

COMMUNAL RIOTS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA



Second Edition

Edited by
Asghar Ali Engineer

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Preface to the First Edition

The present volume on communal violence in post-partition period in India has been planned on the basis of papers read in a seminar organised by the Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay, and Ikhwanus Safa Trust in December 1981. However, some more relevant papers and articles on the subject have also been included in this volume to make it more comprehensive and useful.

I am thankful to the participating scholars for revising their papers at my request to include them in this volume. I regret some papers could not be included in the present volume. The exclusion was certainly not because the papers were not of the requisite standard. I am thankful to all magazines and journals which have kindly agreed to allow us to include the papers and articles which were published by them. Also included in this volume are investigative reports of some major riots which took place since late sixties. These investigations throw important light on the nature of communal violence.

I am thankful to the publishers for having agreed to publish this volume which would be found quite useful not only by scholars but also by laymen interested in understanding the nature of communal conflict in contemporary India. I also thank the Trustees of Institute of Islamic Studies and those of Ikhwanus Safa Trust for having agreed to organise this seminar on my request. I hope the present volume would promote correct understanding of the complex phenomenon of communalism, a phenomenon which impedes the growth of secularism and true national consciousness.

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER
18.5.84

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Every effort has been made to trace and contact copyright holders. The publishers would be grateful for any omissions brought to their notice for inclusion in future editions of the book.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	Caste and Communal Violence in the Post Partition Indian Union <i>A.R. Desai</i>	10
3	The Causes of Communal Riots in the Post Partition Period in India <i>Asghar Ali Engineer</i>	33
4	Some Observations of the Origins of Communalism in India <i>D.R. Goyal</i>	42
5	The Nature and Origin of Communal Riots in India <i>N.C. Saxena</i>	51
6	Communalism and Communal Violence in India <i>Zoya Khaliq Hasan</i>	68
7	An Analytical View of Communal Violence <i>Moin Shakir</i>	88
8	Communal Violence — A Challenge to Plurality <i>Syed Shahabuddin</i>	104
9	The Tamilnadu Conversions, Conversion Threats and the Anti-Reservation Campaign: Some Hypotheses <i>Imtiaz Ahmad</i>	118
10	Perspectives on the Communal Problem <i>Imtiaz Ahmad</i>	130
11	Communal Politics in Jammu and Kashmir State <i>Riyaz Punjabi</i>	156
12	Communal Riots in the Post Partition Period: A Study of Some Causes and Remedial Measures <i>Hussain Shaheen</i>	165
13	The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad: A Case Study <i>Ghanshyam Shah</i>	175

1

INTRODUCTION

Communal violence since the early sixties and caste violence since the late sixties have become, it seems, a part of our life in India. Despite heinous crimes and unimaginable brutalities committed during the riots, our conscience is not shocked nor do we take these organised killings seriously enough to put our heads together to find some way to arrest this fast spreading canker in our national life. Even major riots, like that of Bihar Sharif, in which hundreds of innocent people are brutally done to death do not seem to evoke a heart-felt response least of all from our intelligentsia committed to secularism and democracy. Caste violence since the late sixties has added another pathetic dimension to this phenomenon of social violence.

Ours is a developing country and development proceeds at a very slow pace while, due to electoral politics which is basically a mobilisatory and consciousness raising politics, the aspirations and expectations of the people keep rising higher and higher. Though the process of development supposedly plays an integrative role, in the situation of uneven development (unevenness could be regional or ethnic or both) and a slow rate of growth, it sharpens divisive tendencies, inter-regional conflict and intercommunal violence. Moreover, the dynamics of social violence cannot be properly understood without taking into account its class dimension. The 'haves' of warring communities successfully exploit the sense of ethnic or communal identities of their respective communities to serve their own interests. This is one of the very important contributing factors stocking the fire of communal violence.

However, this is only one of the significant dimensions of the problem. There are other equally important aspects which a serious scholar of Indian politics cannot ignore. We have tried,

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However, this is only one of the significant dimensions of the problem. There are other equally important aspects which a serious scholar of Indian politics cannot ignore. We have tried,

in this book, to collect writings on communal violence so as to throw detailed light on these different aspects. Theoretical formulations, however precise, and analysis, however rigorously done, still leave out certain areas which can be discovered only through field investigations. It is precisely for this reason that we have included in this book a few field studies of some major communal riots which have taken place since the late sixties. These field studies, I am sure, would lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon of communal violence and the way it is organised systematically.

First, it is important to cover various aspects connected with the theory of communal violence. Communalism, as it is understood in our political parlance today, originated in the late nineteenth century, in the post-mutiny period, to be more precise. There were cases of Hindu-Muslim riots before that period also. But these riots, it is important to note, were more of a religious nature and had hardly any political motivation behind them. Religious riots are a spontaneous outburst of religious frenzy on the part of either one or both communities; communal riots, a comparatively recent phenomenon, are, on the other hand, not only politically motivated. They have behind them either an electoral battle or some political, religio-political, economic, cultural or linguistic demand. Even the agitation for or against change in Muslim personal law, is a religio-political and not a purely religious demand. But they are executed with neat planning and with an eye to achieve one or the other targetted result. Being well planned and executed, the atrocities and brutalities in such riots are committed on a scale unheard of before. Even anti-social elements are systematically employed for the purpose.

Needless to say, this book has been designed to cover communal riots in the post-partition period in India. This distinction between the pre- and post-partition periods as far as communal and caste violence is concerned, is necessary to make. There have emerged, after partition, new factors on the socio-political horizon of the country which have significant contributory value in aggravating or even causing the eruption of communal and caste violence.

India did win freedom from colonial rule, but the exploitative state structure and consequently the colonial legacy continued. Immediately after independence the state was dominated by the big landlords and the newly emerging capitalist class with the latter's share in state power increasing gradually as economic development took place. With economic development proceeding at a painfully slow rate there could not occur rapid transformation in the religio-cultural outlook of the Indian people. Moreover, in a tardily growing economy religio-cultural or linguistic diversities become handy for creating divisive tendencies. Dr. A. R. Desai, therefore, argues that the ruling classes use religion to divide the people and to perpetuate their exploitative class structure. He also argues that it is not only a section of the Indian bourgeoisie represented by the BJP (formerly Jansangh) or the RSS or any similar parochial organisation that uses religion, caste or language for creating chauvinism, but the bourgeois class as a whole is involved in promoting casteism and communalism. No bourgeois party, including the Congress (I) which swears most by secularism and national integration, can be exonerated of this charge. It is no use blaming the RSS alone in this respect.

The communal phenomenon, as pointed out before, arises when religion is used for political ends. It would, therefore, be incorrect to maintain that 'illiterate and backward' masses are responsible for creating communal tension or communal violence. It has been pointed out in my paper, while analysing the causes of communal violence that "more than 'illiterate' masses, educated elite from among both the communities play this role and aggravate the communal situation. In a backward situation, education, though not always, but more often, becomes an instrument of generating communal consciousness and identity. The potentialities of 'Hindu' identity and 'Muslim' identity have been exploited by the educated elite from both the communities." It should also be noted that in a slowly developing economy and ballot box oriented polity communal polarisation enhances bargaining power and thus enables the castes and communities concerned to claim a greater share of the scarce national resources. Medieval Indian history has often been used or rather misused by the communalists for their own ends. The conflict between Muslim and Hindu

rulers is usually projected as the fight between Hinduism and Islam. The Hindus, it is sought to be proved, were supplanted by the fanatic Muslim rulers and the latter fought back in defence of their religion. D. R. Goyal argues in his paper that this is far from true. "Friends and foes", he says, "were never determined on the basis of religion. The conflicts of kings, princes or chieftains of that period were rarely, if at all, motivated by considerations of advancements or defence of faith, even though there are cases when religion was permanently displayed as a badge of distinction by some of them." Goyal also argues that religion is not the ultimate cause of communal conflict, as the core of religion is its quest for ultimate reality which is supra-rational and metaphysical. The communal approach, on the other hand, concerns itself with things purely mundane, political and economic interests. The roots of communalism should, therefore, be sought in the machinations of vested interests, both political and socio-economic.

The terms communal prejudice, communal violence and communal conflict are loosely used while discussing the phenomenon of communalism. N. C. Saxena feels that "Prejudice, conflict and violence are inter related, one leads to the other, and yet these three sociological expressions of inter-community relations have an autonomy of their own. Each may exist independent of the other two." Giving an example Mr. Saxena says in his article, "Muslims in Sri Lanka do not mix with the other communities and yet are at peace with them. Thus, it is meaningful to study prejudice, conflict and violence separately." Analysing the dynamics of communal violence he points out that conflict is transformed into violence if the sense of relative deprivation is high, legitimacy of the Government is low, chances of communication are blocked, sense of insecurity intense, beliefs and traditions sanction violence and instruments of violence are readily available. While taking broad political factors into account at a macro level, it is equally important, at micro level, to consider the factors pointed out by Mr. Saxena in order to understand the dynamics of communal violence.

Zoya Hasan's paper 'Communalism and Communal Violence in India' discusses the socio-economic basis of communalism and

the political compulsions behind communal violence in post-independence India. Discussing the socio-economic basis she says, "the process of the fragmented and even capitalist development has created conditions of backwardness which, in turn, have facilitated the growth of communalism. Economic stagnation has led to a situation in which certain groups treat each other not only with suspicion and hostility, but also as rivals in the scarce market for jobs, concessions and subsidies." She also contends that "various forms of tension, among Hindus and Muslims in particular, have assumed corrosive proportions because the bourgeois political parties have, quite successfully, deflected intra-class contradictions into the stream of communal consciousness to serve their narrow ends."

Professor Moin Shakir, while discussing the causes of communal violence, makes an interesting point that "In a communal society, like India, the measures for removing certain cultural grievances, communal representation in the administration or in police personnel, etc., provide no guarantee that communal violence shall come to an end. These are in fact the manifestations of communalism and not the causes of communal violence." Prof. Shakir does not agree with those social scientists who maintain that the communal riots turn out to be "a sign of dynamism and of secular changes that are taking place in the Indian society as a result of economic development and modernisation." Such a thesis, according to Moin Shakir, "is extremely dangerous as it puts the blame of starting the riots on the victims of communal violence." Moin Shakir does have a point if the cause of communal violence he criticises is projected as the only cause. But such is not the case. There are several causes among which this is one.

Syed Shahabuddin, in his article on 'Communal Violence—A Challenge to Plurality', tries to draw our attention to "The myth of Muslim aggressiveness, and Hindu defensiveness, of Muslim fanaticism and Hindu tolerance" which he feels "must be discarded before the phenomenon of violent communal interaction in post-independence India can be dispassionately dissected and understood." According to him, "There are intolerant fanatics on both sides as there are men of goodwill." Syed Shahabuddin has a strong grievance against our intelligentsia who protest against

every small thing but are almost indifferent to as far as communal holocaust is concerned. "What is worse", he says, "is the moral bankruptcy and emotional apathy of our intellectuals. Humanists and liberals of all hues and shades, Gandhians, believers in Ahimsa, fighters for human rights and civil liberties, who are up in arms at the murder of the Chopra Children, at the blindings at Bhagalpur, at the 'encounters' with dacoits, at the lathi charges on the blind and the torture of undertrials at the elimination of 'Naxalites', at the rape of innocent and not-so-innocent women, at the public disrobing of Maya Tyagi in Baghpat, are either totally silent or keep mum after an initial 'tut-tut, too bad it happened', when men, women, children are brutally slaughtered in cold blood in broad daylight, with police and neighbours looking on as it recently happened in Biharsharif, for the crime of having been born Muslims."

The recent conversions to Islam have given a new turn to the communal situation in the country. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad started a campaign rather aggressively against these conversions and blamed them on Arab money. On account of this campaign a number of riots took place in the country. In view of this it is important to examine the causes of those conversions which took place in Tamil Nadu. Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad, an anthropologist, in his article on the Tamil Nadu conversions, formulates some important hypotheses. Dr. Ahmad makes distinction between the actual conversions and those threatened in other parts of the country. Then he goes on to say, "Once we recognise the difference between the actual conversions which occurred in Tamil Nadu and the conversions threatened elsewhere, it becomes pertinent to ask why actual conversions were limited to the four southern districts of Tamil Nadu though elsewhere too the Scheduled Castes threatened that they would embrace Islam."

According to Dr. Ahmad, the conversions in Tamil Nadu could be ascribed to local causes and factors rooted into the local situation. Among these factors the important ones could be the nature of Caste Hindu-Scheduled Caste relations, the nature of Tamil Nadu Islam (which is of Shafi'i variety as against the Hanafi variety in other parts of India) and the comparatively higher

status of Muslims. Dr. Ahmad thus rejects the theory of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad that Arab money had a hand in these conversions. These hypotheses, as emphasized by Dr. Ahmad himself, are of a tentative nature and need to be carefully examined through detailed field studies. In another article, 'Perspectives on the Communal Problem', Dr. Ahmad argues that the communal conflict should not be viewed, in the typology of violence as a separate category by itself; instead, it should be treated as a kind of social group violence. He says, "Once I was able to think about violence in comparative terms, it became clear that a consideration of all kinds of social group violence, including violence between Hindus and Muslims, irrespective of the identities of the social groups involved, was more likely to lead to an understanding of the social, economic and political factors which generate social group tensions, the contexts and situations within which these occur, and the aims they are designed to serve within the broader social and economic frame-work."

Dr. Ahmad, in this article also examines the nature of the Shia-Sunni conflict in Lucknow in this perspective. According to him it is also a type of group violence. He maintains that "... a consideration of the conflict between Shias and Sunnis ... will show that the structural similarities between it and the conflict between Hindus and Muslims are sufficiently remarkable to require consideration of the communal problems." While Imtiaz's assertion that all forms of violence in a developing society including the violence between the Hindus and Muslims as well as that between the Shias and Sunnis should be treated as a social group violence, is true in a sense, it would be difficult to view it wholly as such. A careful analysis of the whole problem would show that communal violence as well as the Shia-Sunni conflict do have more complexities to be analysed and understood. In fact, the whole problem is so complex that it cannot be reduced to any single assertion without risking oversimplification.

Jammu & Kashmir is the only state in the country where Muslims are in majority. What is more significant is that part of Kashmir is occupied by Pakistan and hence the events there have an important bearing on the communal situation in the

country as a whole and vice versa. Dr. Riyaz Punjabi of Kashmir University examines the impact of communal violence on Jammu & Kashmir State in his contribution. The Jamat-e-Islami, he maintains, exploits the incidents of communal violence elsewhere in the country to strengthen its position. And also the fact that the RSS and BJP hold sway in Jammu helps the Jamat in the Kashmir valley.

The barbarous nature of communal riots ever since the partition has been brought out by Mr. Husain Shaheen. He says, "Seeing the horrifying nature and extent of the communal riots which have occurred during the post-partition period in India, one cannot but wonder whether we, the people of India, have made any progress at all in raising the level of our national culture and civilisation from the level described by Mr. Krishna Chandar [in his novel *Ham Wahshi Hain*] in 1947." Mr. Husain quotes important excerpts from the Madon Commission and Jitendra Narayan Commission Reports to prove his contention that the RSS and other parochial organisations like the Shiv Sena are mainly responsible for the savageries and that the theory of conspiracy by the Muslims is not maintainable.

The micro-level study, as pointed out earlier, is very important in understanding the causes of communal riots as a number of factors rooted in the local situation play quite an important part in fanning the fires of communal violence. We have, therefore included a number of Field studies of communal riots Dr. Ghanshyam Shah writes on the Ahmedabad communal riot of 1969 and Satish Saberwal and Prof. Mushirul Hasan on the Moradabad riot of 1980. Dr. Zainab Banu deals with the comparative study of Udaipur and Godhra riots while the author of these lines has covered Biharsharif, Godhra, Ahmedabad, Pune, Solapur, Meerut Baroda, Assam and Hyderabad riots which have taken place from 1980 to 1982. All these studies clearly indicate that besides national or international questions (chiefly relating to the Islamic world in the international arena), local factors like group rivalries, economic competition, political differences, etc., play an important role in aggravating the communal situation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that such field studies provide us with a valuable insight and bring out clearly and convincingly the complex

and multifaceted nature of the problem as various factors contributing to the aggravation of the problem emerge on the analytical plane.

The role of communication media is undoubtedly an important one in spreading or combating caste and communal violence. Mr. S. B. Kolpe, a senior journalist, throws interesting light on the way in which newspapers usually deal with the news of caste and communal violence. The role of journalism in this respect is highly deplorable. It emerges from Mr. Kolpe's study that the monopoly press by and large displays anti-Muslim and anti-Harijan prejudices and contributes a great deal to fanning the fire of caste and communal hatred. The coverage of the Jabalpur riots and the articles written on the Moradabad riots by the editor of a leading national daily are the most glaring examples of this prejudice.

An attempt has been made in this book to cover different aspects of communal violence in the post-partition period in India. If what has been happening for the last several decades is any guide, there is no doubt that we will have to live with this problem for many decades to come. In a developing economy, specially in an exploitative bourgeois economy with a slow rate of development, social violence is endemic. In the Indian social milieu this violence assumes the form of caste and communal violence. More and more academic and field studies would be necessary to develop a comprehensive theory. This book, if it helps in its small way, in developing any such theory, would have served the purpose of its publication.

CASTE AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN POST-PARTITION INDIAN UNION

Dr. A. R. Desai

Dreams Generated by the Rulers

The theme of communal violence in the post-partition Indian Union has acquired crucial significance in contemporary Indian society for a number of reasons.

1. The Indian National Congress (INC) and all those who bargained for Independence on the basis of the Partition of India on communal lines, felt that such a measure would root out the main causes of communal violence in the Indian Union and therefore, the Indian Society to be reshaped under the Constitution and Plans would be liberated from this cancer which had corroded the National Liberation Struggle against British Rule.
2. It was also propagated that the INC, permeated with the spirit of Gandhism, Nehruism and a philosophy which negated the spirit of discriminatory caste hierarchy, including its most heinous form—untouchability, by framing a Constitution and taking affirmative action in the form of special facilities to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, would eliminate the age-old problem of untouchability and would usher in a society founded on harmonious existence, that growth of Indian society, the equality of all citizens, free from caste, class, communal, sex and race discrimination.
3. Though it was recognised that this task was difficult, it was also hoped that the Party which led to the transfer of power from the British, which was wedded to active in-

tervention through newly acquired political power, by enacting a Constitution and evolving a conscious pattern of planning which included not merely economic growth but also a programme of social justice based on equalitarian, "secular", socio-political and normative legal institutional measures rooted in the notion of equality of all citizens, would eliminate the cancer of communalism and class and caste violence. It was also propagated that the economic policies to be adumbrated by the rulers, would augment wealth, in a manner which would eliminate primary poverty, generate growth with justice and would augment prosperity founded on the redistribution of income from richer sections to the poorer sections, thereby paving the way for a "socialist pattern of Society" of a unique Indian variety.

4. It was also presumed that the state wedded to secularism and the welfare of all its citizens would actively spread norms and values, and elaborate institutional and media mechanisms which would generate a humane, equalitarian, scientific, rationalist and anti-superstitious climate and would elaborate economic, political and social institutional framework which would cut at the roots of the disease of caste, communal, sexist and class exploitative relationships among citizens of Secular Democratic India.

Actual Nightmare Created for the Poor by the Rulers

But what has been the real development in the country after thirty-five years of Independence? What has been the impact of the path of development pursued by the rulers, through their Five-Year Plans, comprising of industrial, agrarian, educational and socio-cultural policies?

All the rosy pictures projected by our dream merchant rulers have not only turned out to be moonshine but in fact an opposite nightmarish, social situation is emerging in the country for the majority of citizens. Both urban and rural life today is inflamed by growing caste, communal, class and sexist violence.

Since 1960, the eruption of these types of violence has been increasingly frequent and has been acquired an almost explosive intensity with the passage of the seventies and the ushering in of

the eighties. The upper castes, classes, and sections of the dominant and minority religious communities, and the male upper sections of society, have increased their violent offensive and have been systematising this attack with almost calculated precision.

We will describe the extent as well as main features of the caste and communal violence that has been taking place in the country after Independence.

Extent of Atrocities on Harijans

As pointed out in a number of studies, violent attacks on Harijans by upper and intermediate caste Hindus who constitute land-owning, trading and politically and socially dominant groups in rural areas are acquiring frightful proportions.

1. According to one observer, during Indira Gandhi's rule between 1966 and 1976 alone, 40,000 clear cases of atrocities on Harijans were recorded.
2. According to the National Integration Committee sponsored by the Central Government, the cases of atrocities against Harijans have increased during 1977.
3. A pamphlet entitled 'Atrocities on Harijans and Weaker Sections' by P. K. Kodian published in 1978 indicated that between March 1977 and May 1978, during the Janata regime, more than a thousand Harijans were killed, hundreds of Harijan women were raped and tortured, thousands of houses were burnt, the lands allocated to Harijans were grabbed, the institutions of social boycott was used in hundreds of villages to deprive the Harijans of jobs, occupation, the payment of minimum wages, access to water and other necessities.
4. In March 1978, Dhaniklal Mandal presented in the Lok-sabha the figures of atrocities as 40,000 between 1973 and 1977.
5. On September 3, 1981, the Minister of State in the Central Cabinet stated that in 1980 alone, 13,745 cases of atrocities had been recorded, and in the first few months of 1981 as many as 5,124 had already been registered.

6. The atrocities and attacks on Harijans are perpetrated with an accelerating tempo even in 1981 and 1982 as revealed in the cruel offensive against Harijans in Jetalpur and other places in Gujarat, in villages in Patna district in Bihar, in Deoli and Sadhupur in Uttar Pradesh and in the rural areas of Durg in M.P.

Features of Caste Offensive against Harijans

The growing offensive against Harijans exhibits certain features which need proper attention.

1. The increase in the scale of atrocities and violence is taking place in a setting, in which the Plans have had distinct consequences. They have strengthened the process of class differentiations both in urban and rural areas. At one end, certain sections of the upper and intermediate castes are being strengthened politically and economically and these are increasingly controlling social, institutional and cultural networks which are being evolved systematically by the State, through its economic, political and socio-cultural policies. At the other end the plans have resulted in the process of pauperisation and proletarianisation taking place at an accelerated rate with the passage of decades.

Today more than forty-four percent of the population depending on agriculture has been reduced to the state of agricultural landlessness. Of the remaining land-owning groups nearly 80% have been reduced by a gradual process of pauperisation, to poor sub-marginal or marginal farmers descending further and further down the ladder. The overwhelming majority of Harijans and tribals are reduced to landless labourers or to pauperised landholders on the way to landlessness.

Further in the context of growing monetisation, agrarian production acquires the character of production for marketing and profit and the poorer sections of the rural areas are deprived of the traditional securities in the form of customary payments, however meagre and inequitable they may have been. This process is taking place without creating alternative conditions for generating purchasing power, or the security of getting the goods and services these sections require. The growing awakening among the poorer strata, and their urge to prevent further de-

terioration of their living conditions and their sense of dignity as human beings and citizens is prompting them to protest and evolve struggles against the old caste and other forms of indignities hurled at them.

2. The sections of upper and intermediate castes which are emerging as new dominant land owners and trading classes and as the administrative strata in emerging bureaucratic and other political institutions, in the context of the surplus labour available in India, are utilising caste sentiments and caste ideology and practices, to augment their surplus value by forcing the untouchables and other lower castes to work under semi-feudal conditions. They try to deprive them of their legitimate, and even legally recognised share and terrorise them with increasing ruthlessness to carry on in their old helpless lower caste oppressive situations.

In the new competitive and economically deteriorating situation, the Harijans, unable to work as of old and not ready to suffer the old form of oppression and humiliation, are slowly protesting, are refusing to accept the humiliations hurled at them in the form of caste-disabilities, are demanding rights as citizens, and are also asking for better conditions of work and terms of pay in the emerging bourgeois economy.

The logic of hectic profit-chase by the emerging land owning prosperous farmers and traders, money lenders, comprising mainly upper and intermediate castes, in the context of abundant labour supply, creates favourable conditions for these classes to utilise pre-capitalist feudal or semifeudal, casteist modes of exploitation and oppression to accelerate their profit-hunt. These pre-capitalist forms prove functional to the new emerging prospering classes in rural areas to extract surplus value more intensively, to divide the pauperising and proletarianising sections of rural populace belonging to various castes, and to divert the anger of the poorer sections of upper and intermediate castes, from the main enemy, i.e., their own prospering sections, who are the root cause of their present situation, to the Harijans and other backward castes and tribes who are also equal victims of the same groups and classes. These multiple functions of caste violence against Harijans have to be recognised.

3. The growing caste violence has also to be properly comprehended. It is taking place in the background of growing violence against the entire poor, exploited, oppressed masses in the country. There is a growing allround increase of violence. There is growing violence against the exploited and oppressed poor, against working class, ordinary consumers, footpath and slum dwellers, against adivasi landless or land-hungry people, against women and against the oppressed nationalities whose exploitation and oppression has increased and who are falling in the race of limited development that is taking place unevenly in the country.

