Martyr

Sound of the mother crying overlaps.

Cut to Shakila and Sharda Chawde – the Muslim-Hindu friends.

Interviewer: It's a Hindu-Muslim quarrel. Yet this Muslim man died while saving a Hindu temple.

Sharada Chawde: He belonged to our lane. Don't neighbors stand by each other?

Cut to various chores that are carried out in public sites: vendors in the bazar, women washing vessels at the public water taps on the roadside.

Commentary:

Sharing and surviving in a neighborhood literally walled in on three sides, has created an inseparable bond among the residents of Behrampada. And this bond has been further strengthened by a tragedy that has spared none.

Cut to a group of elderly Muslim women sitting on the floor against a blue coloured wall. They sit still like an exquisite painting. The large matronly women of the urban poor category sit together with extreme grace and in deep grief. The camera or the presence of the outsiders do not affect their poise. They are friends of Neelam Bano.

Neelam Bano's friend 1: When the men and children ran back home, we felt: this cannot go on. Now the police are coming to our homes to kill us. So we went out. We had not even reached the spot but we could already hear the gunfire.

Neelam Bano's friend 2: Thinking they wouldn't fire on women. We went to see where the noise was coming from. At first, they fired in the air to warn us. We all went forward together, looking for the children. When a bullet came and hit her.

Neelam Bano's friend 3: Two of us were in the front.

Interviewer: Where did this happen?

Neelam Bano's friend 3: At the edge of the drain. I saw a bullet land on the ground. I did not think of picking it up. Then she was hit by another bullet and fell into the water. I searched for her saying, 'Where has Neelam bhabhi vanished?' Then I saw her dupatta floating. Then she (Neelam Bano's friend 4), I and two boys pulled her out. She was still breathing. We tried to revive her, but she breathed her last. We went to the police and asked, why did you kill this woman? They said it was not on purpose, they had orders to shoot if anyone came closer.

B/W photograph of Neelam Bano.

Interviewer: She died right there?

Neelam Bano's friends: Yes, there itself.

Dissolve from the photograph of Neelam Bano to her friends in grief.

Neelam Bano's friend 1: And then they dumped her at the site of the police picket.. That was it.

Neelam Bano's friend 3: I even know the name of the inspector who shot her.

Interviewer: Tell us.

Cut to shots of the artisan's workshops known as Muslim crafts but in reality a few available livelihood practices for the urban poor migrants: flower garland making, shoe repairing, block printing etc.

Commentary:

Neelambano died. But for those who survived, the walls of the ghetto closed in further. Prison and haven were now one. Beyond, peril lurked and so the confines of the ghetto had become their fortress. Here people were felled by police bullets, outside an entire people had become headhunters.

Cut to close shot of a scared child peeping through the third floor window of an unfinished building, her father standing behind her – between assurance and premonition.

Umar Qureshi: Being in a majority here, we were safer than Muslims living in the adjacent plots, who were forced to flee. Their houses were looted. They're still living all over, unable to return.

Cut to an old woman sitting outside her hut and reciting from the holy book.

Commentary:

But this air of security in Behrampada is really a Hobson's choice. It further ghettoised the residents and left them under siege. Even the jobs and trades which are forced to remain traditional and old-fashioned in this ghetto-slum, are damagingly crippled.

Cut to zari and embroidery workshops. The, mostly underaged, workers sit on the floor around a cot and pick needles on the drawings drawn on the spread out cloth. Their bent heads rarely look up.

Nazir Ahmed (Muslim Zari Artisan): I have only five or six workers left. The rest have gone home.

Interviewer: Were they all Muslims?

Nazir Ahmed: Yes. They're all from Bareilly, in U.P.

Cut to a Muslim youth in traditional attire.

Ahmed Patel (Goldsmith): We have been jobless for two months because we get our finishing work done in Khar. But now it is not safe to go there.

Cut to shops and offices that were looted and burnt selectively during the riots. From the cluster of shops only the ones owned by the Muslims were marked and attacked.

Commentary:

At least 2.5 lakh people fled the city during the riots. This huge population displacement included several Hindus. But for the Muslim refugees, their identity and thus their existence had been threatened, making their return remote.

