

'Similar communal sense prevailed when Modi was falsely accused for Godhra riots': Himachal Governor

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THE SAME communal sense as prevalent today existed when Prime Minister Narendra Modi endured the "false accusation" of Godhra riots in 2002 as people conspired to get him imprisoned, said Himachal Pradesh Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

"When will we accept a sense of self-esteem? And, when we do that, people feel that we are communal. I think similar communal sense was prevalent when, as the Gujarat Chief Minister, he was blamed falsely for Godhra (riots) and somewhere, people conspired with an aim to get him imprisoned," the Governor said during a special lecture on 'Amrit Kaal Ka Bharat' at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), in collaboration with the India Think Council, in the city.

"Initially I was hesitant to come for this event but when Saurabh (Saurabh Pandey, Director of India Think Council) told me, I realised that I am going to that place whose (former) Chief Minister had endured a Godhra-

like accusation," he said. Shukla added that Gujarat saw its development take a leap when Modi was the CM.

Lashing out at the Opposition and the politics of caste, Shukla alleged that the "followers" of socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia were now indulging in caste politics, an apparent reference to the demand for caste survey by several opposition parties after such an exercise was carried out by the Bihar government.

"When someone gets together, they only talk about their success or other's success. Does someone think which caste we are from? Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, a socialist and an economist, gave the slogan 'dam bandho, jati todo' (fix prices, break caste). Lohia, a socialist who is credited for holding a Ramayan Mela in Chitrakoot, during a Parliament speech said that if those sitting in the House have to learn how a family is united, how India is made and what is the feeling of brotherhood, they had to go to Ayodhya and learn from Lord Ram. It is surprising that the followers of the same Lohia are running after caste. They want to bring caste quickly so that they can do politics. We need to think over this," Shukla said.

The Himachal governor, who was also a Minister of State for Finance in the first Modi government at the Centre, credited the PM for bringing in a change in how other countries perceived India.

India's history witnessed a strange change in 2014, he said, adding, "Prime Ministers were elected based on numbers, but in 2014, even before the elections, the country's population had accepted a person by his name — Modiji as the PM. The country desired this change. It was his reputation as an honest CM of Gujarat that resulted in Modi being elected as the PM in 2014. I definitely say that India's Amrit Kaal is when people (abroad) who used to think that Indians must have come to seek some help, now see India inviting them to establish their businesses here. Today, our country is attracting people under its 'Make in India' policy to set up their units here. It is providing them not just a market but also innovation," he added.

He also credited the Modi government's intervention to ensure safe return of Indian students from Ukraine amid Russian invasion.

-WITHPTI INPUTS