In the context of the capitalist path of development pursued by the Indian rulers, the classes comprising of rich farmers and landlords as well as traders and businessmen are made the lynch-pin of the development. The rulers have elaborated an economic policy in which the State is providing enormous facilities, resources and legal and normative values favouring these classes. The State is also undertaking its own economic activities in a manner which would strengthen these classes in various ways. Within the background of India's ex-colonial labour surplus matrix, the rulers' policies which aimed at benefiting these classes have led to limited economic growth. Simultaneously, the policies have been generating the phenomena of massive unemployment, under employment, pauperisation, proletarianisation and a growing lack of purchasing power among the majority of the population.

The State, pretending to be a Welfare State, cannot find the resources to serve all. It cannot generate purchasing power, or provide securities to the poverty-stricken mass of people. Basically wedded to a policy of not tapping resources from the proprietary classes of the country, and even further of directing the limited resources mobilised by the State, from indirect taxation, deficit financing, borrowings both from within and outside or from increases in the prices of the services provided by the State to the public, the State strengthens these proprietary classes and therefore, finds it difficult to generate resources for assisting the poor, except for some token gestures.

In fact from the mid-sixties even the limited economic growth is characterised by jolts, zig-zags, stagnation and even halts. To prevent the economy from further recession and breakdown, the

State has to drastically rationalise its economic policy, withdraw the limited services and protection which it has granted to the poor; retrench large sections of the workers employed both in the public and private sectors; streamline the efficiency of the productive processes—which means making them more capital-intensive and labour-replacing -- and thereby augment further unemployment or under employment; and withdraw the perquisites made available to the mass of people. From the beginning of the seventies, this process has accelerated.

The exploited and oppressed poor are facing more and more hardships and finding conditions of work and life more and more unbearable. They have started various forms of opposition against such policies. These struggles take on many forms, acquire a wider base, greater intensity and even militancy in various parts of the country. They take on the form of strikes and other appropriate action by the industrial working class and the class of salaried workers in private and public sectors, of struggles of tribal people against non-tribal exploiters and oppressors, of struggles of masses of consumers against the traders and Government. It also manifests itself in the form of struggles of *karmacharis*, students, teachers, of oppressed sections of the nation, of agrarian labour, poor farmers, ruined artisans and other sections of the countryside and of women against the growing oppression and violence launched against them at their the places of work, at home, and in public places. From the mid-sixties, the State has become hard towards these poor citizens, has taken to more repressive and brutal forms of suppression, has been buttressing, conniving and colluding with the upper classes and even inviting them to adopt ruthless and violent methods to crush the struggles of various classes and strata of Indian population comprising poorer toiling people.

The growing atrocities against Harijans have to be seen in this wider context because the root causes of this growing violence against Harijans have to be located in this larger framework.

4. The atrocities on Harijans occur predominantly in rural areas. Though not absent in some of the urban areas, their spread and growing frequency, intensity and ferocity are to be found in rural areas. Further, such violence is found relatively more

in those rural areas where, under the impact of land reforms, and other measures, a class of landowners, actively interested in land and agricultural processes and coming predominantly from intermediate castes has grown powerful. This class of prosperous farmers and landlords, have acquired control over land, inputs, associations and institutions evolved in the countryside, and command over administrative apparatus, including those connected with the provision of welfare and input services. This class has become extremely adept in extracting surplus value at an enhanced rate from labourers as well as in the operations of the market situation, input-output calculations, and ways of augmenting profits by cheapening the cost of production, particularly the cost of labour. It also is astute and adopts various devices cunningly to take advantage of the situation arising out of the large labour surplus and the lack of alternative opportunities for that labour to get employment elsewhere. It uses various legal and illegal methods to reduce the cost of labour, to divide the sections of job seeking labourers on caste, religious, regional and sex lines, to import labour from other regions in order to subject the agrarian poor, particularly Harijans and tribals, to humiliation, semi-self-labour and other forms of exploitation and oppression, to utilise a chain of contractors, who huddle the job-hungry rural poor, particularly from lower castes and tribes, to semi-concentration camp like hovels and make them semi-bonded, ill-paid workers. They use various devices from social boycott to terrorisation and starvation. Increasing atrocities on Harijans have to be seen in this context.

5. The Harijan atrocities are taking place in a cultural and moral climate of upper caste-Hindu norms, very assiduously stimulated by the State, and financed, supported and powerfully backed up by proprietary classes which are benefiting from the path of capitalist development pursued in the country. After partition, the normative, cultural values considered superior, tolerant, moral and spiritual in the Indian Union are basically upper caste-Hindu norms and practices, generally described as the spiritual and moral ethos of Hinduism which is also being foisted as the essence of secular values. While in economic activities, the bourgeois norms of private property as the means of production,

production for profit and human labour as a commodity, are accepted as values. In the larger social and cultural field, the rulers have accepted norms based not on man as the supreme value and sanctions based on morality in this world, but man as an inferior being, created, guided and governed by supernatural forces, and sanctions of various types based on them as the true bond cementing human relations. The Government has defined secularism in a very pernicious and cunning manner. Secularism does not mean that religion is a private affair of the individual in a society where the morality is based on norms derived from the interests of citizens of this world solely on the criteria of considerations of human being as the supreme value; secularism is equated to a positive respect for all religions, faiths and active involvement of the State in stimulating a climate, promoting morality founded on sacred and supernatural sanctions.

The State and the ruling class have never clearly defined the basis of morality which should permeate the cultural climate of the country. It has nowhere been formulated how the State wedded to a respect for all religions should act if different religions and sects within religions prescribe diverse, contradictory, discriminatory and unequal and opposite prescriptions of beliefs and practices, and generate conflicting institutional forms and social rituals, founded in injustice and discrimination against other groups and citizens. Should the State, in the name of respect for all religions, both in public and in private, permit these contradictory, iniquitous, discriminatory and hostility-generating values and practices among citizens? What is the position of citizens who do not believe in religion and are atheists, materialists and rationalists?

It has also never been clearly stated whether the value systems and practices which are adhered to by atheists, materialists, agnostics or rationalists should be equally respected. If so, should the religious and moral practices and rituals which offend them be permitted to be publicly performed in the name of respect for all religions? In fact, if various preachings and practices, various legal norms and social, institutional and cultural values and public practices of the State and the ruling classes in the country are

carefully scrutinised, they clearly indicate that State and the ruling class have systematically, both through enactments and through actual practices and propaganda, violated the principle of the equality of citizens based on the morality of the equal worth of human beings. In fact they have obstructed the fostering of values and institutions, practices and norms based on the worth of the human being in this world. For instance, a vast array of personal laws has been enacted in the form of Hindu Law, Muslim Law, etc., founded on religious dogmas which are fundamentally discriminatory and humiliating to vast sections of citizens including even the believers in the faiths. It has, in the name of tolerance and respect to all religions, enacted laws and stimulated public practices which offend, not only the religious susceptibilities of citizens belonging to other religious faiths but also the moral susceptibilities of all who are believers and stand for humanism, who are atheists, materialists, in the philosophical sense, and who consider man as supreme value. The State itself has evolved the Sadhu Samaj and organised Bhajan Mandals for the spread of morality. It is initiating numerous public functions with distinctly religious rituals. It has through its chief mass media, viz., radio and T.V., systematically inculcated upper caste-Hindu values in the name of the great spiritual and cultural tradition of India. It has also stimulated, participated in, facilitated and, by spending enormous amounts of money, accelerated the spread of religious values, practices, rituals, festivals, sacrifices, *havans*, *kathas*, and musical recitals and other artistic and cultural activities which spread a religious climate in general and a Hindu upper caste cultural climate in particular.

The State and the ruling class, have actively encouraged the religious superstitions, discriminatory, iniquitous, hostility-generating and contradictory cultural norms and practices by permitting, patronising, idolising and generating a specific messianic god-man aura around proliferating salesmen of religious spiritual values, who are elaborating costly, contradictory and confusing practices and institutions. The State and the ruling class is also helping to build a new holy aura around the heads of various traditional religious establishments in the form of *Maths*, *Devas-than*, and sects belonging to various categories. It favours Hindu

sacred values about the cow and others, which has been responsible for massive anti-Muslim Hindu communal revivalism in the country.

The rulers of the State and the overwhelming majority of the ruling class in India are basically Hindus and are steeped in Hindu cultural practices even in their daily personal routine. They have very astutely generated and strengthened the climate for upper caste-Hindu cultural tradition as a dominant and superior national, spiritual, moral, cultural ethos and are spreading it as identical with secular ethos. This is being sedulously propagated through rituals, practices, festivals and religious scriptures which enhance this upper caste-Hindu ethos. The rulers not only tolerate these practices but even actively encourage them. The cultural revival of higher Hinduism and its varied practices and rituals which are basically founded on contempt for lower caste and intolerance to other religious groups is proving an extremely suitable hurdle to subserve the interests of exploiting propertied classes, overwhelmingly Hindu, against the poor, exploited and oppressed of all religious faiths by hiding the real causes of exploitation from people including the poor Hindus. It also eminently serves the purpose of helping to beat down the rival groups belonging to other religious faiths, by dubbing them as aliens, anti-national and foreign agents.

It is unfortunate that scholars and activists belonging to various political parties, particularly of the left, have never systematically examined the ideological and cultural functions performed by the State in India which is wedded to capitalist path of development, to buttress the exploitative system it is evolving. They have also not examined how the INC and its subsequent fissure groups including various brands of socialists and Sarvodayaits claiming to espouse secularism are themselves basically Hindus and work consciously or unconsciously as a powerful vehicle to create a climate of upper caste-Hindu ethos as the spiritual and moral ethos which alone, according to them can provide emotional cement for national integration. They have not examined its impact in generating in the countryside a climate to launch offensives against Harijans and a sort of hysterical xenophobia in favour of the dominant upper caste-Hindu ethos, generating hostile approaches

towards people belonging to other religious groups. These functions of the emerging Hindu cultural ethos, need proper exploration, if the real roots of upper caste violence against Harijans as well as violence against other minority groups have to be properly analysed.

The Extent of Communal Violence

As indicated before India witnessed communal violence on an increased scale, and exhibits special features. The phenomenon deserves closer scrutiny.

Some distinguished scholars, a number of special committees formed to examine specific riots, the *Samprudaya Virodhi Committee* through its journal *Secular Democracy* and a large number of pamphlets published by it as well as eminent journalists and Government reports have provided valuable information about the phenomena of growing communal violence and specific features revealed by them during different periods after Independence.

According to an article by eminent journalist Kuldip Nayar, providing a rounded picture of the phenomena in the *Indian Express*, till November 1980, 5000 cases of communal disturbances have been recorded. After that communal disturbances have been taking place unabated and are acquiring greater ferocity. These disturbances exhibit certain characteristics which deserve to be noted.

Features of Communal Violence

1. During the immediate post-independence period, i.e., from 15 August 1947 to 30 January 1948, "there was large-scale bloodshed engulfing almost the entire northern India." Of course, it can be said that much of it was continuation of the great killings in the preceding months beginning with the Calcutta massacre early that year. They are considered as retaliatory action against what was happening in Pakistan.

2. In the decade between 1950 and 1960, the communal disturbances were fewer. In 1954 they numbered about 83. Probably this period was overshadowed by other struggles for the reorganisation of States and land reforms.

3. From 1960 onwards the incidents of communal violence have taken place at an accelerated rate. In 1968, there were 348 incidents of communal violence. In 1980-81 it has created new records and even in the first month of 1982 there are no signs showing any improvement.

4. Some other features of communal riots also need understanding.

(i) The communal riots during the 50s appear to be more the result of sudden outbursts of group violence. From the 60s communal riots appear to be systematically engineered. The loss of life during communal riots, in the 50s, was much less. The total number of lives lost during the decade was 316. The loss of life in communal riots after 1960 grows in magnitude. For instance, in 1967 alone 301 lives were lost. In 1969 and 1970, in just three major communal riots, viz., Ranchi-Hatia, Ahmedabad and Bhiwandi-Jalgaon, 184, 512 and 121 lives were lost respectively. Thus communal riots were becoming more blood thirsty.

(ii) Kuldeep Nayar reveals another set of features of these communal riots. In every riot the larger number of those who lose their lives are Muslims. For instance, in the 1969 riots of Ranchi-Hatia out of 184 killed, 164 were Muslims. In the Ahmedabad riots out of 512 killed, 413 were Muslims, and in the 1970 Bhiwandi-Jalgaon riots out of 121 killed, 101 were Muslims. The large death toll of Muslims reveal that Hindu communal forces are launching a more aggressive offensive. Similarly, according to Kuldeep Nayar and others, the loss of property sustained by Muslims far outweighs the destruction of Hindu property. For instance, in Ranchi-Hatia, the Muslims suffered losses to the tune of Rs. 14 lakhs. In Ahmedabad, of the buildings destroyed, 6071 belonged to Muslims and 671 to Hindus. Similar observations are made about other cases of communal violence in other cities and towns.

(iii) Communal violence exhibits other features also, compared to caste violence on Harijans. Communal violence is more visible in urban areas, compared to caste violence on Harijans taking place in rural areas, though with its acceleration in recent years, it may spread to rural areas also. Further a peculiar cut throat

economic competition is also visible as an underlying force in a number of these communal upheavals. The Hindu businessmen, traders, industrialists and craftsmen seem to be keen to oust the Muslim traders, craftsmen and others, and a very peculiar communal turn is given to some secondary episode for launching communal attack with a view to uprooting these groups from their vocations. A very systematic climate is created by various devices to precipitate such outbursts

(iv) It should be noted that communal outbursts are not only restricted to Hindu-Muslim conflicts. With growing frenzy about religious dogmas and beliefs, one witnesses riots between Muslims and Muslims, viz., Shias and Sunnis, between Sikhs and Sikhs, between Hindus and Sikhs and Hindus and Christians.

(v) The frequency of communal violence is increasing, in the backdrop of the deepening economic debacle in the country, a greater offensive against the working class in the public and private sector, a more brutal offensive against hutment and pavement dwellers in the urban areas, more repression of anti-price-rise movements of consumers, attacks on women, ferocious attacks against poor peasants, landless and land-hungry Adivasis and a very ruthless suppression of their struggles. It is also taking place in the background of more brutal attacks both by police and rich upper-intermediate caste landlords and prospering farmers, traders and moneylenders Harijans and other weaker sections in the rural areas. It also takes place in a setting where higher-upper caste Hindu ideology, rituals, cultural ethos and venom is being spread with greater and greater vigour both by ideologues of Hinduism, systematically organised and financed by the richer section of Hindu society and the State and in the context of the situation wherein State and the ruling class interpret every protest or movement of the exploited and oppressed sections of the people as hindering production for profit and as a "law and order" problem. Poor, exploited and oppressed classes and communities are not considered as victims but as major obstacles and enemies of the upper classes and the State who are pursuing the capitalist path for developing the economy and society.

Explanations offered: A critique

I have selected the scenario of caste and communal violence in post-independence India with a view to emphasising the need for a proper dialectical understanding of its extent, its growing gravity and its accelerating ghastliness which render the lives of common men uncertain, insecure and constantly threatened with violence and uprooting at any moment, and therefore increasingly desperate and terror-stricken. It has been drawn to point out the total context in which they are taking place.

Various explanations are offered and different remedies are suggested to counteract and to root out this phenomenon by different groups and parties. We will briefly examine them.

1. It is surprising to learn that no systematic and sustained explanation of why the upper strata of Hindu society are making such ferocious attacks on Harijans is given anywhere.

2. No explanation is given as to why the leaders of various Hindu sects, temples, religious establishments, and the massively proliferating godmen, who claim to be leaders of Hindu cultural traditions are not merely permitting such atrocities and violence on Harijans but in fact in a number of places are abetting the atrocities and violence perpetrated on them. The upper caste Hindus, including their spiritual, political and financial wizards forming the richer sections, furiously talk about secularism, tolerance and equality. But they are not able to absorb Harijans in the Hindu social structure as equal sharers in every aspect of Hindu life. Nor are they willing to permit them to leave the Hindu fold, and convert to other religions where they may feel that they are socially not degraded. In fact the upper caste Hindus, while not willing to socially and otherwise fuse the Harijans as equal members of the Hindu community become indignant if they resort to conversion and consider such acts as anti-national and destroying the great cultural heritage of India. They attribute such steps as conversion as acts of conspiracy by outside agencies to obstruct national integration. These conversions are considered to have been engineered by foreign agencies and money and are put down to the non-national character of Islam and Christianity or any other minority religion, or to the dogmatism and aggressive self-centredness of sects like Sikhs and others.

According to those sections and their ideologies Hinduism is the only religion which is national and secular. The upper caste, upper and middle class Hindus and their economic, political and cultural leaders, in fact with the active support of the State and administrative machinery and political parties, are stimulating a cultural climate which encourages a value system which strengthens the prejudices against the lower castes and non-Hindus and also creates an atmosphere where the values of higher caste Hinduism are emphasised as the mainstream of the Indian spiritual, moral and national heritage. The struggle of the oppressed and exploited within the Hindu fold to eliminate social caste and ideological humiliations are considered as threats to the great Hindu tradition, and threatening the smooth development of economy and political stability.

3. A section of ideologists of the ruling class, asserting to identify secularism as respect and reverence for all religions, claim that the economic development and political stability of the country is threatened by religious minorities, who do not recognise the freedom of atmosphere which they are enjoying in the Indian Union, compared to a large number of states where religious intolerance and preference for one religion is openly acknowledged as a State policy. However, they do not explain why in the secular state of India, the cultural ethos, which is considered as the spiritual, moral and value premise of the national ethos and a force integrating the entire society, should be identified with the spiritual and moral ethos of higher Hinduism? Why should upper caste-Hindu cultural tradition be identified as the national, secular, tolerant mainstream of the cultural ethos of a secular society, superior to other religions and capable of absorbing the best from them?

4. The state and ruling class in India as indicated earlier follow double standards with regard to norms and values. In economic and politico-legal administrative affairs, it is on the whole pursuing secular, this worldly, non-religious norms and laws based on the capitalist norm of production for profit and market, the recognition of bourgeois norms of property rights, including the right to treat labour as commodity. It also acknowledges the political assumptions of the bourgeois individualist

notion of citizenship. However, in social, cultural and moral fields, the same rulers acknowledge, propagate and actively encourage supernatural other worldly sacred norms of religious values, more particularly the values of higher Hinduism, by claiming them to be spiritual, moral and possessing superior tolerant and secular national cultural heritage.

5. It should be recognised that these double standards are held not only by those who are described as Hindu chauvinists like the RSS and Jansangh, or those described as conservative pro-Hindu sections of the national Congress, claimed to be following the orthodox Gandhi and Sardar Patel traditions. It is also adopted by the chief dominating section of leadership belonging to what is called the Nehru-Indira school which claims to be the chief custodian of the developing secular cultural tradition in the country. In value and normative cultural ethos, to be generated in the country, the Nehruite leadership, also basically accepts the roots of morality and spirituality in sacred supernaturally inspired religious ethics. This leadership adopts basically higher Hinduism intermingled with the best elements of other religions as the spiritual, moral and cultural ethos, as the true cultural ethical aroma of emerging society. This tradition attempts to distinguish between true religions and dogmatic and corrupted religions and feels that only true religion can provide a spiritual ethical culture. This leadership does not acknowledge that ethics based on human beings considered not as the creations and puppets of supernatural powers, but as part of this natural world, and evolving ethics founded on this natural materialist objective consideration based on human welfare in this world and on factors located in the human situation and not in supernatural forces. It also does not acknowledge the logic of humanism, viz., that the human situation in this world, shaped by forces within this world and not supernatural or other world forces, should be the foundation of any genuine human culture. And this principle should permeate the social, interpersonal, cultural and institutional fabric of society. The crucial omission is often made to cover up the double standards adopted by the so called progressive and secular section of leadership which is shaping Indian Society through various economic, political, social

and ideological measures. The ruling sections use religion as a cultural weapon to prevent a proper secular, human outlook among poor exploited and oppressed masses, which alone can enable them to relate their woes to the emerging capitalist socio-economic order. This is not adequately recognised and therefore its dangerous role in generating a climate of caste, communal and class violence is being deliberately underplayed. Further the arguments that the government endeavours to overcome poverty for the development of productive forces and establishment of egalitarian society are thwarted by obscurantist, casteist, communal and fissiparous groups owing loyalty to outside forces, are made to look credible, and help to divert the attention of masses to a search for a solution in futile channels, which in fact helps the rulers to divide them, involve them in fratricidal struggles and create conditions in which to establish in the name of 'law and order', a more and more authoritarian regime, so needed by the ruling class pursuing the capitalist path of development in the country.

6. It is unfortunate that even the leftist forces, basically comprising Communist parties, particularly the pro-Soviet sections, consider that the INC headed by Nehru and now Indira (sans the Sanjay section) and backed by the Soviet Union, are pursuing, on the whole, secular, anti-communal programmes and policies, which is leading the country to complete the National Democratic Revolution. According to this section of Marxists, national integration and democratic secular atmosphere is vitiated and hampered by feudal, semi-feudal, communal, casteist, dogmatic and fanatic sections of various religions backed by Imperialist foreign agencies. While heroically trying to bring about communal harmony, it basically lays the blame for the growing caste and communal violence on aggression by the RSS, Jansangh, BJP, Hindu fanatics and the defensive but equally fanatic *Jamiat-e-Islami* and other religious sects, including certain dubious Christian missions and fanatic sections of Sikh and other religions. A massive campaign against these forces is carried on by the Communists. They hit particularly hard against the RSS and Jansangh which they consider are the main enemy. They do not consider as very dangerous the rulers of the Congress, pursuing the capitalist path

which, under the pretext of secularism, utilises higher Hinduism and its multiple well-organised institutions to spread the spiritual, moral, cultural climate in the country, so necessary for the capitalist class in a backward country to defeat socialist and revolutionary ideas which may overthrow the present exploitative regime. It is interesting to note that the Communist parties and their ideologues have never undertaken a systematic analysis of how the INC, particularly its Nehru-Indira Gandhi leadership, pursuing the capitalist path of development, is itself very systematically using religion, superstitious practices, Hindu cultural revivalism and numerous religious sects and organisations for spreading what they describe as secular moral values. They also do not analyse how the ruling Congress commanding the mass media is using it as a weapon to divide the exploited and oppressed sections of the Indian people and is endeavouring to confuse them, and divert them from discovering the main roots of their problems in the capitalist socio-economic order that is being created by the rulers through their plans.

Further it should be noted that the ideologies of these Communist parties, along with the Nehruite leadership of the Indian ruling class, accept the cunning vagueness of the concept of secularism. Secularism torn of its wordly, materialist, rationalist, humanist foundation and transformed into a concept which connotes 'respect for all religions', never clearly spells out what distinguishes the religious from the non-religious, in social and cultural life.

For instance, are property-relations, sex-relations, marriage, succession, inheritance, eating objects, animals, dress material, housing and other things secular or sacred? Can there be an ethic which is not founded on religion or supernatural sanctions, but based on respect for human beings on this earth?

In India, the rulers have accepted as legal relations many practices connected with family property, inheritance, succession, and a number of other practices of human life which are embodied in personal religious Laws. The rulers also have given supernatural sanctity to certain animals in keeping with the tenets of Hindu spiritual culture. Are these vital aspects affecting the

entire population, not non-secular and therefore, to be freed from the contradictory, inequitable prescriptions of diverse religions?

Is it correct for a State wedded to secularism to consider these relations as sacred and permit diverse, discriminatory and inequitable allocations and relations on that ground?

It is ironical, that, in the context of social, cultural and other aspects, the State has never clearly defined what is this worldly or secular and what is supernaturally sanctioned. If equality and human dignity are tempered or undermined by religious prescriptions, should these not be scrapped in the interests of the higher morality of humanism, founded on respect for the equality of human beings?

The Communist parties have not raised this fundamental question and are also accepting, in practice, the notion of secularism as 'respect for all religions' as adopted by the ruling bourgeois Congress Party in the Indian setting. In their enthusiasm to support the progressive bourgeoisie in the country headed at first by Nehru and now by Indira Gandhi, they eschew the fact that the State is pursuing a path in which the ruling class finds religion a very valuable instrument to boost its cultural ego, to act as dope for the people and as a valuable weapon to keep them divided and thereby prevent them from unitedly striking against their own exploitation and oppression. The Communist Parties and their ideologues fail to see that it is the State and the so-called secular ruling party, that is subtly and even openly stimulating the ritualistic and superstition-ridden aspect of the high caste-Hindu value system in the name of our glorious cultural tradition. These values eminently suit the exploiting classes through which it is attempting to build capitalism in the country. Instead of exposing the systematic use of religion and the values of high caste-Hinduism by the so-called progressive Nehru-Indira school of Indian bourgeois leaders, the Communist parties and their ideologues zealously use their energy to attack the RSS-Jansangh as the main custodian of Hindu communalism, which according to them is feudal, semi-feudal and dogmatic. They consider the RSS as the chief agent conspiring to engineer communal violence in the country.