Cut to a middle aged man in his house.

Abbas Perekar (shop keeper): I was terrified that if I went back like this they would kill me. If I get rid of my beard and cap, I shall be safe, no harm will come to me then, I know that. But I cannot do that.

Cut to the vendor woman in red who appeared first on the screen.

Red woman (very empathetically): I am capable of making 10 rupees, but it's been two months.

Interviewer: What work do you do?

Red woman: I carry sand, or sell fish, or bananas. I have five children. How can we survive? If others in the clan were doing well one could tell them – come on, spare some 100 or 50 this way. But on that account too we are finished. Even good businesses have been ruined. We must exchange, I shall buy from your shop, you will buy from mine... If we cannot live in harmony, there will be no livelihood. Tell me – isn't it!

Cut to shots of young children playing a make-do version of cricket (the dream sport of Bombay) and a deserted school building.

Commentary:

However, this irrefutable logic is ignored in the present charged atmosphere. Besides, the attempts of those who have stayed and continued their efforts to enter the mainstream, are also sabotaged. School children and parents try to cope with the loss of an academic year. The no. of those thus deprived may not be

many. But in the context of a community still largely marginalised, an entire generation is threatened with the loss of a better future.

Cut to a closely knit group of women with children in Behrampada. They stand tall and present their case. Noise of children playing filter in.

First argumentative woman: Students in the tenth have been badly ruined. After studying all year, they couldn't fill the exam forms.

Second argumentative woman: Teachers in the Municipal school were attacked with knives.

Interviewer: In Urdu school?

Second argumentative woman: Yes, in Urdu school. They told the teacher that – we would kill you if you continued to teach. The teachers fled... falling over each other... clinging to their self-respect. One male teacher was picked up and then beaten. Then the teachers in Marathi school also ceased teaching, they said – if Urdu students are not allowed in then we shall not teach either.

Third argumentative woman: Some well-known people gathered here...

Second argumentative woman (to the noisy crowd that gathered around):
STOP! STAY SILENT!

Third argumentative woman: They promised that it would not continue anymore. They came for our Republic Day function... to hoist the national flag. They said, please reconcile... everything would be all right, that we should send the children back to school. The children had been back barely a week when it began again, explosions, bombs.

Second argumentative woman: The teachers said: Bring the children, nobody will touch kids wearing our school uniforms. But it is not only the uniform, the parents had to go along as well. Children cannot be sent on their own. Like they caught hold of two boys. One escaped, they beat the other, threatened him. He came back panting. They said, 'go and inform the people in Behram'. Even those who go there to sell things are beaten up and sent back with these words, 'Go, tell them in Behram that you were thrashed'. Nobody is ready to venture out, no one can go anywhere or sit for vending goods.

First argumentative woman: When the children were taken to school for new admission they are refused. No admission for the people of Behram. Behrampada is

maligned. They act like this is a den of terrorists. They may come here and see it for themselves.

Cut to a top angle wide shot of Behrampada. The sound of evening azaan on the track.

Commentary:

A malicious campaign persists in dogging Behrampada long after the rest of the city has regained its equilibrium. The slum was allegedly a godown for sophisticated arms, headquarters for several underworld dons and a familiar stop for dope peddlers.

Shots of a display of arms seized by the local police – including hockey stick and kitchen knives.

But in the end hard evidence stopped at one crude gun. In case of the rest of the seizures, the police refused to distinguish between what was taken from the slum and what was recovered from other areas surrounding it.

Cut to the police map of the locality with religious shrines marked prominently on that.

However, this did not stop the police from giving blanket statements against Behrampada to the media. Design rather than mere emotion appears to sustain the campaign.

Cut to the adjacent locality where some eminent Marathi intellectuals live. Well appointed house of Arun Naik.

