

In Response to Hindutva

PREETI KAUR*

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each spring
I plant a circle
of marigolds
in my backyard
a golden garland
to honor
remember
weep
for my dead

each bright bud
a life
dipped in saffron nectar
smolders
like the *kesri* turbans
which crown my people's heads
like an ember
like the city/ the village
on fire
on fire
like the gurdwara upon gurdwara®
and now mosque upon mosque®
target
of torch and bullet
the land
at the hand
of politician/ policeman/ mob leader
lit up
into a cremation ground

the government
a giant match
strikes through
rakes through
the mud cake huts
the city homes
drags the flame
between the people's thighs
burns
burns
weds the people
to the earth
through inferno and blaze
sends shiver

to extinguish
the families
the tillers
commits the ultimate
sati
sati
how dare you
sati
on the streets
as the *hindutva* hordes
strip my brothers' turbans
douse long hair with oil
set their skulls on fire
to flee through the Delhi alleys.
sati
on the streets
as the hindutva hordes
carve out
my sister's nine month pregnant tummy
in Gujarat slum
hoist up the dead faetus
as live flame
threat in the face
of the dying mother
massacre/ massacre
holy/ holy
how many/ how many
my beloved's blood
flows from
my mother's heart
my sister's womb
blessed
my father's chest
my brother's throat
flows
as the most sacred
river
in my homeland
nothing more holy
than breath and body
so I will continue
to string
my garland
blossom by blossom
I will plant life
into the earth
I will not forget

our sisters
raped at noon in the village square
I will call out the names
of our orphans
our widows
who still live
in thin huts
amongst ash
and burnt bones
their homes
their hearts
a well
deeper than fiery night sky
I will demand
the worms
which still inhabit
the shared garden
out
to shrivel away
in the salt
of our dead's dried blood
I will drench myself
in marigold/ marigold
because
I refuse
to forget
massacre/ massacre
I refuse
to extinguish
this living candle
I will not allow
anyone
to eclipse
the golden suns
which circle
my planet.
My memory
I will resurrect
each life
each flower
I refuse
to forget
because
my people's heart is
the forever burning
funeral pyre.