Pre-requisites for correct explanation

It is my submission that for a proper comprehension of the causes underlying the eruption of the phenomena of caste and communal violence in India we have to take note of certain features which are developing in their overall dialectical connections.

1. The economic and political measures adopted by the State, pursuing the path of capitalist development is generating, nurturing and strengthening the capitalists, traders, rich farmers, landlords and a section of the upper echelons of bureaucracy, coming basically from upper and upper-middle castes of Hindus in a country with a Hindu majority of population. It simultaneously accentuates the process of pauperisation and proletarianisation of vast masses of people, hitting more harshly the lower castes, particularly untouchables, the majority of tribals, women and poor sections of every community all over the country.

2. The Government, through its policy of throwing a few crumbs selectively and in various styles to tiny fragments of those who are being ruined by the overall economic policies, is fairly successful in sowing the seeds of division among various exploited and oppressed classes and thereby preventing unification among them to overthrow a system which basically worsens their conditions of life. The crumb-throwing capacity, however, is becoming limited.

3. The State, in the name of tolerance and respect for all religions, has permitted and legally sanctified heinous, discriminatory, oppressive and iniquitous institutions and practices which fundamentally violate basic morality postulated on the equality of human beings. For instance:

(i) It has permitted an entire domain of the life of citizens, which affects them in every aspect of their living, to be guided by religion. The most offensive, inequitable sets of relationships affecting property, inheritance, succession, marriage, the choice of a partner in marriage and practices affecting many of the vital aspects of life, are legally sanctified under the rubric of 'Personal Laws' of different religions. The State has itself made a grave travesty of its claim of secularism

by not evolving a single civil code, and by permitting diverse inequitable personal laws based on religions.

(ii) The State, in the name of spreading spiritual, moral and emotionally integrating values, is also systematically assisting propaganda, practices and organisations which generate a climate loaded with supernatural upper caste-Hindu cultural ethos. In fact it presses actively in its service organisations like the *Sadhu Sainaj* and *Bhajan mandlis* to spread morality.

(iii) The State has never clearly defined how the ethical norms and institutions encouraging worldly humane values and practices, will be protected from and not tyrannised by the practices and preachings of diverse Hindu and other religious sects: Will the State prevent actions and practices which will hurt the susceptibilities of those who are atheists, nationalists, materialists and who consider religion and religious practices as derogatory and insulting to human dignity? Will the State force religious bodies to scarp all practices and values which cause indignity to and prescribe discrimination against men and women in the name of the higher morality of human dignity and equality?

(iv) It is interesting to note that the religious, spiritual and moral values spread by the ruling class, very eminently, fit in with its need to prevent the exploited and oppressed classes from locating the causes of their growing misery and deprivation in the capitalist social order which the state is elaborating through its plan and policies on this earth as well as to divide the exploited and oppressed masses, and involve them in fratricidal minor struggles, which help the rulers in pursuing their capitalist path of development. These norms also help in preventing united assault against the State and ruling classes, the main causes of the prevailing malady.

(v) The potentiality of the capitalist path to carry on development even in a limited way being exhausted, the revolt of the discontented, exploited toiling masses is developing at a rapid rate. The ruling class and its state are resorting to increasingly ferocious repression. They are also resorting more extensively to the use of higher upper caste Hindu values to fan casteist, religious and other forms of conflicts,

by generating a climate of intolerance and frenzy among various religious groups and preventing their unity against the common enemy, the chief source of their misery.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would request the readers to consider the suggestions on how to view the emerging and expanding caste violence and the spreading communal disturbances in the context of the larger social milieu emerging as a consequence of the capitalist path of development pursued assiduously by our rulers. The causes of caste and communal violence are to be located not only within caste relationships or within relationships between Hindus and other religious groups *per se*, but they have to be located by viewing them as manifestations and symptoms of a larger milieu that is being created by the rulers after Independence.

For the purpose of understanding deeper causes of the phenomena under discussion, a careful examination of the above arguments may offer some guidelines for arriving at a proper explanation. This may help to evolve effective lines of action, to counteract and remove the real causes responsible for atrocities on Harijans and for communal violence in the country.

3

THE CAUSES OF COMMUNAL RIOTS IN THE POST-PARTITION PERIOD IN INDIA

Asghar Ali Engineer

It was naively believed by some people that the partition of the country would bring about a lasting solution of the problem of communalism in India and that in the post-partition period we would be able to live without this much dreaded legacy. However, it was a false hope and, except for a short period during the fifties, we could not live in communal peace. In the sixties the curve of communal violence took a sharp upward turn, and this continued throughout the decade ending in a violent convulsion at Ahmedabad. The seventies proved to be no more auspicious in this respect, except for a brief interlude in the middle of the decade. We again witnessed a violent upsurge of communal virus at the end of the last decade.

In view of such a tenacious persistence of this phenomenon it is highly necessary to understand its underlying causes. To attribute the communal phenomenon to religion alone, as is often sought to be done even in certain academic quarters, would amount to over-simplification, to say the least. It is high time that this misconception is thoroughly dissected. A careful study of this phenomenon would show that neither before nor after partition, was religion the sole factor responsible for its origin or growth. This is not to suggest that religion plays no part in it; far from it. But religion acts more as an agent determining the attitude of its followers than the motivation or mainspring of communal violence. It will be my endeavour in this paper to identify the other complex factors which account for it.

Are the underlying causes of communal violence before and after partition the same, or do they differ in their nature, degree

and scope? In view of the complexity and also the enormity of the problem it would be difficult to find categorical answers. No social phenomenon, much less a communal one, is reducible to neat conceptual categories. Social interactions and processes do not admit of such simplicity or neatness. Nevertheless, some broad features and distinguishing marks can be identified.

The communal phenomenon is political in genesis. Communal tension arises as a result of the skilful manipulation of the religious sentiments and cultural ethos of a people by its elite which aims to realise its political, economic and cultural aspirations by identifying these aspirations as those of the entire community. This again, it must be noted, is only one aspect of the phenomenon as it does not embrace all its complexities.

As the struggle for independence from British rule intensified and the prospects of the transfer of power brightened, the Muslim elite became apprehensive of being dominated by and becoming adjuncts of the Hindu elite. The Muslim League, therefore, motivated by such an eventuality, formulated its demands. These essentially reflected the economic, political and cultural aspirations of the Muslim elite but they were identified with the entire community in order to win its support. This strategy aroused strong passions within the Muslim community. However, the Hindus being in a majority, its entire elite had no need to take recourse to such a communal strategy. It could couch its demands in more secular idiom, thus identifying its aspirations with those of entire nation. This was precisely the policy of the Indian National Congress vis-a-vis that of the Indian Muslim League. However, a section of the Hindu elite did take recourse to communal idiom to realise its aspirations using the political platform of the Hindumahasabha and also the umbrella of the Congress.

The major cause of communal conflict before partition was thus the struggle between the Hindu and the Muslim elite for political power as well as control of economic resources at the national level. Needless to say, this battle was fought by the Muslim elite — being more feudal in its orientation and motivated by the minorityphobia — using the religio-cultural idiom and basing nationalism on religio-cultural complex; it was the only sure way of carving out a separate homeland for itself. How-

ever, for the Hindu elite, there was less compulsion to do so and consequently it could appear more secular in its approach. The Muslim League fought vigorously for the partition of the country and finally the concept of two nations was accepted.

After partition, this cause ceased to exist, as the Muslim elite had succeeded in realising its aspirations. The Muslim masses left behind in India (the major chunk of the elite migrated to Pakistan) were too dazed by this catastrophe to react in any meaningful way, much less in an aggressive way. Hence there was a comparative lull in communal violence during the fifties. But with the Jabalpur riots in 1961 a new phase of communal violence started in post-partition India.

While complete discontinuity of causal connection is not maintainable, it would not be possible to deny the emergence of new factors on the communal scene. Whereas the attitudes of the two communities towards each other were largely determined during the course of the power struggle in the pre-partition period and these attitudes did matter in hostile interaction leading to the aggravation of communal conflict, they cannot be said to be the most significant cause of communal violence in post-partition India. Also, the most significant cause of communal imbroglio before partition, i.e., the share of power at the central level between the two communities, ceased to operate. The Muslims in India were no longer fighting for any fixed quota of seats at the central or provincial level. Neither were they now demanding any reserved quota of jobs in the government services.¹

There remained causal continuity between the pre-and post-partition periods as far as superstructural causes of communal conflict like religio-cultural prejudices, the memory of Muslim rule over India (leading to communal interpretation of history and glorification of the 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' periods by both the communities respectively — a wrong notion of periodisation of history), emotional commitment to the cause of Pakistan, etc., were concerned. However, now there emerged a variety of local factors which came to play an ever greater role in pushing com-

¹ Such a demand is again being put forward by a section of Muslim leadership. Although it may strike sympathetic chord, it is difficult to say whether it enjoys unanimity of opinion among the Muslims

munal conflict to the threshold of violence. It must be considered as a significant development.

Take the Jabalpur riot for example. The apparent cause was the "elopement" of a Hindu girl with a Muslim boy. However, although it brought the powerful religio-cultural prejudices between the two communities into play (the local newspapers, it must be noted, play a very important role by spreading rumours and playing up such prejudices), it was not the real reason. The real reason lay elsewhere. The Muslim boy was the son of a local bidi magnate who had gradually succeeded in establishing control over the local bidi industry. His Hindu competitors were very sore over this development. It was not insignificant that the bidi industry belonging to the Muslims in Jabalpur suffered heavily during the riots.

The empirical data collected from a number of centres of communal violence enables us to draw certain important conclusions. Firstly, though communal riots remain an urban phenomenon, with some exceptions, they are more likely to erupt in medium-sized towns than in large urban conglomerations or cosmopolitan centres. Aligarh, Jamshedpur, Moradabad, Bhiwandi, Allahabad, Malegaon, Varanasi, Godhra, etc., have been communally more sensitive. One important reason for this could be that the majority of people living in these towns are from the lower middle classes and their religio-cultural behaviour tends to be more segregationist and conservative. In such towns the leadership is provided by the petty shopkeepers or lower middle-class professionals like advocates and doctors. One cannot ignore their religio-cultural background.

Secondly, it would be seen from the list of the communally sensitive towns given above that most of them are thriving centres of small scale artisan-based industries. In these towns the Muslim artisans and businessmen have achieved a relative degree of prosperity. This is not altogether unconnected with communal problem in these towns. Intensive studies of the communal problem in these centres can throw much useful light on the subject. Economic competition between the two communities often leads to social tensions which can be easily turned into communal tension by exploiting certain situations on the occasion of religious

festivals, etc. The problem gets further complicated by the fact that in these towns, more often than not, Muslims happen to be wage-earning artisans. The increased prosperity (speaking only in relative terms) among the Muslims leads to increased political aspirations among them, thus challenging the traditional political leadership of the town. This political rivalry in turn leads to a communally dangerous situation. It is also worth noting here that these towns have comparatively higher proportions of Muslim population.

Let us take some concrete examples to illustrate this aspect of the problem. Bhiwandi in Maharashtra witnessed a major communal riot in 1970. It is a thriving centre of the powerloom industry, with quite a few Muslims owning powerlooms and a large number of Muslim artisans working as weavers on these looms. The population of Bhiwandi is around one lakh of which almost fifty per cent are Muslims. Also, being on the Bombay-Agra National Highway Bhiwandi receives a large amount of revenue by way of octroi from the passing trucks. Its municipality thus has a handsome income. Local municipal politics, therefore, assumes great deal of importance. Different parties and political groups vie with each other to wrest control of the Municipal Council. A section of Muslims with their increased prosperity due to the loom industry developed greater political aspirations challenging the traditional leadership, and this led to communal tension. An in-depth study of the Bhiwandi riots shows that the municipal politics had a direct bearing on communal violence there.

In this connection one or two more important factors need to be noted. The dispute never directly assumes political form, as this would expose the vested interests involved. More often than not, it assumes the form of some highly emotional issue with a strong appeal for the common man. In a backward country like India, what other than a controversy over a religious procession, the playing of music before a mosque, or the hitting or slaughtering of cows can have greater emotional potential? It is the opportunity to wrest or consolidate leadership rather than the sanctity of a religious issue *per se* that is more important for a politician. In a situation of mass hysteria thus created, even sane or

otherwise mature politicians are compelled to join in, lest their leadership be threatened by more vocal elements waiting in the wings to cash in. The popularity so won is later on utilised by the politicians of either community to win elections or gain political advantage in any other form.

It is equally important to note that more than 'illiterate' masses, educated elite from among both the communities play this role and aggravate the communal situation. In a backward society, education, though not always, but more often, becomes an instrument of generating communal consciousness and identity. The potentialities of 'Hindu' identity and 'Muslim' identity have been exploited by the educated elite from both the communities. In a slowly developing economy and ballot-box oriented polity, communal polarisation enhances bargaining power and thus enables the castes and communities concerned to claim greater shares of the scarce national resources. It would, therefore, be wrong to assume that in a slowly developing economy development would lead to increased secularisation in direct proportion to the rate of development.

In fact, in such a situation, the process of secularisation takes an extremely tortuous course. Instead of a heightened degree of national integration it may result in a greater degree of communal polarisation as already pointed out. Also, at least in the initial stages of development of science and technology, one cannot assume proportionate enhancement of rational behaviour.

In the poor and the backward strata of society, a sense of insecurity is generated, mainly due to the iniquitous benefits of the growth of technology (as such development uproots or threatens to uproot them from their traditional socio-economic pattern of life), and they try to cling with ever greater tenacity to the traditional beliefs. Both religious as well as secular leadership, try to take advantage of this situation for their own political and non-political ends. We have seen that religious festivals are celebrated with ever greater enthusiasm every year and they turn out to be the most feared occasions for increases in communal tensions.

The process of social change in a backward society is always extremely complex. This is mainly because the process of deve-

lopment does not bring about the equitable distribution of benefits. Those who manage to get greater benefits try to consolidate their position, through appeals to communal sentiment if necessary. The process of change gives rise to social tensions which must be studied in the proper social context without falling into the trap of current myths and stereotypes. In a fast changing social situation old mythologised mental constructions and fixed stereotypes would hardly help in properly evaluating the situation. There may be an emotional leaning towards Pakistan on the basis of religio-cultural affinity among a section of the Muslims in India but it cannot be said to be the final determinant of communal violence in the country.

In a dynamic situation, fixed mental concepts and stereotypes hardly help. Along with the new social strata, new leadership is coming to the fore with its own socio-cultural ethos. It is very important to understand this process of change. Until recently the Muslim leadership was in the hands of either the feudal class or the *Ulema*. Although conservative, they had their own social values. However, with economic development in India, a new class among the Muslims is coming to the fore, which has hardly any cultural roots. This class is pursuing its own economic and political ambitions in a way which challenges the traditional leadership. Needless to say, this class is less scrupulous and more ruthless in realising its ambitions. It may even utilise Islamic fundamentalism to realise its own aspirations, more unscrupulously than the traditional Muslim leadership.

As already pointed out, increased prosperity or affluence among a section of Muslims brings about a change in the traditional pattern of leadership and economic hegemony at the local level. The socio-political conflict resulting therefrom often becomes unmanageable and bursts in the form of violence. The riots at Moradabad are a case in point. The increasing number of Muslim and higher wages in the brass industry entrepreneurs not only brought about greater prosperity amongst the Muslims, but also began to lessen the importance of middlemen, often Hindu, in business transactions. Some of the Muslim entrepreneurs even managed to get direct orders from Middle East countries. The Hindu middlemen, thus edged out, began to rally round Jansangh,

then a constituent of the Janata Party (and now of the BJP), which has its base among the petty businessmen. This class of people, being traditionally a mercantile class, is often religiously very conservative and can be easily swayed by communal propaganda.

There is another dimension of the problem to be noted here. The increased prosperity among a section of the Muslims in Moradabad was socially manifested through a greater degree of spending on religious and semi-religious activities in addition to secular activities like buying real estate in the outskirts of the town. Although the real cause of conflict was economic competition and a higher demand for wages from Muslim artisans, the increased degree of spending on religious and semi-religious activities such as construction of more mosques, *madrasas* and *maktabs*, were construed as flow of Arab money into India to strengthen the Muslim fundamentalists. Naturally such propaganda could easily cause a greater degree of hostility among the Hindus and Muslims and succeeded in creating the appropriate atmosphere for communal violence.

On the side of the Muslims, increased prosperity led to greater political aspirations, and in turn the anxiety gave rise to militant attitudes to preserve the gains. In such an atmosphere (small town conservatism) it is easier for the traditional leadership, with the help of neo-conservative elements aspiring to transform economic into political power, to assume an important role and manifest a greater degree of militancy to outmanoeuvre others. One must bear in mind all these micro-level factors in order to understand the true nature of communal violence today in India.

However, this is not to suggest that macro-level factors do not play any role in exacerbating the communal situation at any particular place. The macro-level factors are too well-known to be repeated here. Wherever there is manifestation of mass militancy and assertion by the masses of their aspirations, the local or national forces having powerful vested interests in maintaining the status quo come into play and ingeniously create situations which cause communal violence. The local factors tend to be more mundane and concrete whereas those at the national level tend to be ideological and emotional. It is a complex interaction bet-

ween the two which sharpens the communal conflict ultimately resulting in violent outbursts.

Both the communities have developed certain stereotyped opinions of the other. In a stagnant situation such stereotypes have longer validity. Small-or medium-sized towns, due to comparative stagnation, are bastions of orthodoxy and conservatism, and consequently tend to become hotbeds of communal popaganda. However, although social conservatism or religious orthodoxy may lend itself to the generation of a communal atmosphere, by itself it is not the mainspring of communal hatred.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE ORIGINS OF COMMUNALISM IN INDIA

D. R. Goyal

Communalism has been with us for about a century now, and, considering the trend of social and political developments, it appears that we will have to live with it for quite some time to come. I would like to indicate here, first what, in my opinion, are wrong notions about the origin of the phenomenon, and then make some observations about the soil from which this plant has sprouted.

Medieval Indian history is depicted as the chief villain of the piece. Communalism is often considered to be a part of our medieval heritage. To talk of the historical roots of communalism is the current academic fashion. The approach flowing from the common tendency to transfer contemporary ideological framework to a past age when the objective situation was entirely different, is not only erroneous but also dangerous as it tends to provide justification where none exists. Those holding this view ignore the fact that though rulers of that era did profess religious faith(s), the legitimacy of their rule did not depend either on religious sanction or on the people at large. The legitimacy was based on conquest and superior military prowess: might was right. The tendency among the common people was to accept whoever was able to assert military superiority. They were never involved in the choice of the king or the ruler.

Friends and foes, 'we' and 'they', were never determined on the basis of religion. The conflicts of kings, princes or chieftains of that period were rarely, if at all, motivated by considerations of advancement or defence of faith, even though there are cases when religion was permanently displayed as a badge of distinc-

tion by some of them. The battle lines were rarely drawn along religious boundaries. Rarely were rulers required to mobilise necessary support in the name of religion. Even the most prominent conflicts or antagonisms that are cited as proof in support of the theory of the historical roots of communalism had prominent members of both communities on both the sides. If Maharana Pratap had Hakim Khan Sur leading his army, the commander-in-chief of the opposing Mughal army was Raja Man Singh. The campaign against Shivaji was led by Mirza Raje Jai Singh while the Chief of Shivaji's Naval Force was Ibrahim Gardi. The most vociferous opposition to Guru Govind Singh in Punjab came from Hindu Rajas of the Punjab hills. The most vehement protest against the execution of the Guru's two sons came from the then Nawab of Malerkotla whose descendants still display with pride the letter of grateful appreciation the Nawab received from the Guru.

The cordiality between religious communities continued till 1857. This fact is made clear in the various proclamations issued by the leaders of the uprising. The fact has been noted, at times with concern, even by Western historians of the period. In his introduction to *State Papers*, George William Forrest pointed out. "Among the many lessons the Indian mutiny conveys to the historian, none is of greater importance than the warning that it is possible to have a Revolution in which Brahmins and Sudras, Hindus and Mahomedans, could be united against us, and that it is not safe to suppose that the peace and stability of our dominions, in any great measure, depends on the continent being inhabited by different religious systems for they mutually understand and respect and take part in each other's modes and ways and doings. The mutiny reminds us that our dominions rest on a thin crust ever likely to be rent by titanic fires of social changes and religious revolutions."

So much for history. The other whipping boy is religion. Banish religion and all will be well, it is said. Is religion synonymous with communalism? Does belief lead to the sectarian rigidity called communalism? It is difficult to agree with this view, even though religious symbols, mythology and terminology are widely used in communal argumentation. Religion or its practice may

be condemned with logical justification from the standpoint of rationalism, atheism or scientific approach, but to recommend its abolition as a means of eradicating communalism is barking up the wrong tree. The very way of life of the Indian people refutes the argument. The overwhelming majority of them believe in some religion and to say that all of them, or even a significant number of them are communal would be unfounded. This is not only true of the common people but also of the leaders. Nobody could ever accuse Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, Dr. Ansari or Purshottamdas Tandon of having communal tendencies, though all of them were deeply religious in their lives.

On the other hand the personalities associated with the communal movements are not known for any kind of attachment to the religions which they claimed to defend or promote. Mohammad Ali Jinnah is the most outstanding example of a thoroughly secular person espousing a communal cause. V. D. Savarkar, the chief theoretician of Hindu *Rashtravad*, was an iconoclast if not an agnostic, and certainly not a man of religious faith. M. S. Golwalkar, the main ideologue of the RSS did not owe his reputation either to any mystical or metaphysical attainments or to scriptural scholarship; his distinction lies in drawing the line between 'we' and 'they', patriots and traitors, on the basis of religious faith and on recommending Hitler's methods for nation building.

The core of religion is its spirituality, its philosophy of life, birth and death, its quest for ultimate reality, suprarational and metaphysical. The communal approach has not even a remote relationship to any such thing. It concerns itself exclusively with the 'here' and not the hereafter, with things mundane rather than spiritual. It makes no attempt at religious-social reform or innovation; to harmonise religious belief with scientifically discovered facts or laws of life is none of its concern. The communalist comes into action only when there is an opportunity to move or mobilise the followers of a faith against a usually imaginary threat, as happened recently with regard to conversions. Justice to Harijans was no priority for those who organised massive *sammelans* in defence of Hinduism. If it were, the cause should have been taken up long ago. It was taken up only as a hot issue capable of evoking the sympathy of a large section of caste Hindus and

instilling in them a fear of their identity as Hindus being overwhelmed by the Muslims.

History may present many instances of bloody wars being fought in the name of religion but it would also show that those campaigns were motivated mainly by considerations of imperial expansion, self aggrandisement or procurement of wealth. In some cases it was even in pursuit of carnal lust for a fancied beauty. There is hardly any instance of a truly religious person being intolerant of other faiths or beliefs. Hazarat Mohammed enjoined upon his followers to respect the prophets and holy men of other regions and religions. Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, told Arjuna that all roads in pursuit of truth would ultimately lead to Him. Even the pursuit of politics in the spirit of religion, as exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi, did not admit of hatred, ill will or rancour against the adversary.

From the communal angle, religion is more a line of demarcation, a mark of identity asserting difference and separation from other groups, than a spiritual approach tending to obliterate identities and inspiring realisation of unity in diversity, the one in many, or a force enabling one to perfectly harmonise one's self with the society, the environment and the cosmos. Religion in the hands of the communalist is divested of all that makes it vital and eternal; it is reduced to a slogan, a symbol, an instrument to excite passions or to obscure reason—an opiate or a heady wine. The communal approach of secularising religion by laying emphasis on its notional and ephemeral identification marks is basically in contradiction with the religious approach as reflected in the attitudes of the great practitioners of spirituality and also in the attitudes of the vast mass of population who adhere to it as a framework of values that brings order to social life. The poser, communal versus secular or secular versus religious is misplaced and not valid.

More recently another theory is being agitated. It is part of the explanation for the frequent occurrence of communal violence in Aligarh, Moradabad, Bihar Sharif, Hyderabad and Godhra. The theory is that Muslims who, after independence, had been reduced to the level of destitutes have now begun to do better. With

their newly acquired affluence they are becoming competitors of Hindu entrepreneurs and are asserting their Muslim identity. Openings in the oil-rich Muslim countries of West Asia help them in this race, creating a volume of resentment in the previously dominant Hindu merchants or entrepreneurs, and this leads to tension and conflict. Other components of this theory are the cultural backwardness of Muslims, their refusal to modernise and their tenacious adherence to traditional socio-religious practices.

Why do Muslims insist on the preservation of a separate civil code and the right of polygamy? Why do they not practise family planning? Why do they multiply mosques and *madrasas*? Why are they so sensitive about music before mosques or *gulas* during Holi? Why should they be so boisterous and vociferous even on an occasion of mourning like Muharram?

These questions would not be altogether irrelevant (a) if they were not directed only at Muslims, because there are similar tendencies as widely manifested among the Hindus; and (b) if one could show that in the absence of these trends there would be no communal prejudice.