Arun Naik (Resident of Bandra East, a book publisher): In Behrampada there is no Hindu-Muslim tension, there is no tension at all. The people on the other side of Behrampada are Hindus and inside are pre-dominantly Muslim. The Muslims are an unauthorised settlement which the Hindus on the other side, who are not an unauthorised settlement, want to go away. It happens so that they happen to be Muslim and these people happen to be Hindus. The basic problem is that these hutments should not be here, that is what these people feel. And the communal

violence which has started after the Ayodhya problem has given them an excellent opportunity to use... sort of create an impression that these are the people who are killing, so they should go away. Basically removing 'unauthorised' people 'illegally'.

Cut to the men from LIG colony in the courtyard.

Interviewer: Does what you've said about Behrampada... reflect your views on the entire Muslim community?

Men of LIG colony: No, no, we're not against all Muslims. It's only Behrampada. :This is a land problem.

Cut to the well appointed house of Arun Naik.

Prakash Burte (resident of Bandra east, scientist and author): Priorities have got changed - which jopadpatty to go. Many people do not like to have jopadpatties near by. Even the jopadpatty people do not like to live in jopadpatty. If they are given bungalows in Malabar hill they would happily go. Now the only thing is because of this riot the Behrampada is made victim as a first priority.

Cut to shots of new construction works in the vicinity – corporate parks, multi-specialised hospital and luxurious apartment buildings – a far cry not only from Behrampada but from all the LIG (lower income group) and MIG (middle income group) buildings.

Commentary:

The bottom line is that jopadpattismust go. In the great mad surge towards competitive development, there is no time for lost causes like jopadpattiesand poverty. Behrampada's temerity in occupying 10 acres of prime land in suburban Bandra must surely have contributed in pulling the slum out of obscurity and into the limelight.

In a city where real estate is burgeoning business, commercial land in this part of Bombay sells for as much as Rs. 25,000/- per sq.ft.and residential land rakes in at least Rs.3,000/ per sq ft.

A slow pan on an urban planning map of the area.

Commentary:

Furthermore, Bandra east in recent times is being projected as a mid-town commercial center. The city's central diamond market and wholesale cloth mart will also be relocated here. In short, upper class trappings are in sight.

Cut to the men from LIG colony in the courtyard. Camera on the buzzing crowd of people in the bazar lane of Behrampada.

Men of LIG colony: The Bandra Terminus Project is worth 67 crores. That's why they must be evicted. Today's newspaper says the project's first phase is over. In the second phase, some 350 shops behind the railway quarters have to go so that a 120 feet wide road can be built. There are two platforms currently, seven are needed. There will be a thirteen storied commercial center. This is their plan for the Shopping Complex (shows a promotional brochure).

Interviewer: So that is why Behrampada must go?

Men of LIG colony: Yes, only then can progress occur and the railways make good of their investment. But the issue of eviction has been a vexed one. The then MLA, Chandurkar and now MP Sunil Dutt have kept raising obstacles.

Cut to the old lady who was reciting from the holy book in Behrampada.

Lady with the holy book: Where were these people when Behram was only water? Where had they disappeared then? Ask me, okay! We lived in Parel, in Adam Mistry's chawl.

Interviewer: Who made this place?

Lady with the holy book: We made this place what it is now. Now it is good. Water is gone, there are roads, doctor has come in one place. It is all set. When we came there was nothing, just water up to one's throat. Then in the process of living... one Hindu lived nearby, poor man... he made a living carting dead bodies.

Cut to a series of public sector companies that have their head offices in the areas adjacent to Behrampada.

Commentary:

On January 6, representative of all the housing societies in Bandra east and schools and colleges presented a memorandum to the police commissioner. They were demanding the eviction of all the unauthorised hutments in Behrampada for they polluted the area. The unions of the ONGC, MSEB and Indian Oil which are led by the Shiv Sena also fueled the campaign.

Cut to the sprawling marsh land that still exists in-between the slum and the development projects.

Commentary:

Behrampada's oldest living resident came here in 1950. The country set out to build a nation and some people dreamt of making a home.

Cut to Behrampada.

Old woman in white: We brought sand from all over - from the railway, from the creek where they took the corpses of the untouchables... we keep living by feeding sand to the soil. Some built thatched huts, others used palm fronds. There were no tin roofs or brick walls.

Cut to voices from the veterans of Behrampada.

