INTERVIEW WITH DR. INDIRA GOSWAMI ON 23/11/2009 AT HER RESIDENCE IN GANDHIBASTI, UMAKANTA ENCLOSURE, GUWAHATI AT 5 P.M. IN THE EVENING.

1) Pritima Sharma: Your novel *Pages Stained with Blood* is set during the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. Is it your eye witness account?

*Indira Goswami:* Yes it is set during Anti – Sikh Riot in Delhi, when I was living there. It was a horrible riot. Brutality is beyond description. I was in Vrindavan and also have witnessed the cruelty inflicted upon widows which is more cruel than riots. It is a horrible situation. When I happen to meet officials and ministers, they say that the problem is of social structure. You, writers can do something.

2) Pritima Sharma: Your novel “*Pages Stained With Blood*” is written in first person? Why?

*Indira Goswami:* That’s because I wrote exactly what I saw and most of it is true. It was so horrible and shocking that I couldn’t exaggerate anything further. The novel is more of a documentation of what I saw. It is something beyond description. I have tried to capture whatever possible.

3) Pritima Sharma: Do you know the characters personally in the Pages Stained with Blood?

*Indira Goswami:* Yes, most of them. I have seen the Sikh Baba and after few days saw his injury. Too, brutal and inhuman.

4) Pritima Sharma: How do you feel about this novel?

*Indira Goswami:* I feel that this is one of my great novel. It is based on brutal riots. I had in mind about writing a novel. So I maintained a diary.
5) Pritima Sharma: Before writing this novel, did you visit the riot sites? I think you were lecturer of Delhi University then?

Indira Goswami: Of course. I visited the ravaged sites and saw a lot of incidents standing in my balcony, or from the window of my room, feeling very helpless. I used to work as a lecturer in Delhi University then. I was very young, used to live entirely alone in Shakti Nagar, North Campus. It was very difficult for me as I couldn’t do much to stop it. I wanted to go and meet the victims. The landlord, I mean the owner of the house I rented was a very caring person and wouldn’t allow me to go. Rule 144 was announced and many people couldn’t assemble in one place.

You know, there was shoe shop owned by a Sikh near my house. A lot of people came out from the slums nearby and looted it. I saw small children playing with those shoes. They wore large shoes in their small feet and walked around laughing and playing with them. Large stacks of shoes were carried away from that shop. From my balcony, I also saw four men carrying a fridge from somewhere. They must have looted it from someone’s house.

6) Pritima Sharma: How much imagination did you put in Pages Stained With Blood? Is there a thin line between reality and imagination?

Indira Goswami: There is only a thin line between reality and imagination in the novel. I try my best to portray the factual reality in literature. But such a method can’t be applied in literature as because literature is an art. Many things happen in life but it is always not easy to describe them in words. .. In fact I had to regulate some strange scenes of reality through subjugation of passion.

7) Pritima Sharma: This is the last question that I will ask you. Your literature is sensitive and humanity based? Is there any special reason for it. Here I would like to add that may god give you a long life and also I must say Assam is proud of you.

Indira Goswami: Pritima, listen, you have seen me how sensitive I am. Perhaps this sensitivity has reflected in my literature which is all about humanity. God has created a beautiful creature human beings but we have made it bad I sincerely believe that man may remain as human beings. Now complete your research, my blessings with you. I hope this will be enough.
3rd September, 2009
Place: Shakti Nagar, Delhi

During the field study undertaken, information received during an interview with a riot affected victim.

Simarnjit Kaur, Female, 67 and Jagjit Singh, Male, 72
Delhi, India

Q. Did you lose a family member/friend in the 1984 riots?
A. We did lose 3 of our relatives. One was a retired Air Force Officer, his eldest son who was Test Pilot on Jaguars and the younger son who just got selected for Ranji Trophy. All were lynched in front of the lady of the house and then burnt alive. She was also mercilessly beaten up and had multiple fractures.

Q. What is your opinion of Operation Blue Star?
A. The operation Blue Star was a shameless act by the Government of India. Surely there were other means of flushing out terrorists from the Golden Temple. What was required was more patience and complete cordoning off of the Golden Temple premises so that genuine pilgrims could come out. But Government (More specifically Mrs. Indira Gandhi) wanted to teach Sikhs a lesson. In later years similar situation arose in Kashmir when the Militants were holed up in Hazratbal Shrine. But same Govt. did not issue orders to the Soldiers to enter the shrine.

Q. There have been many parallels drawn between the atrocities of the 1984 riots and those during of the partition, what is your view of this comparison?
A. The atrocities of 1984 and what happened in 1947 have a few things in common. Both these events resulted in blood bath ending thousands of human lives. The common man was instigated by scruple-less Politicians. But during 1947 a large nation India was being split into 2 countries and such blood bath was expected. But in 1984, the innocent people were taken for a surprise. No one expected that in Democratic India such thing could happen. Let us face it, when Mahatma Gandhi was killed by Nathuram Godse, no Maharashtrians was killed. Then how come, when Indira Gandhi was murdered, a veritable hell was let loose on the innocent Sikhs.
Q Did it occur to you that the atrocities committed during the riots would/should be "avenged" when Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister?
A. So many lives have been lost. All the Sikhs have been asking is to punish the known guilty persons. Manmohan Singh being the PM has no Significance on this.

Q There have been many commissions to investigate the 1984 riots. In your opinion was the Nanavati Commission different and if so, why?
A. None of the Commissions appointed by the Government has come out clearly to name the guilty politicians and murderers who were identified. Nanavati Commission is no exception.

Q Why was the failure of the Nanavati Commission more disappointing than that any of the other commissions?
A. Nanavati Commission had possibly the longest stint. Sikhs have been waiting for Justice for over 20 years. So people hoped that possibly this time there would be clear cut findings. But unfortunately this did not happen.

Q Do you feel that the legal battles over the 1984 riots need to continue? If so, when, in your opinion would justice be served?
A. I think the legal battle should continue till the guilty are punished.