I find two major objections to this theory. First, it exhibits the tendency of looking upon the communal problem as the Muslim problem or as the problem of modernising Muslims and bringing them into what is called the national mainstream. Communalism is a mode of thinking which is shared by all the religious communities in India in more or less equal measure and to stick the label to any one of them is itself a manifestation of the disease. Nobody has ever taken exception to the Sikhs trying to maintain a separate religious identity even when the identification marks are so prominently displayed. Even the RSS chief prefers to call them *kesdhari* Hindus than asking them, as he would of the Muslims, to bring their appearance and habits into closer conformity with the national ethos.

My second objection is that the theory confuses the cause with the effect, the root with the fruit. Does the acquisition of affluence by another member of the same community or the refusal to conform to the so-called national ethos by such a person lead to conflict and violence? Conversely why has communal conflict

arisen between the Hindus and the Sikhs in the Punjab despite the absence of all the above-mentioned factors?¹ These factors, particularly at the micro-level, are at best part of the dry grass to which a lighted match is set in order to make fire.

In the context of the discussion on communal violence, local contributory factors and immediate causes, I would like to quote the view of Justice D. P. Madan who has given the most penetrating analysis of the phenomenon in his *Report of Enquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad in May 1970*:

"If we were merely to take a surface-view of the bare facts of any riot, it would appear that the riot was caused by an incident so insignificant that we would stand amazed how such a trifling matter could have led to so much arson, looting and murder. It, however, does not require any deep thinking to know that this incident was not the real cause of the riot but was merely the result of something else which concretely expressed itself in the riot. The basic cause of all communal disturbances is the communal atmosphere pervading the country and the communal tension built up between the two communities. This communal atmosphere provides a ready-tilled soil for communal minded people to sow seeds of communal hatred and nurture them until the bitter harvest of a communal riot is reaped. Communal philosophy and ideas constantly propagated in communal papers and journals and from communal platforms have so poisoned the minds of the ignorant sections of the two communities and even of certain sections of the educated and literate class that every action of a member of the opposite community is looked upon with distrust and suspicion and the most uncharitable construction placed upon it. In some cases officials whose duty is to hold the balance evenly between the two communities are not found free of this taint."

Justice Madan here indicates the real question that we should address ourselves to. For if we are able to trace the sources of

¹ It is not correct to maintain that these factors are altogether absent in the conflict between the Hindus and the Sikhs in the Punjab. The demands are being voiced by the Sikh intellectuals in general, and the Dal Khalsa in particular, are, a close scrutiny convincingly shows, essentially economic in nature. (Ed.)

communal philosophy and ideas' as also their organisational manifestations which create the communal atmosphere, we, in all probability, will reach the diagnosis that may help in curing the disease. The origins of the communal problem, as already indicated, do not go beyond the latter half of the 19th century, a period when the Indian nation in its modern form began to take shape.

Initially there was the demand of the educated middle classes for a share in the governance of the country within the framework of the British Empire. At the turn of the century the demand for complete independence began to grow. With that came the need to create public opinion and to mobilise people. The idea of 'public opinion' and 'people' also did not go beyond the narrow sphere of the educated middle classes. Even this expansion was not realised by the feudal votaries of '*hasab nasab*' and '*parivarik parampara*', both of whom later adjusted themselves to the idea, provided the new entrants into the power game developed a depth and identity. So started a new wave of organised religion and the trend to modern education. The spread of the Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Singh Sabha etc., and the establishment of the Banaras Hindu University and the Aligarh Muslim University were responses to this demand of the situation. Interest in reviving a romanticised version of a past, a golden age, became widespread.

Of course, this was neither the only nor the main trend. There were other arguments in favour of the demand for Home Rule, based on the principles of the natural rights of man and the desire to end the exploitation of India's natural and human resources by the imperial power. But these trends later developed into what came to be known as the phenomenon of communalism. In the race for representation in service or in the legislature, the acquisition of an identity based on religion provided a short cut. The British rulers also considered such identities suitable for their purposes. It helped them to start a competition for showing loyalty to the crown. As the expressions of loyalty on the united national platform,—the Indian National Congress—began to abate, the communal platform appeared, on which to express them more vehemently, the reasoning of each side being that in the race for

concessions the more loyal had more chances to win. Thus emerged the famous communal triangle with the Hindus and the Muslims appealing to the British sense of justice and fairplay. While it was flattering for imperialist Britain it turned out to be poison for national unity.

We can see this thread running into the present times. During World War II the two major communal flanks, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, vied with each other to show support for the war effort, while the main partisan of the freedom struggle, the Indian National Congress, had declared that only free India could be legitimately asked to support the war against Fascism. In the post-war period the leadership of imperialism has passed on from the United Kingdom to the United States of America. Political scientists would find it interesting to observe that the same kind of triangle seems to be in operation with Pakistan and the Hindu chauvinists in India trying to compete for the favour of Washington. The RSS, the Bharatiya Janasangh and its present version, the Bharatiya Janata Party criticised the USA not for its imperialist designs but for showing greater favour to Pakistan.² The contours of this triangle have been blurred because of the massive thrust of anti-imperialism and non-alignment in free India's foreign policy.

The first attempts to compete for jobs and representation later turned into identification of nationalism with a particular religion. First the RSS (1925) and the Hindumahasabha (1932) declared India a *Hindu Rashtra*, and then the Muslim League responded with the slogan of a separate homeland for the Muslims who, they asserted, constituted a separate nation. These new ideological thrusts provided the basis for militant communal organisations which further deepened the cleavage. They went about their business with a missionary zeal, recasting the whole historical and philosophical tradition in their own image and projecting the image of the other community as an unmitigated evil. When the British left, the communal leadership of both communities, the *Jamat-e-Islami* as well as the RSS, recommended that the constitutions

² This is a rather simplified formulation. As Pakistan is drawn into the US sphere, the BJP becomes less hostile, if not sympathetic, towards Zia's regime.

of the new countries should be based on what they considered the Islamic and Hindu policy respectively. Historical experience has shown that India has done well in choosing not to follow them. Pakistan has not been able to preserve even its unity, let alone to solve the problems of the Muslims, which was supposed to be the *raison d'etre* of the demand.

The weakness of the national mainstream, for which nationalism was a secular concept, was that they failed to impart dynamism to their ideology. Rather than combating communalism they tried to make adjustments and come to terms with it and the masses became vulnerable to it. This made the government personnel hesitant when required to hit the perpetrators of communal crimes. The weakness persists even today. No wonder we see periodic waves of the assertion of communal identities, sometimes in a political form and sometimes in the form of communal violence.

THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF COMMUNAL RIOTS IN INDIA

N. C. Saxena

It is generally believed by historians that relations between the Muslims and Hindus during the medieval period in India were cordial. There was generally mutual tolerance and an absence of positive ill will which continued till the end of the nineteenth century. However, there are a few isolated instances of communal violence taking place in India much before the British consolidated their power.

The first riot, of which an authentic version is available, took place at Ahmedabad in 1730. A Hindu gentleman lit the Holi fire against the wishes of his Muslim neighbour. The Muslim neighbour on the following day slaughtered a cow in honour of the Prophet. Enraged, the Hindus in the neighbourhood attacked the Muslims gathered at the place killing one. The Muslims, now aided by regular Afghan soldiers, fought back. In the resulting riots, a number of Hindus and Muslims were killed and there was also extensive damage to property. All business and trade in Ahmedabad was suspended for three or four days. Several leaders from both sides appealed to the Emperor and peace was then restored.

The *District Gazetteer* of Banaras (1909, 207-8) describes a riot of 1809 in Banaras as "one of those convulsions which had frequently occurred in the past owing to the religious antagonism between the Hindu and Mussalman sections of the population" The chief source of conflict was a mosque built by Aurangzeb on the site of an old temple. The serious nature of the riots can be gathered from the fact that order was not restored by the troops until some fifty mosques had been destroyed and several hundred persons had lost their lives.

After 1890, riots on the occasion of religious festivals became a common feature. Such incidents were concentrated in those districts of North India where socio-political activity on the part of the organised groups like the Arya-Samaj, the Muslim League, Hindu Sanghathan groups, the *Tabliq* movement, etc., were prominent. Almost no riot took place in the princely states where the above mentioned groups were not active. There seems to be a positive correlation between periods of intense rioting and deterioration of relations between the top political leaders of the two communities. Thus, around 1916 when the Congress and Muslim League decided to collaborate with each other after the Lucknow Pact, very few riots took place, but the failure of the Khilafat agitation and the resultant bitterness manifested itself in street violence in many places.

A special mention may be made of the Moplah riots of 1921 which occurred in the Malabar region, a part of Kerala. There had been sporadic outbreaks of Moplah violence since 1836. These involved attacks by Moplahs on Hindu landlords and sometimes on English authorities. The outbreaks reflected the existence of both agrarian exploitation and rural poverty. The Namboodiri Brahmans and Nairs held superior tenurial rights whereas land was cultivated by the Moplahs. Throughout the period between 1836 and 1921 whenever the Namboodiri and Nair landlords tried to evict their tenants, violence was provoked. The Moplahs were bitterly anti-Hindu, bitterly anti-British, bitter against the world that gave them only misery. During the later part of the Khilafat movement, the Moplahs became convinced that the rule of the Khalifa had been established in India and they wreaked violence on the Hindu landlords and their men. They also tried to convert many of them to Islam. The army had to be sent for and it took the British Government more than 6 months to control insurrection. Of the Moplah rebels, 2266 were killed in action, 1615 were wounded, 5688 were captured, and 38,256 surrendered. Moplah prisoners were court-martialled and shot or executed (Smith 1946). The agrarian aspect of this violence was unfortunately lost sight of by the leaders of that time including Gandhi, and in future relations between the Congress and the Muslim League, the hang-over of the Moplah riots continued to weigh on the minds of both the parties.

When the Indian National Congress resigned from the State assemblies in 1939 both the intensity and periodicity of communal violence increased in North India. However, very few riots occurred during 1942-46, which was a period of economic boom for the middle class in India. The peak of communal frenzy was reached during 1946-48. The Calcutta and Naokhali riots, which were alleged to have been inspired by the Muslim League government of Suhrawardy continued in August 1946 for many weeks. Mahatma Gandhi resorted to a fast unto death till he was assured of peace in Calcutta. The army was called out with orders to shoot curfew breakers. Muslim atrocities in Bengal provoked the Hindus in the neighbouring provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where Hindu brutality was equally frightful.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 brought about a change in the attitude of the people on the communal question. The RSS was banned and the Hindu communal elements were greatly weakened. The period between 1950 and 1960 may be called a decade of communal peace. General political stability and economic development in the country also contributed in improving the communal situation. The incidence of communal violence has shown a continuous upward trend since 1964 except for the period 1971-77, which again coincides with a strong political leadership at the central level.

In 1964 serious riots broke out in various parts of East India like Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Rourkela and Ranchi in what appeared to be a chain reaction. Tension erupted in Kashmir earlier over the theft of a holy relic of the Prophet from the Hazratbal mosque. The relic, preserved under strict security conditions, was found missing on 27 December, 1963 and this caused an immediate reaction among the people in Kashmir. Their anger was mainly directed against the carelessness of the government and had no trace of communal colour. Although the box was discovered within a week, the incident led to serious riots in Khulna (in Bangla Desh), which caused panic among the Hindu population. They began migrating to India, carrying with them harrowing and sometimes exaggerated tales of their woes. As a reaction atrocities were committed against Muslims in the above mentioned places in India. According to Shri S. K. Ghosh, who was then

Additional Inspector General of Police in Orissa, two thousand people, mostly Muslims, were killed in Rourkela alone in riots which lasted for about 15 days (Ghosh 1974).

Another wave of communal violence swept across the country in 1967 and continued till 1970, when the central leadership was weak. Many North Indian States were controlled at that time by SVD governments. Inability and hesitation to use brute force against the rioters due to weak and wavering political leadership were responsible for the continuance of such riots for a number of days.

The break up of communal incidents for some states for the period between 1968 and 1979 is given in Table 1.

Table 1
Incidence of Communal Disturbances

State	1968 & 69	70 & 71	72 & 73	74 & 75	76 & 77	78 & 79
Andhra Pradesh	50	34	20	21	12	59
Assam	25	56	19	12	9	27
Bihar	197	145	61	72	62	77
Delhi	6	9	8	8	8	10
Gujarat	217	47	39	49	34	48
Jammu & Kashmir	1	1	1	—	2	2
Kerala	30	19	20	9	13	21
Madhya Pradesh	44	65	47	38	19	34
Maharashtra	62	199	53	50	29	29
Uttar Pradesh	111	91	92	77	76	91
Rajasthan	25	23	25	28	13	14
West Bengal	52	90	45	53	47	39
Total (for entire India)	865	842	482	453	357	534

N.B. Each column shows totals for two years.

Source: *Home Ministry Reports*

The casualties during the riots in the four years between 1977 and 1980 are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Casualties in riots between 1977 and 1980

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of persons killed</i>	<i>Number of persons injured</i>
1977	36	1122
1978	110	1853
1979	258	2296
1980	372	2691

Source: *Home Ministry Reports*

Some of the common features of communal riots in the last 20 years are:

- (a) A region, particularly in an urban area, with a Muslim minority population ranging between 20 and 40 per cent of the total population seems more prone to disturbances than other regions. However, there are notable exceptions such as Shahjahanpur, Saharanpur, Lucknow, Gorakhpur and Faizabad where Muslims form 46%, 39%, 30%, 26% and 21% of the population respectively. As against these, percentages of Muslims in the populations of some communally sensitive towns are Moradabad: 51%, Firozabad: 40%, Aligarh: 38%, Meerut: 37%, Varanasi: 26%, and Allahabad: 24%. These towns also have a strong concentration of Muslim artisans, a few of whom have become manufacturers and exporters and are doing quite well.
- (b) Areas where Hindu refugees from Pakistan are settled in significant numbers are more combustible.
- (c) The probability of recurrence of riots in a town seems to be directly proportional to the number of riots which have taken place in that town in the past. In other words,

some districts become communally sensitive whereas others remain peaceful although the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the Muslim population may be the same in these two categories of towns.

- (d) Riots seem to be more common in North India, specially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, although riots have occurred in Southern states also. Within Uttar Pradesh, western U.P. seems to be more prone than eastern U.P. The percentage of '*Ashrafis*', immigrant Muslims from Central Asia and converts from high castes, is also higher in west Uttar Pradesh than in the east.
- (e) In British India and also soon after partition most riots took place on the occasion of religious festivals. The playing of music before a mosque and cow killing were two common incidents which invariably sparked off violence. However, from this alone it should not be concluded that riots are a result of religious differences between the two communities. Religion is just a badge by which hostile communities identify themselves and each other.

Although at the metaphysical level there are serious differences between Hinduism and Islam, at the popular level there had been and still is a great deal of fusion in religious practices and beliefs. As languages Hindi and Punjabi, Assamese and Bengali, Hindi and Urdu may not be very different, but this objective similarity does not render the conflict between the speakers of these languages artificial and irrelevant. Symbolic insults to the religions, such as music before a mosque and cow killing, become significant because of the intensity of feelings which are generated by these symbols which in turn is determined by the way these symbols are associated with political power, history or the pride of various groups. Religion is the outer cover; the inner core of group conflict is to ensure secular power and dominance over the other group.

- (f) As already stated, more riots have occurred when the central authority was weak, between 1961 and 1964, 1967 and 1970 and 1978 and 1980.

- (g) It is difficult to assert whether communal hatred or violence is on the increase or on the decline. What appears more obvious is that brutality and the use of deadly weapons is increasing while the duration of a riot is getting reduced. Another conclusion which follows from a comparison of pre-sixty and post-sixty riots is that in the latter period violence by and large remains a localised phenomenon and does not spread to neighbouring towns. The Moradabad riots of 1980 were an exception to the above rule.
- (h) Muslim majority towns of the Kashmir valley, West Bengal and Kerala have remained unaffected as far as serious riots are concerned.

II

It is hazardous to offer explanations for the continuance of communal violence in India. Unfortunately very few empirical studies have been carried out in an objective and unbiased manner which could throw light on the causes of the riots. The response of the government, press and public figures to such riots has become more or less stereotyped and even predictable. There is a strong condemnation of the so-called communal groups, anti-social elements are held responsible, a sinister foreign hand is seen pulling the strings, pious statements are made in favour of national integration, a commission of enquiry is appointed, and soon afterwards everything is forgotten until we are shocked by a fresh wave of violence. In private people blame one or the other community, but in public care is taken not to hurt any group's sensibilities. The villain is always located somewhere else — economic frustration, legacy of the British, political opportunism, etc.

Communal violence should be distinguished from protest movements like the anti-reservation agitation in Gujarat, the Assam riots, the Punjabi Subha riots, etc., in which there is a group which organises itself on the basis of grievances felt, real or imaginary, demands are articulated, people feel aggrieved and wronged because of certain Government policies, an attempt is made to get certain concessions from the regime and such a protest action leads to confrontation with the police. Communal

riots take place in an entirely different setting. There is no articulation of demands, organisation of groups seems to be informal, leadership is spontaneous and not sharply defined, and the administration is not generally directly involved in the initial stages of the tension.

Communal violence needs to be distinguished from communal prejudice and communal conflict. Prejudice, conflict and violence are inter related, one leads to the other, and yet these three sociological expressions of inter-community relations have an autonomy of their own. Each may exist independent of the other two. Till the early sixties there was a great deal of racial prejudice against the Blacks in the United States of America and yet violence remained on a low key. The Hindu-Punjabis and the Sikh-Punjabis were on opposite sides of the conflict over the creation of the Punjabi Subha between 1950 and 1963 and yet there was very little violence. Two groups may be fighting each other for control over political, economic and administrative resources, like the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans in Madras during 1910-40, yet the informal rules of the game of not aggravating conflict into street violence may be observed by both the groups. The Shiv Sena agitation in Maharashtra was directed against the South Indians, yet very few South Indians lost their lives. There is prejudice against Punjabis in Uttar Pradesh but it leads to neither conflict nor violence. Muslims in Sri Lanka do not mix with the other communities and yet are at peace with them. Thus it is meaningful to study prejudice, conflict and violence separately.

Prejudice is an attitude that predisposes a person to think, feel and act in biased ways toward a group and its individual members. A prejudiced individual evaluates a person belonging to a certain group not as a person but on the basis of his group membership. When Ahmad cheats Bashir, Bashir thinks that Ahmad is a cheat. But when Gupta cheats Bashir, he thinks that all Hindus are cheats. Certain negative traits are first associated with members of the other group and all individuals are then presumed to have those objectionable qualities ascribed to that group. Prejudice results in five types of rejective behaviour, talking ill of the other group with friends, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and in its extreme form, it leads to a desire for the extermination of the other group.

An average Hindu's prejudice against the Muslim community is because of his misconceived perception of firstly, the attempts made by the Muslim rulers in medieval times to destroy Hindu culture; secondly, the separatist role played by the Muslims in the freedom struggle; thirdly, their refusal to modernise themselves and accept the uniform civil code, family planning, etc., and lastly, their having extra-territorial loyalties. After the riots of Ahmedabad many educated Hindu rioters felt that they had avenged the plundering of Somnath temple by Mahmud of Ghazni. An incident which had taken place ten centuries before was still fresh in the minds of the Hindus and in their perception, an attack on the present day population of Muslims meant vindicating themselves against Mahmud of Ghazni.

School text books also unfortunately encourage anti-Muslim feelings by teaching and praising the culture and values of the majority community.

Muslim prejudice against the Government and the majority community is derived from their heightened sense of discrimination in jobs, from a belief that conscious and concerted efforts are being made to wipe out their language and culture, and that the Hindu communal groups are always conspiring to perpetrate genocide on them.

Muslims in India have acquired the psychology of a deprived group, they compare their status with Muslims of other Muslim majority countries, or with their own status during the British days when they had a strong political party, administrative and political reservations, separate electorates and a godfather in the British empire. They have not been able to come to grips with the changed realities of a secular country, and they feel alienated. Due to the migration of the urban professional Muslim class to Pakistan the percentage of Muslims in Government jobs declined soon after independence. This percentage has continued to be low, of which discrimination is a minor causative factor, other reasons being lack of preparedness and sufficient educational qualifications. This has further increased the Muslim the sense of frustration.

With such feelings of alienation and perceived persecution an ordinary incident like a Hindu band playing music in front of a

mosque or the presence of a few pigs before a religious congregation takes on an entirely different meaning in the Muslim mind. They see it as a gross and violent manifestation of sacrilegious and vindictive hostility not only to individual Muslims but to the sacred tradition of Islam, being perpetrated not by a few uncouth and brutal rowdies but by the entire Hindu community which is bent upon punishing them. Thus, an incident which may be trivial in nature leads to a chain reaction ending in violence.

They see the police force as a symbol of the Hindu communal elements, and by attacking it in their moments of anger and frustration bring the worst calamity onto themselves. The police constables and sub-inspectors are recruited from the lower classes of society and are often prejudiced against Muslims, who are seen by them as criminals, suspects, communal and irrational people.

Conflict arises when two groups compete with each other for a better share in political power, government jobs or social status. Conflict may also arise if two groups follow mutually contradictory goals in matters of political and cultural policies. The Hindus would like to define an ideal society as one in which all citizens participate freely in all forms of social interaction, with no concern for communal affiliation. In their view, the State should not be concerned with problems of any group based on religion. It may allow for some degree of cultural diversity, but its basic premise should be denial of any social obligation to preserve communal identities. On the other hand, most minority group leaders will view this lack of protection for their cultures as tyranny. They would prefer the Government to follow policies of pluralism in which privileges are distributed to groups according to their proportion in the population.

Thus in India right upto 1935 responsible leaders of both the Congress and the Muslim League desired Hindu-Muslim unity, but there was a basic difference in their approach. The Congress thought of unity in terms of fusion and obliteration of communal moulds, while the Muslim leadership visualised unity as a federation in which group identity was not destroyed and this led them to demand a federal government with a weak centre with a Muslim share in all wings of the Government guaranteed by the Constitution. The Hindu leaders were prepared to grant cultural autonomy but not such rights which would imply that Muslims cons-

titled a political community. The struggle continued till it resulted in the partition of the country.

As India cannot be partitioned any further, the strategy of the Muslim community to create yet another political federation for itself had to be given up. Instead, the nature of their demands changed. They demanded cultural and educational rights for themselves such as status for Urdu, preservation of the Muslim Personal Law, job reservation, minority status for Aligarh Muslim University, etc. Such demands appear to the Hindus as weakening the unity of the nation and are, therefore, opposed.

Apart from religious minorities there are linguistic groups in India as well which have demanded from time to time separate states and more federal rights for their regions. Although in the early fifties such demands were interpreted as divisive and detrimental to national integration, there has been an increasing willingness to accommodate regional demands. There is no evidence that the strategy of promoting regional identification by creating states based on languages has either proved to be divisive or prevented economic growth. On the other hand, it has reduced conflicts directed against the Central Government, has regionalised politics and has increased the political participation of the masses.

The attitude of the Central Government towards religious minorities has been different, only partly because of the heritage of partition and the memories of the intense conflict which took place in the first half of the twentieth century. But the more important reason why religious demands have not been accommodated lies perhaps in the geographical dispersal of Muslims in the country. Since they are in a minority not only in all the states (except Jammu and Kashmir) but also in all the districts (except Murshidabad and Mallapuram) Muslims cannot convert their cultural identity into a political pressure group nor can privileges of a political nature be granted to them. Since Muslim MPs have to depend on substantial Hindu support for winning in elections, they cannot openly espouse Muslim causes. This makes the Muslims feel isolated and embittered. Certain Muslim papers and rejected political leaders have developed a vested interest in romanticising and highlighting Muslim grievances. It suits them if the Muslim masses suffer from a sense of permanent injury; it

will keep their readership and leadership intact. Objective analysis will perhaps show that Muslim problems are not so much the cause of the disturbed Muslim mind as the consequence of that disturbance which is a result of the lack of political participation on terms to their liking.

As already stated prejudice and conflict have to be distinguished from violence. Certain general conditions which transform conflict into violence are:

1. Relative deprivation—high
2. Legitimacy of the government—low
3. Channels of communication—blocked.
4. Insecurity among a group—high.
5. Dehumanisation—widely practised.
6. Beliefs and traditions—sanctioning violence.
7. Instruments of violence—readily available.

The direct cause of the eruption of violence has to be sought in administrative lapses. When law and order machinery is on the verge of breaking down, the two communities start losing faith in district administration for the maintenance of peace. Each community then starts contributing by emotional and financial support to its anti-social fringe elements for their physical and emotional defence. Such elements now begin to indulge in arson, looting and killing, thereby further aggravating the break down of law and order. Another administrative explanation, which may sound tautological, is that violence is habit-forming and continued riots in a town leads to an acceptance of violence as the only means to settle inter-community issues, thereby resulting in a vicious circle. This may partly explain the reasons for the continued occurrence of riots in certain towns in Uttar Pradesh in the past three decades.