The second old man with flowing beard: I came in fifty seven. Behram was already inhabited. Even the foundation of the Housing Board came up before our eyes. I told you there was no housing board then. This MIG building is just seven or eight years old. It was not there. There was nothing else in this whole area. It was deserted.

Another elderly lady: Water was constant. We fed sand into it, made the land. Then huts came up. This road didn't exist, it was made by us - a dirt track at first, then we paved it.

Another elderly man: We raised funds, some gave 100 rupees, some 50, brought sand, built a road, that joined the main road.

Cut to a slow pan shot of a deserted but extremely fashionable industrial complex.

Commentary: Behrampada paid its due to a developing society by providing traders, vendors, maid-servants, artisans and laborers. But as new neighbors took up residence next door, yesterday's path finders became today's interlopers.

Cut to

Sheikh Liyaqat: In 1970, Indira Gandhi, laid the foundation stone by the highway, where the ONGC now stands.

Interviewer: What was it for?

Sheikh Liyaqat: Slum development.

Interviewer: The land was to be given to the slum?

Sheikh Liyaqat: Yes, after being developed. They were to build houses that would cost us Rs.25,000. Means she laid the foundation stone with the promise to make provision for good housing for rupees 25,000. It was part of the Clean Bombay campaign.

Cut to the parliament of Republic of India.

Commentary:

Political parties played musical chairs with power. In this game of electoral politics old promises were crumpled and tossed into the waste-bin, never to be revived again.

Sheikh Liyaqat: When Morarji Desai of the Janata Party became the Prime Minister, the railways first laid claim to this land. They had made no move to acquire it earlier.

The second old man with flowing beard: The beginning of our life was horrible.

We lived through such hardship in the initial days. Today everyone claims - it's my land, it's my land! Nobody was interested then.

Pyari Apa, the story teller of Behrampada: Swing one oil-smearred thali and mosquitoes would stick all over. At night, we would sit outdoors with the children - there was no electricity... we would spread sheets and sit, fanning the children through the night. That's how we spent the summer nights. Now it is all filled up, with sand brought in lorries, paid for by us, by the poor. Not by the government.

Few generic shots of the slum which have already appeared in various contexts.

Commentary:

What has made these early settlers outcastes? IS the dividing line language? Religion or culture? Or class? In a gentler, more compassionate age these differences wouldn't necessarily have led to bloodshed. But in an open season of intolerance, those who don't fit in must either bend or bow out.

The woman with the holy book: Now they say, Get lost - we are putting up our buildings. Why is your slum here? They will demolish our homes, they have got orders from top – so what to do. Allah will punish them!

Old man with flowing beard: This prejudice is growing all over India. It's not just here. It has spread all over. And we still don't know how we are to blame. Surely there must be a reason. But we have no clue - why we are being treated in this way.

Pyari Apa, the story teller of Behrampada (Tight close up): What new place? How will it be... where is this place they want to dump us in? We are afraid. We have lived here for so long – in the land that we made by ourself, yet we are facing so many problems. What will happen to us elsewhere? When our homes grow old, they make us leave. Once we are settled there, they will chase us out again. Will we never have an address of our own?

Pyari Apa's face freezes and slowly dissolves into a black frame.

A male voice over comes on the black frame:

Observe, from here the city
confining within confines
Walls rise, prison-like,
all around

Every street a line that
foretells the prisoners fate
Where no milestone, nor destination
nor succor is found.

If one walks swiftly,
the mind asks in vain
Why no voice cried halt
along the way

If some hand gestures,
the senses must explain
Why no sound of bangles
pierced the stillness of day.

Observe, from here, the city
how, among those living here
Honour is abandoned
and reason depraved

Each man in fetters bound
a prisoner
Each woman in chains of gold enmeshed,
a slave

Those shadows that flicker afar,
near the flames
Are they shimmers of sadness
or stale, drunken breaths?

Those daubs of red on every door,
and wall of every lane
Are they flowers, or blood?
Signs of life, or of death?

(The poem is translated into Hindustani from Faiz Ahmed Faiz by Atul Tiwari)

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