Many writers have tried to find economic factors behind such riots. Economic arguments may be expressed in a number of ways. First, it is asserted that most of the employers, industrialists and middlemen are Hindus, whereas most of the employees, workers and artisans are Muslims. Therefore, communal riots are a distorted form of class-conflict. Second it is hypothesised that there is a competitive conflict of interests within the middle class

and among the self-employed people over access to a given array of opportunities like government jobs, export contracts, market shares, etc.,. Since identities of groups have already been formed on religious lines, which are time-resistant in nature, group clashes occur along communal lines just as in Bihar, where there is a clash of interests between caste groups like Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars and Kayasthas. Third, it is alleged that communal clashes are deliberately planned and encouraged in order to ensure that people do not begin identifying themselves with the economic class to which they belong. Exponents of this explanation find a strong co-relation between periods of economic slump in traditional artisan-based activities and periods of communal clashes. Fourth, it is asserted that even present economic crises in our society and the persistence of scarcity conditions have led to the brutalisation of every day existence, leading not only to communal violence but to increased atrocities over women, scheduled castes and members of the weaker sections of society. In a stagnant economy there would always be a greater danger of violence against those who are not regarded as full members of the society, who are living beyond the pale of legitimacy in the eyes of the majority group, and whose existence is marginal.

There is a general impression that the irresponsible behaviour of politicians is a major factor in escalating communal tensions. Some people go to the extent of asserting that politicians have a vested interest in perpetuating Hindu-Muslim differences as feelings of insecurity push Muslims to vote as a bloc which helps the political parties.

The role of politics in communal violence can be discussed at two levels, the national policy level, and the district level where politicians compete with each other within and outside the party maintaining their hold over different segments of the population. These aspects of political involvement will be discussed separately.

There are broadly two kinds of policy which may be followed in declining group demands. One seeks the assimilation of the entire population of the state so that it shares a common identity. Only individual rights, privileges and duties are recognised. The Soviet Union and Thailand have been pursuing this approach toward the Muslim segment of their population. The success of

this method depends on the willingness of the minority group to abandon their group demands and merge with the more dominant group. The other approach recognises the existence of differentiated groups in the population and concedes to such groups, rights, privileges and obligations based on their proportion in the population. Lebanon and Malaysia have been following this approach where political and administrative reservations for various religious and racial communities are built into the constitution. No general guidelines can be laid down as to which approach should be followed. Much would depend on the history, traditions and economic capabilities of the two communities as also on the nature of the state, whether it is authoritarian, democratic, elitist, etc. From the experience of other communally divided societies perhaps it can be suggested that if the political leaders seek to bring about an identity between state and nation, the problem of conflict management becomes more complicated.

The Government of India has been following, and perhaps rightly so, a middle-of-the-road policy as far as Muslims are concerned. It frowns upon demands of a covertly political nature, such as those for a separate electorate, proportional representation, the formation of religious parties, etc.; at the same time conceding cultural and educational demands like encouragement to Urdu, the preservation of Muslim Personal Law, minority status to the Aligarh Muslim University, etc. Thus the central government's ideal seems to be political assimilation and cultural pluralism. This, however, leaves a certain amount of grey area, the most important issue being the reservation of jobs, whether formal or informal. Purely in the interests of communal harmony it will be better to once and for all take decisions on such issues, rather than giving the impression that the issues are negotiable on the eve of the elections, or allowing the increase of communal agitations for and against such demands.

The role of district level politicians in communal violence can be understood in a number of ways. Since economic growth is taking place at a very slow rate the politicians can indulge only in the politics of distribution and not of production. Politics being the art of the possible, the politicians find it more paying in terms of votes to appeal to the people in the name of caste, reli-

gion and language. Thus local politics often assumes the character of a zero-sum game with a built-in-potential for social conflict. At the same time, since in a mixed constituency legislators have to depend on the votes of both the communities, the Muslim legislators belonging to all-India parties are often constrained to eschew the more militant form of protest as far as Muslim causes are concerned and are obliged to work behind the scenes.

The nomination and selection processes within a party also tend towards the selection of docile and moderate Muslims for party tickets. Muslims had by and large voted for the Congress party in the general elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962, but there was a growing feeling among them that their vote was being taken for granted and in the 1967 elections the Congress party did not get as massive support from them as it had been used to get in the past. The Congress party succeeded in winning back their vote in 1971 but lost it again in 1977. Since then the all-India political parties seem to be under the impression that the moderate articulation of Muslim demands will not result in any loss of Hindu votes but will ensure them the minority support, hence the scramble among them to woo the Muslim electorate.

Apart from the legislators there are a number of disgruntled politicians, teachers, journalists and members of extremist organisations who do not have to contest Assembly or Parliament elections and, therefore, do not suffer from the constraint of seeking votes from both the communities. These people tend to take extreme views on communal questions and though they may not have mass support, they can arouse mass passions during periods of tension. Their activities being a greater source of nuisance, the district administrations take a tough view of them.

To conclude, sectarian violence needs multi-causal analysis and a deeper understanding. Certain important questions as those listed below still remain unanswered. An objective study of specific riots in India may throw more light on their nature and provide us with clues to understand the following questions that still remain unanswered:—

1. If A attacks B in a communal riot, what was the relationship between A and B before the riot? Were they known to each other, was there a casual acquaintance or business

- rivalry between them or were they members of two different factions with longstanding enmity? What are the relations between such people after the riots? Or are they still unknown to each other? What kind of people participate in the communal frenzy?
2. It is generally believed that while people of the lower class actually participate in the riots, leadership is provided by the middle class and funds are provided by business people. To what extent is this true? In case there is an involvement of different classes of people, either psychological or physical, what is the nexus between such classes? How are the ideas actually transmitted? Where, if at all, are any meetings held where decisions are taken to attack the other community?
 3. There is a difference between preparedness and conspiracy. Do communal riots occur as a result of preparedness or after conspiracy?
 4. What are the backgrounds of the so-called communal leaders? Why does extremist ideology appeal to some and not to the rest of the people? Is it because of economic frustrations?
 5. What class of people are responsible for the spread of rumours? Why are some rumours strongly believed and others disbelieved?
 6. So far administration has believed in only three kinds of control—curfew, large-scale arrests and peace committee meetings. Each method has its own limitations. Curfew results in large-scale hardships. It sharpens the anger of the entire community and focusses it against the police. Large-scale arrests tend to be arbitrary and often of anti-social elements most of whom may not participate in rioting. Peace committee meetings sharpen the communal identities of the leaders. Can there be other more successful methods of control?
 7. Who are the members of the Peace Committee? Are they prominent members of the communities or are they so-called secular people with very little hold over the masses?

8. Behind communal riots is a feeling of strong prejudice and hostility between the communities. How can local administration reduce such feelings during times of peace.
9. What kind of training can be given to the Police and P.A.C. to improve the functioning and the image of these forces?
10. What is the relationship between the recurrence of riots and the trade cycle of local industries?

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COMMUNALISM AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA

Zoya Khaliq Hasan

I

This paper attempts to examine the socio-economic basis of communalism, and the political compulsions behind communal violence in post-independent India. It suggests that the process of fragmented and uneven capitalist development has created conditions of backwardness which, in turn, have facilitated the growth of communalism. Economic stagnation has led to a situation in which certain groups treat each other not only with suspicion and hostility, but also as rivals in the scarce market for jobs, concessions and subsidies. It is also our contention that various forms of tension, among Hindus and Muslims in particular, have assumed corrosive proportions because the bourgeois political parties have, quite successfully, deflected intra-class and inter-class contradictions into the stream of community and communal consciousness to serve their narrow ends. An investigation of some of the major communal riots reveals that various powerful interests—economic and political—play a vigorous part in fomenting communal conflict.

The emergence of communalism is often attributed to the establishment of "Muslim" rule in India. This is because the Sultans of Delhi consciously followed a 'discriminatory' policy towards the Hindus, reflected in the demolition of temples and in the imposition of *jizya*¹, while the '*ulema*', acting as guardians

¹ For a discussion of such views see Mukhia (1972). For an explanation of religious intolerance see Kosambi (1962, pp 29 - 31). Kosambi pointed out that the attitude of religious tolerance or otherwise in

of orthodox Islam, encouraged their followers to maintain their identity by rejecting Hindu influence on their social life.

The more extreme inferences drawn from this view of the medieval Indian state have been effectively challenged by some historians (Mukhia 1972, 45-47), who reject the view that Hindu-Muslim relations in medieval India were characterised exclusively by strife and confrontation. It is argued on the basis of contemporary evidence that the vast majority of Indians lived together without overt communal antipathy or bitterness. The attempted integration between communities was evident at the *Khanqahs* of *Sufis*: as institutions of cultural adaptation, the *Khanqahs* provided a means of incorporating Hindu religious customs and beliefs into an eclectic system. But it was found convenient by the colonial rulers to ignore this reality; there can be no doubt that the British played an important part in heightening communal consciousness and in giving credence to many stereotyped notions about various communities. They laid special emphasis on the conflicts and divisions in medieval Indian society in order to underscore the unifying and centralising impact of British rule as well as to counter the claims of the Indian National Congress to represent all classes and communities of Indian society.

The British Government singled out the Muslim community for deliberate repression in the years immediately after the Mutiny of 1857 (Smith 1979, 77-79). The policy was subsequently replaced by one of appeasement of the Muslims. The success of these policies was made possible by the unequal development of the various communities, as indeed of various regions. Except for the United Provinces where they were relatively better placed in the professions and Government service, Muslims were economically and educationally a backward Community (Hasan 1979). They formed an insignificant portion of the rudimentary Indian

ancient as well as medieval India was to a certain extent related to the availability of resources. A tolerance or eclectic attitude would become pronounced during a period of comparative prosperity but it would tend to recede into the background in a situation of scarcity and fall in revenues. "With the Mughal prosperity at its height," observed Kosambi, "Akbar could dream of a synthetic *Din-i-Ilahi*; Aurangzeb could only augment his falling revenues by increased religious persecution in the *jizya* tax on unbelievers."

bourgeoisie, *i.e.* being far removed from the commercial and industrial centres of the Empire—Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. It was for this reason that leaders like Syed Ahmad Khan claimed special concessions and safeguards. Above all, these leaders saw the future progress of the Muslims as inextricably linked with the fortunes of the Raj. Syed Ahmad Khan, in particular, professed and preached loyalty to the Government: this was the corner-stone of his politics.

The British Government recognised the necessity for enlisting Muslim support and extended special favours to them in recognition of their "historical importance" (Hasan 1979, 119). The introduction of separate electorates was one such favour: This was recognised as a counterpoise to the growing strength of the anti-colonial movement. The principles of communal representation inevitably lead to the "creation of political camps organised against each other and teaches men to think as partisans and not citizens;" (Robinson, 1974). Lord Ronaldshay, Governor of Bengal from 1917 to 1922, observed that the Hindu-Muslim differences were significant, since the "divisions are not only those due to religious belief and practice, but also to a profoundly different outlook on life resulting in social systems which are the very antithesis of one another." (Robinson 1974, 122). Such notions established a Muslim identity in Indian politics and encouraged the growth of communal alignments.

To treat Muslims as a distinct political interest was a conscious, but mistaken policy pursued by the British colonialist. The Muslim community, like the Hindus, was divided at all levels—political, economic and ideological. Its political interests were not alike; they varied from class to class and from region to region. These contradictions came to the fore at the end of 1917 when Montagu and Chelmsford received 44 deputations from Muslim bodies each claiming to speak for the community. This made nonsense of the communal categories created by the colonial rulers.

It is noteworthy that the Congress did not successfully challenge the assumption made by the British rulers about Indian Muslims. In fact, they also assumed that Muslims possessed common economic and political interests and were distinct from Hindus. This

was the logic in negotiating the Lucknow Pact of 1916 (Hasan 1979, 90-94). By approving the principle of communal representation, the Congress was guilty of accepting and perpetuating the misleading and artificial communal categories created by the imperialists.

After 1916, the Congress began to dwell on the unity of Hindu-Muslim interest, but having agreed to negotiate on the principle of communal representation, there was no wriggling out of it. This was made difficult by those privileged Muslims who had secured major political concessions under the Acts of 1919 and 1935. Now it became convenient for them to assert their communal identity, which had British approval, to secure a strong position in the new structure.

The Congress mass mobilisation campaigns also had severe limitations. Many Congress campaigns built a following by exploiting narrow sectarian and religious issues. It is common knowledge that the Congress was closely identified with Hindu institutions and its leaders were connected with cow-protection societies, the Nagari agitation, the *Shuddhi Sabhas*, the Arya Samaj, and the Hindumahasabha. They used Hindu religious idioms and symbols — the cult of *Kali*, *Ram Rajya*, Ganapati — and religious fairs and festivals for nationalist mobilisation.

In Maharashtra, Tilak and his followers employed the cult of Shivaji in their mobilisation campaigns. Similarly, the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal, notwithstanding its contribution to the anti-colonial struggle, had unmistakable revivalist overtones. In the United Provinces, several Congressmen, supported by traders, bankers and landlords, actively campaigned against cow slaughter, patronised the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, the Arya Samaj and Gaurakshini Sabha (Hasan, 1981).

This is not all. The national movement, led by the Congress, failed to organise any systematic ideological campaign to combat the forces of reaction and revivalism inside and outside the Congress organisation. This was not possible because the movement was built on the premises and structure of traditional Indian society. Not being revolutionary in character, the Congress-led agitations were constrained to rely on and use the existing narrow levels of consciousness. Not surprisingly, the glory of India's

past formed a constant refrain in the argument of the nationalists to mobilise support for democracy and freedom. This provided an impetus to revivalist thinking and ideology, culminating in compromises with, and even the defence of, the existing social system.² In different ways and at different times Tilak and Gandhi represented these tendencies in the national movement. They harnessed revivalist energies to promote the Congress cause.

The effect of this was the emergence of a nation plagued with the divisive forces of casteism and communalism. This could not be otherwise as long as anti-feudalism was not the basis of the democratic revolution which could unite all classes and groups against imperialism and landlordism. The democratic movement of the Congress was not built on anti-feudalism; in fact, it was grafted on the compromise with feudalism and feudal institutions. This resulted in the surrender of the modern intelligentsia before the indigenous feudal land relations which sustained the caste system. Not that subjectively there was no caste consciousness, for this was inevitable if you accepted the basically unjust agrarian structure. . . . Such was the double-faced intelligentsia of the earlier years. Espousing the aims and interests of the rising bourgeoisie, proclaiming new democratic values, it attacked the imperialists but at the same time allied itself with the old feudal order and institutions and justified such alliance as concentrating fire on the foreign enemy first (Ranadive, 1979).

For this reason, the Indian National Congress, which claimed to represent all classes and communities, was challenged by the Muslim League, the Justice Party and other organisations of non-Brahmins in Madras and Bombay Provinces (Namboodiripad 1979, 336). These organisations demanded separate electorates for minorities and reservation for backward castes and communities. Congress leaders blamed such organisations for obstructing progress and development, but some of its leaders were in no small measure responsible for paying obeisance to obscurantist ideas and practices.

The origins of communalism, as indeed its perpetuation in the post-independence period, can be grasped by taking into account a number of important factors. Firstly, communal identities ex-

² For a discussion of this aspect, see Namboodiripad (1979, pp. 333 - 335).

isted in the pre-colonial period, but communalism and communal politics took shape and acquired divisive proportions in the colonial period. Imperialist manoeuvres, manifested sharply in the British policy of "Divide and Rule", created artificial divisions and fostered the growth of communal organisations and of communal politics. Secondly, the anti-colonial movement led by the Congress compromised with communal elements and with pre-capitalist forms of consciousness; consequently, the movement witnessed a low level of struggle and had to rely on the narrow levels of consciousness prevailing in Indian Society. Thirdly, the incompleteness of the anti-feudal revolution created conditions of backwardness in which the communal ideology found a fertile soil upon which to grow. Finally, the political and economic crises of the system produced conditions in which intra-class and inter-class rivalry and competition were aggravated. The ruling classes often resorted to the communal strategy as a diversionary tactic to conceal the weakness and fragility of the system.

II

Many Indian leaders, particularly of the Congress, maintained that the withdrawal of the colonial power would bring to an end the communal disputes and animosities. How unprophetic this belief was, is proved by the subsequent history of communal relations in post-independent India. The communal problem still persists. The promised era of communal harmony has eluded us and the hope of establishing a secular society has not been fulfilled. Class interests have failed to transcend religious and caste loyalties; consequently, organisations based on sectional and communal appeals have undermined the solidarity of the working people.

Communalism has been exacerbated by many factors. Some arise out of the inherent contradictions in the social and political system, the nature and character of the anti-imperialist movement earlier discussed, and the traumatic experience of partition in 1947. Yet, the resurgence of communalism is often sought to be explained either as the logical consequence of Muslim separatism, or in terms of the persistent Muslim opposition to the changes

in the Islamic Personal Law. On the other side, it is explained in terms of the ideology of the "Hindu Rashtra" and the anti-Muslim posture of the RSS and its allies.

The contemporary energy of communalism is derived from the landscape of fragmented and uneven capitalist development. Capitalist modernisation, under colonial auspices, inducted various groups and communities into its fold at disparate levels and at different stages. Muslims, in particular, were late entrants in the process because their proximity to the bureaucratic, judicial and economic structure of feudalism made it harder for them to adjust to new professions (Robinson 1974). Their hardship was caused by the general decline of feudalism, the decay of traditional crafts, and the steady erosion in their landed status. Finally, their dominance of judicial and executive services was challenged because unlike "the early years (when) these positions could be plucked from the family trees or on the basis of landownership, with the increasing pace of modernization these ascriptive criteria began to be discarded. The status of the landed gentry atrophied as Government began gradually to take over all the residual administrative functions. Besides, the very basis of landed status was continuously eroded by the rise of the powerful commercial classes (mostly Hindus) who, besides achieving status, were buying up their land" (Naidu 1980, 38)¹.

Displacement and loss of privilege, combined with the militant posture of Hindu communal groups in the post-independent period, sustained Muslim insecurity and provided the basis for their communal loyalties and alliances. The logic of this has to be located both in the process of development and in the structure of politics. The communal logic operates vigorously in the backward regions of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and not so much in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal. The anti-colonial movement in the former areas drew on revivalist energies and on the political efforts of religious leaders who exhorted the people to revolt against the alien presence. The political space, in the absence of social reform movements, was occupied by religiously inspired nationalism.

¹ In 1886, for example, Muslims held 45.1 per cent of the judicial and executive posts in Oudh and the North-Western provinces, although the total Muslim population was 13.4 per cent (Mishra 1961, 158).

This, no doubt, sustained the nationalist movement, but only at the expense of providing encouragement to separatist and communal politics. Economic development in the post-independent period was retarded and slow; consequently, politics and mobilisation took place around individuals, factions, and communities rather than on the issues of development and reform (Brass 1980). Hindus and Muslims have been interlocked in a competition for survival and advancement, magnified against the backdrop of underdevelopment. Instances of increasing competition are quite numerous. Certain areas in western U.P., where the communal phenomenon has acquired inflammatory proportions, constitute a case in point. Here the Muslims have come to occupy a relatively influential position in the economic and political life of the region, which seemingly threatens the hegemony of existing Hindu commercial groups. On the brute fact of economic competition is superimposed cultural antipathy, religious animosity, linguistic prejudices and, above all, the memories of Partition.⁴

The communal imperative has proved a lot more self-perpetuating in the case of minorities.⁵ Their perception of being the "threatened group" has made them lean on the Government and, in a peculiar way, enmeshed them in the intra-class contradictions of the ruling elite. Often drawn into the vortex of politics, they have given primacy to the protection of political interests rather than to the alleviation of their economic backwardness. But their preoccupation with politics has only helped to marginalise them further in the new economic infrastructure and processes of development.⁶ Moreover, the compulsions of ruling class politics

⁴ See Naidu (1980, pp 146 - 149) for a discussion on the role of psychopathological factors.

⁵ It is important to make a distinction between "minority effect" (example, Jews and Parsis) and the "threatened group". The former induces the group towards industry and professions, while the latter acts as a fetter.

⁶ Naidu (1980, pp 43) remarks "The greater the pressure for this, the greater the absolute numbers among the elite of the community who appear to have surfaced the currents of the new economic system and are thereby heirs to the fruits of the new technologies and expansions of the economic framework." But the lag in the modernisation of the minorities as an explanation of communalism has been challenged by Brass (1974).

permit political concessions to Muslims only in a limited sphere—the preservation of the minority character of the Aligarh Muslim University or the Muslim Personal Law — but not in the form of granting concessions to Muslim weavers in Bihar and U.P. The latter, if granted, would boomerang on the ruling party because it would be construed as a “surrender to Muslim interests”.⁷

Communalism has also been sustained by the structure and pattern of political mobilisation. The communal calculus, derived from the existence and persistence of traditional interest groupings based on caste, religion, language and region, is the organising principle for articulation.⁸ Bourgeois party politics has legitimised these groupings, particularly at the time of elections. Mobilisation strategies of most parties relying heavily on communal, caste and regional networks have found it convenient to organise people on such a basis. Thus in various ways communalism serves the interests of the dominant classes. Yet it is equally in their interest to deny overt legitimacy and recognition to communal interest. They do so in different ways. For instance, while denouncing the Muslim League in the North as a blatantly communal party, the Congress courts its counterpart in the South by assuming its non-communal character. This is in keeping with its view of secularism which is not based on the complete separation of religion from political and civil activity. Rather, the secular state in India enjoins diverse religious and ethnic groups to participate in political activity and partake of the benefits of Government largesse distributed on a pluralist basis.

The Congress has mastered the game by an adept handling of communal, caste and regional networks during elections and in the dispersal of patronage to groups and powerful individuals. This has led many observers to view the Congress system as essentially a bargaining counter of contending interests jockeying for power and influence (Bardhan 1978). But minorities are generally

⁷ This is sharply evident in the attitude towards Urdu in U.P. and Bihar. For a discussion see Brass (1974). Recently the Bihar government recognised Urdu as the second language, leading to anti-Urdu agitations in Ranchi.

⁸ Naidu (1980, pp 63- 65) provides a useful discussion of the operation of communal calculus in pluralist societies like India and Malaysia.

debarred from the bargaining game because their community label embarrasses and upsets the secular pretensions of the Congress. This was convenient because Muslim electoral support has rarely depended on the redressal of their grievances, for the Congress has invariably relied upon conservative elements amongst Muslims — mullahs and imams — for “delivering” votes. This strategy has paid rich dividends. In addition, Muslims were appeased by elevating a few from the community to exalted positions in Government. The benefits of such a calculated policy designed to perpetuate the Muslim illusion of Congress benevolence, have accrued almost entirely to either the upper crust of the community or to those who claimed special favours on the basis of their role in the freedom movement.

The democratic process in India has also failed to weaken caste and communal solidarity. In fact, it has strengthened them; religious sentiments are encouraged by political leaders who patronise religious functions and consult religious leaders. Communal consciousness is heightened in the process. With the exception of communist parties, most parties played the communal game with remarkable ease and dexterity. They have, in the pursuit of power, forged alliances with communal organisations and made concessions to their communal sentiments. This style of politics has been much more in evidence since the late 1960s. Therefore, it is not surprising that communal riots surfaced in the mid-1960s, coinciding with the beginning of a prolonged period of political instability and centralisation.

The period from 1950 to 1960 was relatively free from communal riots. This can be explained by the existence of political stability and relatively unimpeded economic development. In the mid-1960s, however, a severe economic crisis faced the country, a crisis which profoundly influenced political alignments and party structures. Such developments necessitated a populist strategy of mobilisation, particularly for the ruling party, in order to keep its following intact. Such a populist strategy was not shy of using communal solidarity to garner support for the party. Politics in the Nehru era, on the other hand, stressed independent political initiative for developing the public sector, the development of heavy industries, planning and self-reliance. Above all, it stressed

the values of secularism and democracy. These elements and categories were gradually withdrawn from the Congress pantheon and replaced with more personalised politics, populism and coercion. In such an environment, various strategies were employed to overwhelm political opponents, and to legitimise both communal politics and communal groupings.

III

Communalism has served a pernicious function by diverting attention from the economic crisis and the breakdown of the political system; instead, people tend to blame the other community for their troubles. In this sense communalism has provided cover for the pursuit of class policies and strategies. In Firozabad (Uttar Pradesh) in 1972, the class contradiction was sought to be concealed by the communal division of Hindu owners of bangle factories and Muslim craftsmen. Many Muslim craftsmen owned independent units before partition, which were burnt down. As a result, they resented their dependence, however inevitable, on Hindu factory owners. This generated tremendous solidarity and identification with their co-religionists and, in the process, "they jealously safeguarded their communal identity and craft which gave them their livelihood" (Chopra and Singh 1972). Their insecurity was aggravated by industrial competition. They blamed the other community rather than the structure of ownership for their difficulties. Being divided and fragmented they fell easy prey to the machinations of the factory owners, who, under communal cover, extracted administrative support to unleash their oppression. The class and communal factors intertwined to the advantage of the ruling interest which used it to disrupt and divide the working class movement.

Communalism is also utilised to cut into the support base of the left. This happened in Karimganj in 1968. It is no coincidence that the communal outburst started on the day when the communists organised a massive demonstration of evicted tea garden workers. The demonstrators included approximately 1,500 Muslim labourers. The slogan of communal solidarity was raised to break the unity of the workers. Subsequent events proved the

utility of the communal bogey — it was an effective bulwark against the rise of communism in the area (Ray and Chakravarty 1968a, 16).

On the basis of such instances, it is possible to argue that communal riots are not caused spontaneously; also, they are rarely caused by simple religious animosity.⁹ Religious and cultural differences exist, but these rarely manifest themselves in organised antagonism. Differences assume antagonistic proportions as a result of conflicting political interests in a particular region which, in turn, are linked with economic interests. These forces vary in different regions. In general, however, those towns which have a large Muslim population as well as substantial number of refugees from Pakistan are prone to communal tension. Here, too, Muslim presence is resented not for religious reasons; the competition for jobs and positions is the underlying source of tension. Economic stagnation and rising unemployment heighten competition among segments of the petty bourgeoisie for the scarce opportunities. Perhaps for this reason, the petty bourgeoisie is susceptible to communal arguments articulated in a populist genre. Communalism-populism fetches not only economic gains for the middle class in provincial towns, but also political benefits for political parties representing those interests.

Communal riots in Western U.P. conform to the above pattern. The complex interplay of intra-elite competition and communal politics can be discerned in Aligarh in 1978, Firozabad in 1972, Moradabad in 1980 and in Sambhal in 1980. These cities are characterised by the existence of affluent Muslims who seemingly threaten Hindu dominance. Moradabad furnishes a case in point.

It is now well known that the relative success and prosperity of Muslim businessmen in recent years was the cause of much antagonism in Moradabad. In the brassware trade, in particular,

⁹ For a discussion of the planned nature of riots see Ray & Chakravarty (1968b). The authors observe, "We have no hesitation in putting the blame squarely on local leaders of the majority communal forces for the riots. The entire episode bore the stamp of organisation and advance planning executed with a ruthless disregard for human lives." Ahmedabad riots are another example. See Ajit Bhattacharjee (1976).

Muslims received large orders from West Asia¹⁰ which proved an impetus to their trade and industry, attracting workers from the neighbouring districts. They now had sufficient capital to purchase sophisticated tools, to own property, to spend on education, and to initiate new ventures. All this generated hostility among Hindu traders who faced the cheerless prospects of losing out to their counterparts among the Muslims. The spectre of Muslim dominance, facilitated by Arab money, was raised. Fears were also expressed regarding the creation of a "Pakistan in the heartland of Rohilkhand". These were skilfully exploited by the BJP elements, who, having lost their seats in the 1979 elections, were striving to regain their political dominance in the area. Aided by various communal factions in the local Congress Committee and generously financed by the Hindu traders, the Janasangh now organised under the banner of the Janata Party, created a climate of hatred and suspicion which culminated in serious communal rioting. True, the violent outburst was exacerbated by the callousness of district officials and the covertly communal posture of the guardians of law and order. Indeed, it seems evident from most accounts that the police and the PAC (Provincial Armed Constabulary) not only aided and abetted the communal propaganda, but also perpetrated atrocities on Muslims.

The case of Moradabad, as indeed of many other riots, underlines the need to understand the interaction of long-term causes and the more proximate economic causes which produce conditions for a violent outburst. Militant communal organisations, as in Moradabad, play a vital part in the promotion of communal ideology and politics through insidious methods. They build up the emotional tempo to a feverish pitch months before the riots, creating an atmosphere which magnifies small irritants and grievances into major ones, remind people of earlier communal grievances or riots, and stress the need for rallying round their "defenders" (Shah 1970).

Significantly the activities of communalists do not end with the creation of communal tension. In fact, they enter the situation with renewed vigour in the aftermath of a riot. Through relief

¹⁰ This is a highly generalised statement and needs to be carefully studied.
—(Ed.)

work and expressions of concern they try to gain the sympathy of the people who are engulfed as victims because riots generally occur in crowded *mohallas* and *bastis* inhabited by them.

To people made distraught by looting and killing, communal arguments begin to make *se. se.* The minorities in particular, who suffer most, are susceptible to the exhortations of communal organisations. Many sections of the majority community, too, fall a prey to communal propaganda. Various myths and stereotypes about Muslims, who are presented as aggressors and bullies, help to create fear and suspicion in the majority community.¹¹ In fact, communal organisations of both communities succeed in creating an atmosphere of distrust and antipathy.

Religious festivals, music before mosques, cow-slaughter and alleged desecration of temples provide occasions for the aggravation of communalism. Such issues become contentious because they are debated in a highly surcharged atmosphere brimming with rumours, pamphlets and incendiary speeches, reminding Hindus of the humiliations suffered by them during the Mughal rule. In such an environment, even the smallest spark can ignite a riot. This was so in Ranchi, Bhiwandi, Varanasi and Jamshedpur in 1969, 1970, 1978 and 1979 respectively. In Ahmedabad, handbills giving exaggerated accounts of the Jagannath temple incident were liberally distributed; during the course of the riot the handbill industry kept pace with the fury of violence. The bills found a receptive ear among people fed with inflammatory speeches calling upon Muslim "guests" not to stay on permanently in the host country. Even more provocative were the processions in front of major mosques, throwing *gulal* into the mosques and playing music designed to hurt the religious sensibilities of Muslims.¹²

¹¹ Balraj Madhok made a very provocative speech about Muslims before the Ahmedabad riots, see Shah (1970).

¹² Shah (1970, 188) says, "The humiliation of Muslims went further. After demolishing Muslim graves, local people erected small temples. In Ahmedabad, at one place, the shrine of the temple was named 'Huladiya Mahadev', i.e., 'The God of Riots'. In Baroda, the traditional folk dance of Gujarat, the garba was performed around a destroyed shrine by a huge congregation. In Ahmedabad, on the wall of a ruined mosque was written, 'It is a request to all Hindus to pass their urine here'."

There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that the RSS has consistently played a role in organising and inciting communal violence. In Aligarh, for instance, there was unconcealed co-operation between the RSS, the police and the local and district administration. Navman, who had close links with the RSS and was reported to have engineered the riots, secured passes and transport to facilitate the movement of prospective rioters. Navman was arrested and released later at the behest of the Chief Minister¹³

The role of communal organisation in fomenting communal trouble has been established by various commissions of inquiry. For instance, the report of the inquiry into the Tellicherry disturbances in 1971 disclosed that communal cordiality was broken only when the RSS entered district politics by setting up their units (*People's Democracy* 1979a). The strident anti-Muslim propaganda threw the Muslims into the lap of communal organisations which prepared the ground for the communal conflicts.

There are many other factors which contribute to the building up of communal tension. Unstable politics often encourages communal alignments. Political rivalries and disputes assume dangerous proportions in areas marked by a high level of political instability and social violence. For example, in Jamshedpur, just before the 1979 riots, Karpuri Thakur was deeply entangled in the changing political alignments prompted by the agitation of backward castes (*Indian Express* 1979). Nothing could have embarrassed Karpuri Thakur more than a communal riot on the eve of the no-confidence motion. The riot was engineered by contractors who were hostile to the Government for having arrested a Janata Party MLA in connection with the Dhanbad mine murders. In an effort to appease Janata MLAs, Thakur allowed the Ram Navami procession against the advice of the district administration. Apart from Thakur's complicity, the RSS was assisted by the Tatas who organised meetings to provide a platform for the RSS (*People's Democracy* 1979b).

¹³ Navman and other RSS men were shielded on the plea that arrests could only be made after CID investigations were over. See *Patriot* (1978).

IV

Various commissions of enquiry into the Ranchi riots and those of Bhiwandi and Ahmedabad emphasise the inefficiency of the administration in handling the situation. More importantly, the communal bias of the police has been highlighted.¹⁴ The bias is apparent either in the selective imposition of the curfew or in the refusal to prevent organised mobs from looting and killing. In fact, during the Ahmedabad riots the Government imposed curfew after two days of bloody rioting, more to protect police stations than localities and people.¹⁵ There are other methods of complicity; for example, police arrangements accompanying controversial religious processions are generally inadequate. Often it was found that the ministers intervened in support of communal organisations. The Raghbir Dayal Commission of enquiry and the Madan Commission criticised political parties for exploiting communal feeling and ministers for interfering with local administration or making statements which undermined the efforts of the government. (*People's Democracy* 1978). The Aligarh riots are replete with instances of RSS and police collaboration aided by certain ministers in the U.P. Government. The U.P. Government could not prevent the recurrence of riots in Aligarh because it lacked the requisite political will to take action against erring officials and politicians who were responsible for the communal violence.¹⁶

¹⁴ See Naidu (1980, 91-123) for these inquiry commission reports.

¹⁵ For instance, in Varanasi the PAC systematically raided the houses of Muslims and looted whatever was there. The attack was concentrated in Muslim *Mohallas* where weavers live. They produce Banarasi sarees (*New Age* 1978). Of course reports about Aligarh are replete with police atrocities. One report cited the reaction of the Divisional Commissioner of Agra who wanted to impose curfew to avoid stabbing and arson on the 8th of November. He was told "*Chamaar Ke Bache to Musalman Ko Bachana Chuhta*."

¹⁶ In no major communal riot were the miscreants convicted and punished by the process of law. The guilty are let off on the plea that communal clashes are the result of the excitement of the moment and insistence on punishing the offenders will aggravate tensions and perpetuate a climate of conflict.

On the basis of such evidence, it appears that certain instruments of the state, such as the police and the district administration have not only failed to come to grips with the communal problem, but have also demonstrated a distinct prejudice towards the minorities. This is discernible in both the lower and higher echelons of the police and the administration who "carry a burden of emotion with regard to inter-community problems which seems to tilt the balance of their judgement. The burden of emotion is also most often a pre-conscious experience so that there is often no clear awareness that a particular act is prejudiced or discriminatory against the minority." (Naidu 1980, 120). Ultimately, it is the functionaries who articulate the position of the Government in a specific situation. If these functionaries adopt a communal stance, then, in effect, the Government is seen to be deeply biased and partisan; this has shattered the confidence of the minorities in the impartiality of the administration and rendered them vulnerable to communal persuasion. Frequent riots have led to an acute feeling of insecurity among Muslims in North India; communal violence constitutes an important factor which affects the perception and judgement of most Muslims of North India.

Though it is important to combat communal organisations and communal politics, it is equally vital to counter communal ideology. It is quite true that communal ideology alone, without the intervention of political interests, does not lead to violence, but communal politics cannot be thwarted without an attack on communal ideology and the socio-economic structure of the society which sustains it. In the long run, the question of communalism is linked with the social transformation of Indian society, though there is no guarantee that something so deep-seated as communalism will automatically vanish with the creation of a socialist society. It is perhaps significant that communal tendencies and riots have not occurred so frequently in States where Leftist parties wield influence (though these cannot really be termed socialist). In fact, there is a definite co-relation between the intensity of communalism and the relatively weak influence of Leftist parties in North India. The position of these parties will be enhanced greatly if they can weaken the hold of the communal ideology and outlook on the people.

To begin with, it is important to probe the communal content of certain images, symbols and stereotypes which are popularly accepted. It is important to do so because myths and images are often the basis of reaction and action. For instance, the popular image of a Muslim has not changed over the years. He remains a bully fanatic in his adherence to Islam, and he is thought to live in a conservative social and cultural ethos, reinforced by a separatist psychological and religious orientation. A favourite theory is that Muslims are essentially pan-Islamists who would readily lay down their lives in the defence of the Kaaba; this theory is revived after every major riot. Much is also made of Islamic fundamentalism which is supposed to have heightened communal consciousness among Indian Muslims and contributed to their self-confidence and assertiveness. Though the resurgence and success of the Islamic fundamentalist movement in Iran has given a fillip to these forces in other parts of West Asia, its influence in India has not been established. It would seem, however, that there is no manifestation or serious evidence of a fundamentalist upsurge in India. There is no mushroom growth of religious seminars or mosques and no indication of any substantial growth in the influence of *Tabligh Jamaat* and the *Jamat-e-Islami*. In fact, the *Jamat-e-Islami* has not gained a foothold in any region except in Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, attempts have been made to identify Islamic fundamentalism as the cause of the carnage in Moradabad, and other places.

Clearly, secular consciousness in India is only skin-deep. This is largely the consequence of policies and strategies pursued by the Congress for three decades and by the Janata in its regime. The Congress woke up to the unpleasant consequences of aiding communalism only after a spate of ghastly riots, and it continues to view communal violence as a law and order problem. It has not been able to recognise the fact that a part of the antagonism stems from outright ignorance and distorted information. In spite of having lived together for centuries, most Muslims and Hindus do not really know about each others' values, traditions and customs. Each has a stereotyped and distorted image of the other. Such images must be counteracted, because the communal prob-

lem, in our view, has as much to do with ingrained prejudice as with political rivalry and economic competition.

Communalism has persisted because ideas linger on much longer than the agencies which give rise to and sustain them. The problem is compounded since the anti-feudal revolution was precipitously arrested by the compromise with feudal elements. It is all the more necessary to fight pre-capitalist ideas and forms such as communalism, because the *bourgeoisie* by virtue of their political dependence on feudal structures cannot destroy the vestige of the earlier outmoded ideological forms. On the contrary, it needs them all the more in order to confuse people and to prevent them from linking their hardships to the exploitative system. The communal smoke-screen becomes convenient for the ruling classes, as it causes to see themselves primarily as Muslims, Hindus or Christians and to view their oppression and deprivation in terms of these categories.

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AN ANALYTICAL VIEW OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Moin Shakir

The incidence and intensity of violence, which has become part and parcel of Indian social life, have been continuously increasing and consequently undermining and disrupting the process of nation building.¹ There is nothing extraordinary or unique about the nature and causes of communal violence. There are riots not only between the Hindus and Muslims but also between the Hindus and Jains, Hindus and Buddhists, Hindus and Christians, and Hindus and Sikhs. Intra-communal violence is also quite frequent.

Before 1947, the phenomenon of violence (communal and caste) was perceived in the context of the British colonial manipulation and the struggle for freedom. The Indian leaders followed a strategy of accommodating the demands which were likely to generate violence in the social life of the people. The demands which could not be negotiated necessitated confrontation which the national leaders were not always successful in handling. The partition of the country may be instanced here as one of the failings of the freedom struggle.

After Independence the old framework to understand and to handle the phenomenon of social violence proved to be inadequate. The influence of politics on all spheres including religion and

¹ A total of 196 people lost their lives in 319 communal incidents in 1981 as against 375 people in 427 incidents in 1980 and 261 people in 304 incidents in 1979. In 1981, the highest number of people (62) lost their lives in communal incidents in Bihar, followed by 49 in Andhra Pradesh, 30 in West Bengal and 16 each in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. See *The Times of India* (1982).

culture and the growing number of disputes due to differences in language or region posed ticklish problems. Eruption of violence on the basis of region, religion, community, caste, sex, etc. created not only the law and order problem but also made the people wonder whether the objective of equality and freedom could at all be achieved in a society characterised by all kinds of inequality, hierarchy and exploitation of the 'have nots'.

The people of India who are multilingual believe in different religions, follow various cultures, and perceive historical traditions differently are bound to present diversities in social and political life. The forces of religion, language, region, etc. divide the people, and at the same time strengthen the feeling of caste or communal solidarity and communal unity. Religion and caste, by aligning with politics, tend to generate communal violence and also perpetuate backward-looking and oppressive institutions attached to religion or caste mentality.

It is believed that the existence of several groups and their operation in socio-economic life generates an area of conflict and disharmony. The divisions in the social structure due to communalism, linguism, regionalism are described as the product of the strong primordial loyalties which are inherent in any traditional society.

In any developing country a conflict between 'primordialism' and 'modernisation' which is characterised as tradition-modernity dichotomy, is considered to be unavoidable. The tension takes a chronic form because "peoples' sense of self remains bound up in the gross actualities of blood, race, language, locality, religion or tradition, and because of the steadily accelerating importance in this country of the sovereign state as a positive instrument for the realisation of collective aims" (Geertz 1963, 108). It is the responsibility of the modernising elite to dilute and weaken the primordial loyalties and create a new centre to command the loyalty of the people. There should be a value consensus in order to avoid conflict and tension.

According to some social scientists, there is no dichotomy between tradition and modernity. The interaction between the two results in the modernisation of tradition and traditionalisation of

modernity. The functioning of religion and caste etc., shows that they have been playing an important role in making democracy and competitive polity meaningful and participatory. They stabilise the polity and provide opportunities to the different sections of the people for upward mobility and in achieving desired goals. After all 'political community' lies "in the development of loyalty and allegiance to such institutional forms, aided and abetted by the mediating role of secondary associations, by the caste, occupation or other interest-oriented groups." (Gusfield 1965, 130.)

II

If religion and caste play a constructive role in organising and mobilising the different collectivities then how should we explain the phenomenon of communal and caste violence in the country? What are the political motives of those who participate in communal caste rioting? What are the effects on the victims of the violence?

A distinction should be made between the pre-partition and post-Independence communal riots. Before 1947, the riots evidenced the mass participation of the members of different communities. This might perhaps have been due to the larger issues involved. After Independence a considerable change in the socio-economic structure of the Muslim community has taken place. The Hindu communal groups, as a part of its attack on the Nehru Government and to demoralise Indian Muslims, began describing the Muslims as 'Pakistani agents' and 'Pakistani spies'. The patriotism of the minority community was considered suspect. In the late fifties and early sixties, riots were marked by the unhindered rampage and killing of innocent Muslims by mobs of the majority community. Moreover, the bulk of the majority community was somehow made to believe that if they had not taken the aggressor's role, they would have been the victims of aggression by the minority community.

In this situation the minority community was blamed for starting the riots. Commenting on the Ahmedabad riots of 1969 Jayaprakash Narayan said, "The division of India and creation of Pakistan resulted from communal riots. Pakistan would like

that the same thing should happen again. If the rioting goes on and Muslims are able to say that the Government is unable to protect them they will ask for some territory to be given to them where they can protect themselves and live in peace. This will mean second partition. This is the interest for which extremist Muslims and pro-Pakistani elements have been keeping up the riots.' (Narayan 1969, 17).

But since the early seventies, there has been no question of superiority or inferiority of any religion nor any evidence of mass anger and frenzy on this account. However, the issue of patriotism, or its absence, is still raised. Now it is not the 'Pakistani hand' but 'Gulf money' which is blamed for the aggressive attitude of the Muslim community.

On the basis of the frequency of occurrence one can identify the areas more prone to communal tension and violence. Generally, the riots take place in the urban areas. Though it is claimed that rural areas are free from communal clashes, examples such as of Bihar Sharif indicate that this is not always true. Many a riot in the rural areas is likely also to go unreported and unnoticed by the people in the urban areas. Another basis for identification of an area as one which is a possible site for a riot, is its demographic composition. Areas in which the Muslims are numerous enough to form a force to be reckoned with, yet not sufficient to be overwhelming, are possible riot areas. Thus a region with a Muslim minority population, ranging from 20 to 40 per cent of the total, seems more prone to disturbances than others. If in such an area, there is a liberal sprinkling of post-partition migrants from Pakistan then the area is positively combustible, in the communal sense.

In most cases the riots are politically motivated. Also in almost all riots, the role of rumours in rousing communal passions is quite prominent. It is reported that the knives used by rioters were used in a particular manner, suggesting that the users are trained to handle the knife (Mathur, 20-24). Of late, the participants in riot have begun using lethal weapons and bombs.

The riots that used to be two or three day affair formerly, now continue for weeks together, showing that there is what may be called a methodical and organised madness. They are pre-plan-

ned and politically-oriented, preceded by almost identical incidents which rouse religious passions and followed by the desired similar results conducive to the growth of anti-secular politics.

The post-partition riot more often than not, has turned out to be an attempt to adversely affect the position of the prosperous Muslims. For instance, the bidi industry belonging to the Muslims of Jabalpur, and the brass industry of Moradabad suffered heavily during the riots in those areas.

III

Why do riots take place? There is no definite answer to this question. Leaders and writers trace the historical, religious, social, economic, political and cultural causes of communal riots. The pet thesis of Hindu communal groups (so-called secularists also subscribe to this thesis) on the cause of communal riots is that "the Hindus and Muslims cannot live together." The Muslims, it is said, insist on rights and forget their duties towards the nation. They provide first provocation in a variety of forms: The stoning of a Hindu procession; the stoning of Ganesh procession; an attack on a Hindu place of worship; desecration of the idols of the Hindu deities; butchering of calves; firing a shot from a mosque; a dastardly attack on a Durga Puja procession; inflammatory speeches or slogans; encroachment on public or private property, generally for constructing a mosque or a durgah, and superiority complex of the Muslims." (Ghurye 1968, 304 - 351; Shah 1969, *Organizer*, 1968).

This approach of holding the Muslim community responsible for communal violence ignores many things. Firstly, it is utterly wrong to attribute individual acts, such as those mentioned above, to an entire community. The whole community cannot become an aggressor in the eyes of the administration. Secondly, it is more important to know what is behind the riots and not merely what starts the riots. For example in the case of the Aurangabad riot in Maharashtra in 1968, it had not been proved that those who attacked the temple were Muslims but the total fury was directed against that community. Truly, unpremeditated and spontaneous retaliation would have made a *dargah*, a few fur-

longs away from the temple, the natural target. But, in fact, it was Muslim *property* that was destroyed. One cannot explain why large-scale rioting started more than 24 hours after the temple incident. Also how is it that the rioters had thorough knowledge about the properties and even the registration numbers of cars owned by Muslims. It is absurd to consider that the victims of any trouble would themselves be responsible for its plan.

It is the Hindu chauvinist groups like the RSS who have a vested interest in perpetuating communal incidents in the country. Their political philosophy is that people belonging to different races and cultures cannot live together. To preserve the racial and cultural purity in Germany the Nazis drove out the Jews; and in India such groups believe that the non-Hindus do not deserve to live in the country as equal citizens. The handbills and leaflets distributed on the eve of the riots are quite significant.

In Ahmedabad in 1969 several such handbills were distributed. In one of the handbills, a call of *dharma yudha* (religious war) was given. In another, the Hindus were told: "Wipe out those who have dishonoured your mothers and sisters; show them that the Muslims who have insulted Hindu religion and molested our mothers and sisters will not be able to stay in India. Drive away the Muslims... Hindus should be united, finish off the Muslim goondas, wherever you see them."

In Jamshedpur in 1979 a pamphlet was headlined "an appeal to the religion-loving public of Jamshedpur". The appeal said, "Till now the people have borne every cruelty peacefully, but in the name of peace the Hindus of this area are being crushed. In Dhakidih, the police destroyed an image of the Lord Hanuman; in Jugsalai, the police rained lathis and tear gas; in Mango, the Hindus have been reduced to a minority. It is clear that behind this are the Superintendent of Police and some sycophant officers of his. What is clear is that all the constables, *havalgars*, homeguards, etc., are ready to support us."

In Maharashtra riots took place in Pune, Solapur and Baramati in 1982. In one of the leaflets distributed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the people were told, "There is a well-planned conspiracy behind the riots continuously occurring in the country.

From Morocco to Malaysia, India is the only country where Muslims are still in a minority. Therefore, constant efforts are being made to increase the Muslim population by not accepting the family planning programmes of Government, by producing more children, by keeping more than one wife and by converting Hindus to Islam. They are dreaming of installing a Muslim Government in this country by taking advantage of democratic system in India... They are in League with the Arab countries and on the strength of their petro-dollars they are trying to make Indian Muslims anti-national, to make riots through them on one or the other pretexts, to instigate innocent Harijans to come in conflict with other members of the Hindu society, to convert Hindus to Islam and thus create chaos in the country. The Centre of Islamic Culture, in London, is directing all such activities. The plan is to make the Muslim minority in India into majority by converting eight crores of Harijans to Islam."

The following is the extract from one leaflet distributed by the RSS:

"It is being discussed everywhere how long will Hindu society go on tolerating this anti-national conspiracy? If India does not sustain Hindu way of life who will? Where else in the world can a Hindu take shelter?"

It is not an accident that the slogans which are raised before and during the riots are once like "*Pakistan jala do*" (Burn Pakistan), "*Hindustan mein rehna hoga to Vande Mataram gana hoga*" (If you want to stay in India, you will have to sing *Vande Mataram*), "*Hindustan Hinduon ka nahin kisi ke baap ka*". Is this not enough to demoralise the Muslims as a community?

It may be pointed out here that the areas identified for spreading such falsehoods and lies are those in which signs of the prosperity of a section of the Muslim community are clear. According to F. Rustamji, a former member of the National Police Commission "...a riot does not occur in a sleepy little village of Uttar Pradesh where all suffer equally, nor in a tribal village of Madhya Pradesh where all live safely in their poverty. It occurs in Moradabad where metal workers have built up a good industry, it occurs in Aligarh where lock makers have made good, it occurs

in Bhivandi where power-loom rivalries are poisonous, it occurs in Hatia and Ahmedabad and Hyderabad and Jamshedpur where there are jobs to get, contracts to secure, houses and shops to capture, it occurs in Agra and Ferozabad and in all other towns where economic rivalries are serious, and have to be covered up with the cloak of communalism." The objective of communal rioting seems to be to economically suppress the Muslim community. It vitiates the climate necessary for growing prosperity and strips the community of its sense of security and confidence. Politically it polarises the people. Genuine secularists, like Professor Zakee Anwar in Jamshedpur, are either killed or rendered ineffective in order that the Hindu and Muslim communal groups may consolidate their strength.

The RSS and other Hindu chauvinist groups deny the charge of their active participation in the communal incidents. But the different enquiry Commission reports show that the RSS has been instrumental in fomenting communal tensions. Mr. Justice Jagannohan Reddy who enquired into riots in Ahmedabad and other towns in Gujarat observed, "Another noticeable feature to which we must make a reference is the definite part played in various districts which were affected by the workers of the local Janasangh and the Hindumahasabha organisations or by persons having leanings towards them. There is evidence definitely that they took a leading part in the district of Amreli, Banaskantha, Mehsana and Baroda and there is evidence to show that they were inciting the crowds to riots."

In the Tellicherry riots report, the enquiry commission remarked, "I have no doubt that the RSS has taken active part in rousing up anti-Muslim feeling among the Hindus of Tellicherry and in preparing the background for disturbances."

Some of the findings of the Jitendra Narain Commission about the Jamshedpur riots in 1979 are quite pertinent: "After giving careful and serious consideration to all the materials that are on record, the Commission is of the view that the RSS with its extensive organisation in Jamshedpur and which had close links with the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh had a positive hand in creating a climate which was most propitious for the outbreak of communal disturbances."

"In the first instance, the speech of Shri Deoras (delivered just five days before the Ram Navmi festival) tended to encourage the Hindu extremists to be unyielding in their demands regarding Road No. 14. Secondly, his speech amounted to communal propaganda. Thirdly, the *shakhas* and the camps that were held during the divisional conference presented a militant atmosphere to the Hindu public. In the circumstances, the commission cannot but hold the RSS responsible for creating a climate for the disturbances that took place on the 11th of April, 1979."

In Ahmedabad, in 1982, communal feelings were roused in a similar fashion. One Gujarati leaflet distributed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad alleged that the conversion of Harijans to Islam is not on account of their persecution by the upper-caste Hindus but is related to the large amount of petro-dollars flowing into the country. The leaflet also said that the conversion of Hindus had been an aim of the Muslims for the last thousand years, from Mohammad Ghori upto Aurangzeb and then from Jinnah to Yahya Khan (it interestingly omits naming Zia!) (Engineer 1982). One is reminded here of what Dr. Radhakrishnan once said — if you believe in absurdities you will commit atrocities.

IV

It is necessary to mention the role of the Police and the administration in the communal riots. There is a general feeling among the Muslims that during the communal clashes, the Police and administration do not protect them (the Muslims). The Police personnel betray the worst kind of communalism. They fail to bring to heel known preachers of communal hatred. They are unwilling to employ all the administrative measures available to them. The Hindu communal elements are given a free hand to propagate communal hatred without any objection from the administration, as for instance in the Rourkela riots of 1964. The demolition of mosques has been allowed to continue for hours in Aligarh, with the connivance of officers. No preventive measures are adopted, with the result that the Muslims suffer irrecoverable losses. In Ranchi, the police even indulged in loot, arson and killing. The military Jawans behaved as robbers, devoid of any sense of responsibility

and any trace of humanity. They become persecutors, tyrants and perpetrators of crime in a number of communal incidents. In 1977 at Varanasi, curfew was imposed only in Muslim areas, which were relatively quiet. During curfew the police broke into the homes of Muslims, arrested all males, including 10 year old children and old bed-ridden people aged over 100 years and looted and destroyed property worth lakhs of rupees. The local people said they knew where the looted property was taken, but the ruling party refused to order searches of the houses of police and PAC men. In Moradabad the PAC men looted or burnt Muslim shops and houses or helped Hindu goonda elements to do so. Their partisan behaviour naturally aroused the wrath of the Muslims (Singh 1980). Thus in every communal riot, the story of the one-sided and partisan behaviour of police personnel is the same.

V

In the context of the participation of militant communal groups, it is not difficult to determine the motives behind communal violence. The determined groups among the Hindus obsessed by anti-Muslim fanaticism consider communal violence as an 'antidote to all fissiparous tendencies'. Since they have no economic programme to offer, they can function as a political force only by using the political doctrine of communalism. They regard the Muslims as an unnecessary burden on the economy of the nation. The more imaginative among them have gone to the extent of suggesting that the food problem in India could easily be solved by driving six crore Muslims out of the country.

The objective of the Hindu communal groups is thus to suppress economic activity which brings prosperity in the Muslim community. But it should not be ignored that communal violence is sometimes employed to teach a lesson to the Muslims to behave in the political arena. The riots also take place in those areas where the signs of Muslim prosperity are not visible. The Aurangabad (1968), Hyderabad (1968), Parbhani (1969), Pune (1973), and Ahmedabad (1982) riots may be instances of this. In Pune (1973), one of the Muslims said, "The sufferings of the Muslims will end if our right to vote is withdrawn. We were opposed to

the Congress in 1962; so the Congress harassed us... Now the Muslims support the Congress, for which they are being harassed by the Jansangh and Shiv Sainiks. Ultimately it all boils down to our vote. Why not take it away? Then we will be happy." (Avachat 1973, 1142).

In Hyderabad it is electoral politics which determines the objective and the direction of communal violence. The *Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin* (MIM) has always had a strong base in the old city of Hyderabad. During the last 20 years, it has been consistently winning a large number of Assembly and Municipal seats in this area. The Congress Cabinet Ministers who contested from the old city have been defeated by MIM candidates. Now the BJP has been attempting to make some inroads through its RSS strongholds, and the MIM and the Congress (I) are trying to consolidate their positions. The employment of communal violence is one of the strategies they make use of. All the three major contenders are guilty of a communal approach to politics. But the net effect of all this is the victimisation of the poor members of the Muslim community.

It is interesting to note that both the Hindu and Muslim communal groups tend to believe that the solution to the problem of communal violence lies in the separate organisation and in the assertion of communal solidarities and religious identities. For example, as Shah (1970) states, the Hindus in Ahmedabad were jubilant on their 'victory over the Muslims' because they had taken the revenge after seven hundred years. To the Muslim communalists, every riot is "a reminder of the forgotten lesson of the unity of the Millat." They continue to insist on the redress of their grievances which are of a religious and cultural nature, as if this will solve the problem of communal violence. In fact, the issue of making Urdu a second language in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and even the Government's acceptance has generated communal violence against the Muslims, rather than eradicating it.

The suggestions for a solution by the Muslim leaders betray a faulty understanding of the nature and causes of communal violence. A typical example is the list of measures suggested by Dr. Faridi (1969):

- (I) Secularisation of text-books.
- (II) Prohibition of the construction of any place of worship in Government buildings or in residential colonies set up by a corporation.
- (III) Introduction of suitable changes in the election system to discourage communal propaganda, and of proportional representation, with a party list system.
- (IV) Establishment of a separate portfolio in the Central Cabinet — Ministry of Minority Affairs — to look after the interests of the minorities.
- (V) Improvement of Indo-Pak relations.
- (VI) Liberalisation in the issue of gun licences to the Muslims.

In fact such measures can be counter-productive. What is neglected is the political aspect of the riots. Since the Muslim leaders perceive Indian politics and economics in terms of communal categories, their approach inevitably becomes lop-sided and inadequate to grasp the reality of the situation.

In a communal society, measures to remove certain cultural grievances, communal representation in the administration or police personnel, etc., provide no guarantee that communal violence shall come to an end. These are in fact the manifestations of communalism.

A school of social scientists and political analysts has recently offered an interesting explanation of the communal phenomenon and communal violence. According to it, the communal violence within a community or between communities, is the result of the lower classes—the menials or artisans—improving their social status on account of newly created opportunities, subsequent social and economic growth, and self-awakening against the erstwhile prosperity of the dominant groups (Ahmad, n.d.). Consequently the communal riots turn out to be “a sign of dynamism and of secular changes that are taking place in the Indian society as a result of economic development and modernisation... They are clearly directed and goal-oriented,” (Ahmad 1981). Violence against the Harijans in Agra was described not as an indicator of social breakdown but as a factor promoting cohesiveness. It was considered to be quite successful in establishing and main-

taining group identity. Besides in the Hindu world view, violence and destructive forces are an essential aspect of nature and reality (Lynch 1981).

Why did communal violence erupt in Moradabad and Aligarh and other places? One major reason given is that the Muslim artisans and businessmen in these places have achieved a relative degree of prosperity. This is socially manifested through a greater spending on religious and semi-religious activities such as buying real estate in the outer periphery of the towns. (Ahmad n.d., Engineer 1981, Ray 1981, Vohra 1981). It is difficult to agree with such assumptions regarding the origin of communal violence. Even in Moradabad it is the struggle between the two groups of wholesale merchants regulating the sale organisation of the industry (brass-ware), each wanting to monopolise the loot from the sales of these goods (for which incidentally there is a growing demand abroad, especially in West Asia), that acquired a communal colour (Mallick 1980). How about Gujarat? It is reported by J. I. Laliwala, an economist from Gujarat University, on the basis of a sample survey, that 75 per cent of the Muslims in Ahmedabad were destitutes; they were educationally and economically much more backward than the other poor classes. The required monthly income per capita for not relapsing below the poverty line was determined in 1973 to be almost Rs. 46.00. On this basis the required monthly income for a family of seven members was Rs. 322. But about 75 per cent of the families in one survey had a monthly income below Rs. 322 (Engineer 1982).

In the same way, in Godhra, the Ghanchi Muslims are "generally poor" and "extremely backward". Yet riots took place in Godhra in 1981. The prosperity-thesis does not hold good in all riot-affected areas. Not only that, it is extremely dangerous as it puts the blame of starting the riot on the victims of communal violence. It also ignores the implications of the ideology and the role of Hindu chauvinist groups like the RSS, the objectives of rightist politics, the functioning of law and order machinery, and the patronage received by anti-social elements from leaders of the different communities. Nothing can be more irrational than the fact that the *dalis* and the poor Muslims suffer on account of

the emergence of a few well placed *daits* and Muslim entrepreneurs.

A reference should be made to the notion that democratisation of politics provides many opportunities for the people belonging to the lower strata to come up in the economic and political life of the country. According to B. G. Verghese, an eminent journalist, it makes communal violence "a facet of the struggle going on among the submerged masses of India, including the Harijans, other backward classes and Adivasis for economic opportunity and, for some of these categories, social rights... they seek access and participation... The educated unemployed and lumpen elements among these disadvantaged groups are locked in competition, one against the other, for the few positions or opportunities open to either or all of them. They are the so-called anti-social elements who collide with the thugs and hirelings of the upper classes and castes who have made money by whatever means, and would like to keep out further competition; when one set of these elements clash we call it caste violence; when another set clashes it is labelled communal violence." (Verghese 1981). Verghese clearly states that what is called lumpenisation of Indian politics results in communal violence. One wonders if this is true.

All the available data shows that political power in India has been a monopoly of the rich and the neo-rich. At the lower level of Indian politics what one notices is the emergence of the neo-rich as a political force in a big way. The neo-rich, and not the lumpen elements, control the centres of politics and economics. The neo-rich category by its very definition, carries some element of lumpenism and is characterised by ruthlessness, and by the absence of political sophistication. It is devoid of all political niceties and values. This development strengthens the bourgeois character of Indian democracy. It has a vested interest in communal and caste violence as a means of maintaining its position in the system by dividing the people and for diverting their attention from the real problems.

The ruling class in India has developed a strategy to tackle the problem of social violence, a strategy which really originated with the colonial rulers. The demands of the elite of all communities are supported, but the demands of the masses of the communities

are suppressed. Violence which does not disturb the status quo is handled in a cursory manner. In cases of mob anger and violence, not only the 'haves' but also the 'Government' act as assassinators. Coupled with this is the fact that Hindu extremist and chauvinist groups are making inroads into rural areas. This is creating a situation in which killings are so planned that no opportunity is available to the victims for resistance or retaliation. D. R. Goyal (1981) asked a pertinent question in the context of Bihar Sharif: Is it (the occurrence of communal riots in rural areas) because rural-based parties have been associating with it (RSS) politically and thus making it respectable in the eyes of the peasantry who had earlier been suspicious of town-bred sons of money lenders and traders? The parties that are trying to develop a rural base and bring about a broad unity of all farmers, rich and poor, should seriously contemplate such questions. Those who do not want the peasantry to develop progressive consciousness would like it to be bogged down in communal strife. Thus it is the nature of state power, the contending political forces and the Hindu chauvinist groups which determine the extent and level of communal and caste violence. Other situational factors are of secondary importance.

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COMMUNAL VIOLENCE—A CHALLENGE TO PLURALITY

Syed Shahabuddin M.P.

Major Obstacles to National Integration — Hindu Chauvinism and Muslim Alienation

The myth of Muslim aggressiveness and Hindu defensiveness, of Muslim fanaticism and Hindu tolerance, must be discarded before the phenomenon of violent communal inter-action in post-Independence India can be dispassionately dissected and understood. There are intolerant fanatics on both sides, as there are men of goodwill.

No doubt historical memories, sometimes operating at the sub-conscious level, as well as, misperceptions or misinterpretation of historic facts play a role in determining individual as well as collective attitudes. Muslim revivalism as well as Hindu revanchism feed on these memories and perceptions, creating stereotyped images of Muslim 'glory' and Hindu 'humiliation'; both building up pressures for restoration, on one hand, and for balancing the account of the centuries past, on the other. It is in this sense that teaching of history in schools and colleges and the history text books in the hands of our children assume enormous importance.

Factors of Muslim Alienation

The Muslim community today suffers from a complex arising out of the cumulative impact of real, exaggerated and imaginary grievances. Frustration arises out of its inability to obtain a due share of the fruits of development, equitable access to Government employment, higher education, bank credit, foreign trade

licences, industrial licences, etc. It ascribes this to persistent communal prejudice and a pattern of discrimination.

The Muslim community finds that its right to freedom of religion is sought to be curtailed on one pretext or the other. Land is not readily allotted for mosques; objections are raised to their construction; even their repair or maintenance is looked upon as an act of conspiracy attributed to the flow of foreign money! 'Azan' (calling to prayer) is frowned upon as a public nuisance; sometimes objected to on the ground that it drives away the local gods! Mosques are readily locked up by the authorities, the moment some local elements raise an issue, e.g. that it has been built upon the ruins of a pre-existing temple. In some places an 'agreement' not to construct a mosque at the time when a section of the population entered the fold of Islam becomes the basis for a permanent and continuing denial of public worship.

Conversion to Islam is looked upon, despite the right to profess the faith of one's choice, as a denial of nationhood, an act of treason, a negation of Indianness. All this makes the impact on the Muslim mind that Islam does not in fact enjoy freedom and equality in India. This breeds bitterness and alienation.

All over the country, old Muslim graveyards are being 'acquired', taken over, usurped, built upon, bulldozed. Right in the heart of New Delhi, ancient graveyards were recently bulldozed to construct highways over and through them; the technique was first to convert them into parks and then to take them into public use, despite public protest and parliamentary debate.

Urdu continues to languish helplessly in its homeland. While Urdu academies are generously funded, while *Mushairas* are held, while flowery tributes are paid to the beauty and eloquence of the language and its secular temper, and while the participation of Non-Muslims in its propagation and development is evoked, the constitutional right of primary instruction through the medium of Urdu is denied to Urdu-speaking children; while a Urdu University project is talked about, every effort is made to keep Urdu out of the ambit of the three-language formula at the secondary stage and to minimise the number of children studying it! Thus struck at its very roots, Urdu is dying in India: 'cut the grapevine at the root and the branches will soon dry up'. Every one knows

this, and everyone also knows that today 95% or more of those who declare Urdu as their mother tongue, numbering nearly 30 million according to the 1971 census, are Muslims. But the Urdu speaking people are so dispersed as to have no sizeable pockets of concentration, no state, which they can call their home-state. Urdu has become the homeless refugee, because to many it is not a symbol of cultural synthesis, not a product of Hindu-Muslim interaction, but a 'foreign language' written in the 'Arabic' script, 'imported and imposed' by Muslim conquerors!

Attitude of Hindu Chauvinism

Hindu chauvinism, based on self-righteousness, cultural superiority, exclusive proprietorship (Hindu, Hindi and Hindustan!), continues to harp on the original sin—the exclusive Muslim responsibility for the partition of the country, and casts Indian Muslims in the role of Trojan Horses and fifth-columnists for Pakistan, and, what is worse, for Islamic Fundamentalism, as conspirators ready to take over the country through conquest, conversion or biological expansion! The goal of equal rights for Muslims is projected as an illogical anachronism, when Pakistan, Bangladesh and a host of Muslim countries do not treat non-Muslims as first class citizens. This breeds an overall reluctance to share the administrative patronage, the fiscal benefits, the fruits of development equitably with Muslims. ("Why, they have their Pakistan."). This creates the climate in which a rising Muslim profile anywhere, whether political, economic or social, is an object of suspicion and a target of planned violence.

Hindu chauvinism, however, both denies a fair share to the Muslims as well as forces the pace of their assimilation—thus reviving the fears which led to the demand for Pakistan—the fear of the submergence of the Muslim personality in the Indian society dominated by the Hindu community.

It has been said that the Hindu community is a 'majority' community suffering from the minority complex! It shows symptoms of fear and suspicion ("You don't know what the Arabs are up to!"), of a persecution complex ("All big powers are against us, because they don't want us to come up"), of a siege mentality

("Hindu island in a sea of Islam"), surrounded by an international conspiracy (the ever-present foreign hand).

The Muslims are perceived as contestants for political and economic power, as an indigestible element, as a foreign presence, or as a hostage for good behaviour by Pakistan and or other Muslim States.

Intellectual Framework

What is worse is the moral bankruptcy and emotional apathy of our intellectuals. Humanists and liberals of all hues and shades, Gandhians, believers in *Ahimsa*, fighters for human rights and civil liberties, who are up in arms at the murder of the Chopra children¹, at the blindings of the under-trials by the police at Bhagalpur, at the 'encounters' with dacoits, at the lathi charges on the blind and the torture of under-trials, at the elimination of 'Naxalites', at the rape of innocent and not-so-innocent women, at the public disrobing of Maya Tyagi in Baghpat, are either totally silent or content to utter an initial "tut-tut; too bad, it happened", when, as recently happened in Bihar Sharif, men, women, children are brutally slaughtered, in cold blood in broad daylight, with police and neighbours looking on, for the crime of having been born Muslims! Is it moral cowardice or an example of the turning of a blind eye or religious prejudice or communal partisanship? Why should a people swearing by non-violence become so insensitive to violence when directed against the Indian Muslim? Perhaps he is regarded as the logical victim, and the violence, a form of 'prayaschit' for his past sins and his present presumption.

The antipathy, even partiality, of the administration, their active participation in acts of violence against the minority community, their effort to play down the Muslim losses, and to throw the blame on the Muslim community, to conceal the statistics which would speak for themselves, to doctor and even to manufacture evidence, their markedly reduced efficiency and soft-glove treatment, when it comes to arresting Hindu goondas, searching Hindu *mohallas*,

¹ Geeta and Sanjay Chopra, the teenaged daughter and son of an army officer were kidnapped and later brutally murdered in New Delhi. Two men were later tried, found guilty and executed for this murder.

dealing with Hindu mobs or pursuing criminal investigation on First Information Reports filed against known Hindu criminals, and their extra zeal and energy when it comes to dealing with Muslims, make a study in contrast. A cracker found in a Muslim locality becomes a 'bomb'; a bomb in a Hindu hand a 'cracker'! We are a civilised state and yet hardly anyone has ever been punished for murder, arson and looting in communal riots, of which the brunt has been borne largely, almost exclusively by the Muslim community.

Political System

Muslims find themselves unrepresented in the power structure, except, through Ghani Khan Chaudharis and Sikhandar Bakhts—who are thought to be deaf and dumb and blind legislators. The Muslim masses are being constantly subjected to loyalty tests; often advised by Hindu chauvinists to quit India and migrate to Pakistan.

The Political parties treat Hindus and Muslims as separate entities—rather they treat Muslims as yet another 'caste' group, as a separate element in the political equation—in calculating the electoral prospects, in selecting the candidates, in constructing power structures, cabinets, high court benches, filling governorships and ambassadorships. Of course, the Muslims chosen are of the 'right' mould—loyalists, who serve in the name of the community and yet refuse to identify themselves with its problems or to articulate, even whisper, its grievances and aspirations. Parties are not teachers of morality or purveyors of compassion; they are brokers of power; the Hindu backlash can be more important than Muslim support, the loss more than the gain, if they were to espouse a 'Muslim' cause, e.g., launch an agitation in Moradabad or in Bihar Sharif.

We believe in unity in diversity, in pluralism, we say that India is a land of many religions, languages, cultures; we claim that we are a tolerant people. And yet so many of us equate nationalism with monolithism; Indianness with Hinduism; Indian culture with Hindu culture, as if the Indian of today had descended directly from the Gupta age, as if the intervening centuries were like a bad dream, fit only to be forgotten, an embarrassing interregnum

in our long history, fit only to be consigned to oblivion. Like those Muslims who believe that the history of India began with the invasion of Sind by Mohammad Bin Quasim, the average Hindu intellectual equates the Indian renaissance with the revival of Hinduism!

No wonder that Muslims feel that their cultural identity is constantly under attack, and they have to defend this identity against the pressures of assimilation.

How can such a minority identify itself with the nation as a whole, when the 'we-they' syndrome continues to operate, generating a lack of mutual confidence and trust and, what is worse, a lack of comprehension, fuelling separatism and alienation, which Muslim communalism is not slow to fan, to work up.

Yet, the fact is that the Muslim psyche is reconciled to minority status and has given up daydreams of dominance. It is anxious only to obtain a fair share of goods and services.

The Phenomenon of Social Violence

The most serious impediment to national integration is, therefore, the phenomenon of the communal riot—not so much because of the loss of life, limb or property but because of the loss of confidence, of trust, because of the anxiety and uncertainty, because of the resulting alienation and frustration.

The communal riot is a national question because it adversely affects the process and pace of national integration; saps the sense of national unity and solidarity; because it leads to communal polarisation and puts our secular ideals to test.

The communal riot is also a Muslim question because physical violence is directed against the Muslim community—it has the motivation of genocide. The fact is that 90% of the dead or the injured, of the losers of property, of the homeless, of the searched and of the arrested, and the overwhelming majority of the charge-sheeted and tried all belong to one community. Only among the persons granted curfew passes, are the victims in a minority!

The communal riot is an economic question, because it affects the economic life of the nation as a whole; the entire process of

production, distribution and consumption comes to a stop; because it affects capital investment; because it destroys productive assets and mutilates traditional skills.

The communal riot is an administrative question. The inability to foresee the explosion and to take precautionary measures, and to take drastic action to control it when it breaks out, casts a slur on our administrative system. It strains the capacity of the law and order machinery, and consigns development tasks to lower priority.

The communal riot is a political question, going to the roots of the national option between a monolithic or a multi-cultural society, between a democratic and a totalitarian society, between a secular and a theocratic state, between a non-violent and a violent society.

The communal riot is a social question, it affects the masses, not the elite as a shudder of pain and anxiety passes through the system.

The communal riot is also an international question. If communal riots are a permanent, recurrent feature, can the world stand by as a silent spectator? Can we take shelter behind the plea of domestic jurisdiction? As it is, it lowers our prestige, darkens our image, strains our relations with the Muslim world, and affects our status as a leader of the Third World. Above all, it retards the process of normalisation and economic co-operation among the countries of the sub-continent.

Analysis of Communal Tension

Behind the explosion of social tension into physical violence are three stages – the existence and build-up of communal tension; the ignition point, the trigger and the large-scale violence directed against a minority group while the rest of the national community, the intellectual and the politician included, looks on and the administration largely goes on with business as usual.

Communal tension is built up over a period of time with the interaction of psychological, historical and economic factors. Trifling incidents involving members and different communities will occur and, given the climate of disharmony, inflame passions, rouse sentiments of communal solidarity irrespective of any con-

sideration of the merit of the situation, or comparative responsibility, or the question of relative right or wrong; giving an opportunity to interested organisations and groups, and anti-social elements and their backers among the politicians, the police, the bureaucrats and the propertied classes.

With democracy, education and economic development a new dynamic factor has become operational—the newly emergent groups claiming a larger share of the goods and resources of society, entailing a redistribution, which the haves, the *ir-groups*, shall resist with increasing ferocity, matching the increasing assertiveness of the have-nots, the *out-groups*. This would logically imply an accentuation of group conflict, of social violence. But at the same time, this would constitute a test of our political maturity and of our sense of social and economic justice. Group consciousness is not based on shared memories of past glory or humiliation alone; group solidarity is cemented also by a contemporary experience of discrimination, repression, injustice and violence. Thus economic development without social justice will breed discontent and violence.

The recent phenomenon of Arab affluence has also added to the communal tension through envy and suspicion. Perhaps it has also, on the whole, brought some prosperity to the Muslim community and given them some confidence, thus encouraging their assertiveness. But in economic terms, our country as a whole, including the non-Muslims, have largely profited not only from Arab trade and investment but also directly from private employment in Arab countries and inward remittances of wages earned. But notwithstanding this, such is the lack of cultural confidence in sociological terms, that there seems to be an atmosphere of panic—an Indian version of 'the Russians are coming' is 'the Sheikhs are coming' or 'Islam is coming', or 'Fundamentalism is coming'. The sudden and severe enforcement in Pakistan of archaic Islamic criminal laws, not in force in most Islamic countries today, has aggravated these fears.

The myth of the 'prosperity' of the Muslim community needs to be analysed in depth. No doubt some sections of the Muslim community have prospered. A new class has grown, changing the old guard, in fact a new elite conscious of their status; but

though the mix has changed, the Muslim community as a whole (1/8th of the population and, therefore, large enough for statistical analysis) remains economically backward. What is important is to ensure that it attains the same level of income as the nation as a whole.

Role of the RSS

The role of the RSS is important because it is the major exponent of the philosophy of Hindu chauvinism, of Hindu domination, of the assimilationist approach. The RSS has many believers outside its fold — it is a state of mind, but it is also an organisation, which prepares the Hindu mind psychologically, intellectually and emotionally for accepting, supporting and defending the physical role it plays in training Hindu youth, propagating its views, building net works, linkages, committees and fronts, neutralising administration and media, planting agents-provocateur, organising physical attacks, projecting *causus belli*. So the role of the RSS should not be dismissed as a fantasy or as a myth propagated by the Muslim communalist. Its role needs to be deeply probed and its multi-level, multi-dimensional *modus operandi* must be understood. The Jamshedpur Report only lays bare the tip of the iceberg.

Profile Theory of Communal Conflict

The question has often been asked: why there are no Hindu-Christian² or Hindu-Parsi riots? The situation of plurality becomes explosive only when coupled with the perception of adversary relationship by one side or both. A community with a low profile, numerical, political or economic, historically or in the contemporary setting, is not likely to arouse hostility, as it does not appear to pose a threat to the *status quo*. Neither does it become assertive, demand redistribution of power or resources, thus assuming the role of a rival. Also when two communities are balanced in numbers or in political or economic weight, there is tension

² Hindu-Christian riots have begun to take place now on a scale big enough to be taken notice of. Riots in the Kanyakumari district are a case in point (Ed)

but also mutual deterrence leading to equilibrium and adjustment. Thus it is not surprising that physical confrontation largely occurs in localities where one community constitutes more than 15% but less than 35% of the population. The limits may be extended at both ends if apart from the numerical non-balance, additional elements, such as historic rivalry or political or economic competition, are thrown in.

Perhaps the Hindu and Muslim communities are in some ways further apart today than they were in 1947. The Hindu society is a closed society; the Muslim *mohalla* is a cultural ghetto. There is less mingling at a social level or in modern housing. The reason may well be the relative economic backwardness of the Muslim community, their lower presence in the elite, the affluent or professional groups. Both communities live apart in a world of stereotypes, of make-believe.

Muslims have little say in national leadership. Their own leadership is mainly concerned with their day-to-day problems, bargaining with one power-group or the other; their traditional leadership speaking a religious idiom, appealing to their religious ethos, pursuing emotional questions, reacting emotionally, has a vested interest in keeping them backward, obscurantist and orthodox. The overall behaviour appears in the Hindu eyes as fanatical and fundamentalist or at best as self-centred.

Remedial Measures — Long Term & Short Term

In the long term, education is the answer. But even education by itself may not do. It must be based on human values and coupled with accelerated economic development, generating social mobility, cutting across existing lines of cleavage in the society on religious, caste, regional or linguistic lines. Intensive social intercourse between various communities and even a more finely-tuned and responsive administrative and legal framework would combine to eliminate the scourge of social violence, but we must recognise the hardy nature of the problem, that it is going to remain with us in the foreseeable future, and we must not lose patience.

No sane person can argue that if Muslims give up their mother tongue (wherever different from the majority language), accept a common civil code, even if, in parts, not in consonance with

the Shariat, adopt the Hindu view of Indian history, identify Indian culture with Hindu culture, close down the religious *Madrassas* or even give up public worship, the riots will stop! No, so long as the society is fragmented and dominated by an economy of scarcity, unable to meet the demands of rising expectations and the claims of social justice, so long as the Muslim community can be distinguished in any way, even by names, the pressures will continue to take the form of violence, now and then, forcing Muslims to adopt defensive means and thus leading to a spiral of violence.

No government or administration can prevent the outbreak of communal riots, given the existing level of intergroup antipathy and mistrust and suspicion. But once such a situation develops, communal organisations as well as anti-social elements, acting jointly and severally, bring their 'contingent' plans into operation and take full advantage of the situation, sometimes, as stated above, with the understanding, acquiescence or even logistic support of the local police and magistracy. After all, the most loss of life and property occurs during curfew hours, after the police intervene.

That is why the Government must create a special anti-riot force as soon as possible to deploy in such situations. Such a force, in order to command the confidence of the minorities, must have their adequate representation in its ranks, at all levels.

Local intelligence machinery should be punished administratively for failures of intelligence.

Local police officials from the District Superintendent Collector to SHO level should be transferred immediately and replaced by pre-designated teams of officers with a reputation for combining efficiency with a secular approach. This was tried with great effect recently in Bihar Sharif. The V. S. Dubey-Ramaclandra-Khan Team did wonders to the satisfaction of all communities.

If there is any loss of life, a judicial probe should be immediately ordered. Simultaneously, special courts should be set up for expeditious trial of those named in the FIRs, against whom investigation supports a *prima facie* case.

Compensation for loss of life, limb and property should be authorised by the Government, not on the basis of compassion or

discretion, but by a duly-appointed Claim Commissioner, on the basis of a prescribed scale. The law should provide for life-long pensions for riot-widows, educational grants and preferential employment for all riot-orphans, with marriage-grants for riot-affected girls, as well as compensation for loss of goods of trade. The GIC should introduce a scheme of group insurance against riot losses.

The victims should be as far as possible rehabilitated in the original places of residence but sometimes, in the case of families which have lost male members or have no property worth the name or are too few to muster the courage to settle down in the original place, they have to be rehabilitated elsewhere, preferably in a neighbouring village with a substantial population of the community to which they belong.

Collective fines must be imposed under a law which provides guidelines to the authorities for determining the quantum of fine which should cover the compensation paid for various types of losses as well as for making exceptions in favour of the victims and their protectors. This can be done under the Police Act or under a new legislation specially enacted for the purpose.

Media-Reporting

Finally, to ensure factual reporting by the media, the existing regulations and guidelines about publication of information are not only inadequate but counter-productive. The press ends up by concealing facts or reporting the version of the local authorities instead of the results of its own independent investigation or even observation. Such versions are largely one-sided, incomplete or evasive because it is the dereliction of duty on the part of the local authorities--their own acts of omission and commission--which have led to the explosion, in the first place. Secondly, the truth, in all its brutal and shocking detail, must be told if a national catharsis is to be effected and our psyches purged of communal venom and we are to be made conscious of the evil within us. The Press Commission and the Press Council as well as professional organisations like the AINEC and the EGI should address themselves to rewriting the guidelines for reporting on communal riots.

Man's Multi-Dimensional Being—Multi-cultural India

Since group identity cannot be whisked away, it should be respected, and the institutions of administration and development should be such as to provide scope at all levels for group consciousness to operate positively, partly through the decentralisation of power, partly through the delegation of authority and partly through the formulation of norms and limits of minority rights and safeguards, applicable uniformly to all communities all over the country. A multiplicity of identities, each of which comes to the fore in a different context and in a different situation, without clashing with the demands of the others, is not a bar to national integration. Denial is. A person may have a caste, religious, linguistic, regional and national identity. These identities coexist; none is truer than the other; none is more right than the other; none is higher than the other. Man is not a uni-dimensional being. Identities have no permanent order of precedence or of priority; this depends solely on the circumstances or the situation. That is to say their order is not hierarchical but situational. Maturity lies in balance and in not permitting any particular identity to dominate over the others. Indian nationalism must be so comprehensive as to include and provide expressions for all the aspects of our being; all its dimensions. That is why it cannot be equated with Hindu nationalism or chauvinism or with Islamic fundamentalism.

How is it then we should define Indian nationalism and Indian culture? Does India have a common national culture? And if so, what are its elements, its warp and woof, its strands, the feel of its fabric? How Hindu is it? Does it or does it not acknowledge a Muslim contribution, or an Islamic content? What is our cultural model: a melting pot or a mosaic? A melting pot reduces all diversities to an assembly line uniformity. In a mosaic, of which Mrs. Gandhi once spoke, the individualities are retained; they are not submerged or transcended but arranged to make for a more beautiful pattern, a harmonious wholeness. That is multi-culturalism.

In choosing the model for the India of tomorrow, the Muslim integrationist would opt for a mosaic; the Hindu chauvinist for

a melting pot. Neither can check the inexorable pressure of modernisation; economic progress, political activity and social intercourse shall inevitably redefine the contours of group interaction. Thus, the pace of change and, therefore, time are of the essence. Integration will be achieved faster if there are no pressures of assimilation or alienation, feeding each other in a vicious spiral.

But the goal of multi-culturalism should be more precisely defined and then consciously accepted and propagated. Mutual tolerance, peaceful co-existence, harmonious relationship, respect for the personality of the individual and for his multi-dimensional identity, for each religious, each ethnic and each linguistic group, equal rights for all, in fact and not just in name, the sharing of affluence as much as of poverty, and above all no social violence. That is how Indian Nationalism shall acquire a moral grandeur and a cultural strength perhaps unique in the world, and the inner harmony so achieved shall enable us, once again, to influence the external world—the course of world thought and of human destiny.

THE TAMILNADU CONVERSIONS, CONVERSION THREATS AND THE ANTI-RESERVATION CAMPAIGN: SOME HYPOTHESES

Imtiaz Ahmad

The question of the conversion of members of Scheduled Castes to Islam in Tamilnadu has engaged public attention for well over a year. In 1981 there was an extended discussion of these conversions, and leaders and members of the Scheduled Castes elsewhere, particularly in North India, threatened that they might follow suit. Further there were indications in the press that such conversions might occur once again.

Unfortunately, despite all the publicity and discussion, the question has not received the kind of serious treatment that it would seem to deserve. On the contrary, the more common tendency has been to press certain popular beliefs as explanations without attempting to formulate logically consistent propositions explaining the phenomenon. Given its rather sensitive nature, and the recent political history of the country, there would appear to be a strong case for a serious treatment of the subject.

The serious barrier to a correct appraisal and understanding of the whole conversion episode, which can be more objectively understood now that the euphoria over it has gradually waned, is that events and developments which are actually susceptible of separate explanations have been sought to be accounted for in terms of a single explanation. This has been particularly the case with the conversions in Tamilnadu and conversions threatened elsewhere in the country. These two developments have generally been viewed as expressions of a common factor which has been identified variously as the role of foreign money or the growing militancy of the Indian Muslims in the context of the recent resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism or even the urge

for social mobility among the Scheduled Castes. Perhaps we stand a better chance of understanding the whole conversion question if we dissociate these two developments as two acts of a play and account for them by separate explanations rather than a single one.

Going simply by the chronology of the events that occurred, there appears to be a strong case for approaching the question this way. For, though it is true that most analyses have seen them as expressions of a common tendency, they are quite distinct and are separated by a time-gap which though not considerable was nevertheless there. The conversions in Tamilnadu actually took place in the beginning of 1981 but did not come to light until late February or March. Conversion threats in the North came to be made in May or June, by which time the conversions in Tamilnadu had already received a great deal of publicity and a considerable euphoria had built up over them. Again, those conversions were actual conversions, and the conversion threats which failed to materialise would need to be distinguished from the actual conversions.

Once we recognise the difference between the actual conversions and the threatened ones, it becomes pertinent to ask why actual conversions were limited to the four southern districts of Tamilnadu, though elsewhere too the Scheduled Castes had threatened that they would embrace Islam. Unfortunately, all the factual details necessary to answer this question are not available and may have to wait until social scientists undertake detailed studies on the subject. Meanwhile, one plausible hypothesis that suggests itself is that the Tamilnadu conversions were an essentially local phenomenon and were caused by conditions or factors typically rooted in the local situation.

What these local causes or factors were can only be guessed, since press reports did not view the conversions in local terms and did not provide the information that would have indicated that the origin of conversions was local in nature. Proceeding on the basis of the limited information drawn from press reports and other sources in various contexts, it is possible to hypothesise several factors that might have served to bring about these conversions.

Perhaps, the most important of these factors, already noted by some analyses seems to be the nature of Caste Hindu-Scheduled Caste relations in Tamilnadu. It is generally noted that caste rigidities are more pronounced in the South than in North India and this observation is true to a great extent. However, it is not so much to this that I am referring here. For, if this were the principal reason for the conversions, they should have actually occurred in Kumbhakonam, the centre of Brahmanical dominance, since the Brahmins are supposedly more rigid about caste rules and regulations than the other castes. Since conversions took place in areas outside the area of Brahmanical dominance, some other factors seems to have been crucial.

The particular pattern of interaction obtaining currently between the dominant castes of the area and the Scheduled Castes appears to be crucial. We may recall here that in this area peasant castes of Tewas and Vaniyas, whose current superiority is a matter of recent acquisition, enjoy dominance over the area by their control over land accompanied by their ability to acquire other symbols of status.

Given the newness of their status, it is easy to anticipate that they should also be suffering from an acute status-anxiety and should be jealous of preserving this new-found status through asserting and overly demonstrating it to these lower in the social hierarchy. Such status-anxiety or assertiveness on the part of peasant castes has been a common feature in India. Thus, what may actually be happening in the areas where conversions have taken place, is that the overbearing behaviour of the peasant castes might be rendering things difficult for the Scheduled Castes who, as the lowest castes, might also be having to bear the major brunt of the Tewa and Vaniya status-anxiety and social aggressiveness arising from their recent mobility.

There has been some indication of this possibility in the press reports on conversions and on atrocities being committed by the locally dominant castes. Still, the overbearing behaviour of the locally dominant peasant castes may not have brought about conversions if the developments among these castes were not to a certain extent paralleled by similar developments among the Scheduled Castes. The Scheduled Castes in the area too have in

recent years registered considerable social mobility, one effect of which has been the emergence of a group of young militants who are simply not prepared to accept the status traditionally ascribed to them and to submit to the dictates of the Caste Hindus. This group of young and militant Scheduled Castes is aware of its constitutional privileges and rights and is bold enough to assert its right to equality. Conversions appear to be adopted by this group of Scheduled Castes as a stratagem either as a way of escape from the alleged humiliation and atrocities of the dominant castes or to dramatise the point that they can no longer be coerced into accepting a low status, as it is now possible for them to repudiate the rules upon which this coercion was based.

It might be argued—to some extent correctly—that I am crediting the Scheduled Castes with more awareness than they actually possess. However, it is my contention that Scheduled Caste perceptions, attitudes and understanding of their own situation have undergone a sea change in recent years, and those who continue to work on the basis of the image of the Scheduled Castes as submissive and inert, actually underestimate the social change that has taken place amongst them. A great many of them, if not all, are aware of their rights and what they should do to assert them, and if they do not do so it is because the situations in which they find themselves do not provide adequate room for their aspirations to be expressed openly and not so much because they lack awareness. Perhaps the long leap that the Scheduled Castes have taken in Tamilnadu afforded this room.

This still leaves one question unanswered. Why did the Scheduled Castes opt in favour of embracing Islam rather than any other religion like Christianity? Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the nature of Muslim missionary activities in the area, the nature of Tamil Islam and the position of Muslims in Tamil nadu.

Some evidence suggests that the area has been the scene of sustained substantial Muslim missionary activity over the years. Due to lack of detailed study of this phenomenon, it is difficult to say whether the object of this missionary activity has been proselytisation. After eighteenth century Islam in India practically lost its proselytising thrusts, Muslim missionary activities have

since been directed more at the imposition of a more rigid practice of Islamic principles and precepts among Muslims rather than at the recruitment of new converts to the faith. Whatever the thrust of contemporary missionary work in the area, we find Muslim missionary organisations working in the area have prepared a considerable body of religious literature in the local language which has found wide dispersal throughout Tamilnadu. It could be that the option of embracing Islam might have been suggested to the Scheduled Castes by their increased awareness of the faith brought about by their exposure to the missionary religious literature, or they might have been persuaded to adopt Islam through proselytisation work.

Equally the option could have been determined by the nature of Tamil Islam. Unlike the rest of India, the Islam that predominates in Tamilnadu is of the Shafi'i variety. The chief characteristics of this variety of Islam are its more pronounced simplicity because of greater Arab as opposed to Persian influence¹ and its greater social egalitarianism and simplicity at the level of religious practice.

Finally, a third factor that may have influenced the choice of the Scheduled Castes could be the status of Muslims in Tamilnadu. Unlike the Muslims in North India, a good many of whom carry a rather low estimation of themselves as a dispossessed and frustrated minority, Tamil Muslims have traditionally been engaged in trade and business and constitute an economically strong community. This strength has considerably increased in recent years as a result of the expansion of opportunities in trade and business. It is possible that the decision of the Scheduled Castes to convert to Islam might also have been determined by the support that this might give them in terms of belonging to an economically strong and stable community in their fight against oppressive domination by the locally powerful peasant castes.

¹ The author's contention about the simplicity of Shafi'i, Islam is not tenable. Shafi'ism is a school of jurisprudence counted as one among other schools of orthodox Sunni Islam. The local Tamil influences would perhaps better explain the attraction it might have for the local people. (F.d.)

It can be argued that these statements are highly tentative without any concrete evidence to support the propositions put forward or that the questions of inducements and interplay of foreign money which have been referred to so very frequently in discussions of conversions have been completely overlooked. As regards the tentative tone of the arguments, there is an obvious difficulty here. Press coverage of the conversions in Tamilnadu could have produced some concrete evidence to substantiate these propositions provided those investigating the matter had proceeded on the premise that the conversions owed themselves to local causes. Since they proceeded on the pre-supposition that the conversions were rooted in global or all-India causes, they did not produce the kind of information that could go to substantiate these propositions. Under the circumstances, all that was possible was to indicate those likely factors that could serve to explain the conversions as a local phenomenon and to hope that subsequent investigations would provide a test of them.

As regards the questions of inducement and foreign money operation the situation is quite different. It is true that they have been cited widely as factors responsible for conversions, but the evidence that has been produced to substantiate the claims has been quite slender. Furthermore, the point that needs to be borne in mind is that it is possible to explain why both inducements and foreign money have enjoyed such wide public appeal and acceptance in terms other than that they are necessarily true. Actually what should be asked is, if inducements and foreign money were actually responsible for conversions to Islam in Tamilnadu, why is that their operation did not take effect in other areas? Why did they not bring about large-scale conversions in other areas despite the fact that conversions were threatened by the Scheduled Castes elsewhere?

It would be absurd if one were to argue that inducements were not a factor in the recent conversions. One would indeed be surprised if the conversions were prompted entirely by spiritual considerations or the promise of social mobility. Conversion is almost always an outcome of tangible benefits. What is not clear, however, is how the question of inducements acquires a singular significance in the context of the conversions to Islam. It will

be easily recognised that inducements have always been built into the national policy on religion. For example, when Gandhi persuaded Dr. Ambedkar to abandon his idea of separate electorates for the Scheduled Castes on the promise that special provisions would be made for them in matters of education and political representation, that too was an inducement. Or again, when it is argued that those members of the Scheduled Castes who embrace a religion other than Hinduism should be debarred from enjoying the benefits of protective discrimination, do not the concessions being granted to the Scheduled Castes under the law become a kind of inducement? Clearly, therefore, the question of inducement in the case of the conversion of the Scheduled Castes is not quite material.

The question of foreign money is quite another matter. There is no tangible evidence that would go to show that foreign money was involved on a large scale in the conversions of the Scheduled Castes in Tamilnadu, but in the popular mind such evidence has often been presumed to exist. Therefore, the question that arises is why the belief about foreign money operations has enjoyed such wide appeal and acceptance despite the almost total absence of any concrete evidence to show the clandestine operation of foreign money. Is it not that there is some other objective basis in society which accounts for the remarkable popularity and acceptance of this belief?

Such a basis in social reality exists in the emergence in recent years of a socially visible, though of course tiny, entrepreneurial class among Muslims in India. Conventional analyses of Muslims in India have tended to miss this point because they continue to be based on a view of the Muslims as a frustrated and backward community still pondering over its predicament in post-partition India. This development is having a far-reaching impact on the mutual relations, attitudes and perception of the two communities.

The Partition was no doubt a traumatic experience for both communities or at least large sections of them. It caused immediately a sense of insecurity and withdrawal among Muslims in India. Around the early sixties, however, the Muslims began realising that they could not go on pondering over their predicament indefinitely. Accordingly, the more enterprising among

them began to shed their sense of withdrawal and started taking advantage of the available economic opportunities created by the expansion of a market for goods and services monopolised by them. Over the years some of these enterprising Muslims have been able to emerge as businessmen of substance and are running their own manufacturing workshops, trade or export enterprises.

Such enterprising Muslims do not belong to the traditional Muslim elite whose own perceptions have actually dominated the Muslim polemics and rhetoric this far. Most of them come from the erstwhile artisan or menial classes and their size is perhaps considerably limited at present. Nonetheless, the significant point is not the size of this entrepreneurial class or whether the picture of the Muslim community presented by them can be used to generalise that the economic development of the last three decades has benefited all sections of Muslims equally. What is really significant is that the emergence of this class of Muslim entrepreneurs has actually resulted in a growing social visibility of the Muslims.

This explains to a considerable extent the strong Hindu reaction to the conversions reported from Tamilnadu. Perhaps, at the risk of a slight exaggeration, one would not be far wrong in saying that the Hindu reaction to the conversions was one of panic. It was argued that the conversions were an attempt to destabilise the region and carried within them the potential of destroying the freedom and integrity of the country. The Shankaracharya of Kanchi had precisely this in mind when he stated that the conversions were a threat to freedom and independence. Similar views and sentiments were voiced by other leaders of Hindu opinion and some of them went so far as to state that the Hindus could not just sit back and be onlookers to the erosion of Hinduism.

The Hindu reaction to the conversions in Tamilnadu, particularly as articulated by the more articulate leaders of Hindu opinion and some politicians keen to cash in on the issue, set the stage for the unfolding of the second act in the conversion episode. It demonstrated to the leaders of the Scheduled Castes that the Muslims were the only minority in the country that Hindus took seriously, and this point could be made use of politically. Already after the anti-reservation stir in Gujarat and elsewhere, the average

members of the Scheduled Castes as well as their more articulate leaders had been feeling alarmed and apprehensive over the caste Hindu backlash against the Government's policy of protective discrimination. The Hindu reaction to the conversions in Tamilnadu suggested to the leaders of the Scheduled Castes that the conversion issue could be used to force the Hindu community into conceding what the Scheduled Castes felt were nearly on the verge of losing.

It might be argued that these comments grossly exaggerate the Scheduled Caste reactions to the anti-reservation stir as well as the strength of anti-reservation sentiments. One wishes this were true. Actually, the Hindu reaction against the Government's reservation policy has been stronger than the gains registered by the Scheduled Castes would warrant. Curiously, even intellectuals have come around to the view that the reservation policy was responsible for injecting a communal virus and creating a vested interest in backwardness, and they have begun to argue in favour of an abrogation of this policy. What is more, the opposition to the reservation policy is being couched in an ideology of efficiency and skills.

Perhaps the Scheduled Caste leadership might have been less alarmed if the opposition to the Government's reservation policy had been confined to the level of intellectuals. But the opposition was clearly not limited. It had spread to other social strata. Furthermore, rightly or wrongly, the Caste Hindus had actually succeeded in building up strong public opinion against the reservations, so that even in remote villages educated as well as uneducated members of the intermediate and higher castes had begun to voice opposition and resentment over the policy. On the Scheduled Caste side, this had convinced the members of the community that reservations could not continue indefinitely and they would soon be called upon to find other strategies to secure their legal rights and promise of upward social mobility.

The Hindu response to the conversions in Tamilnadu provided an opportunity to the Scheduled Castes to impress upon the Hindu community at large that the problem of their uplift was still very much present to be resolved. There is no denying the fact that the use of the strategy and conversion as a weapon against the Hindu backlash was carried to absurd limits. Groups of Sche-

duled Caste workers in Government establishments, and occasionally individual members, promptly despatched letters to the Government that if they were not immediately promoted or if their grievances were not quickly attended to they would embrace Islam. That the threat was not actually carried out clearly suggests that it was intended more to blackmail the Government or the Hindu community at large rather than to actually embrace another religion.

As a political strategy, the threat of conversion could at best be of limited utility. Unless the threat were actually carried out in a few places it could hardly be sustained for long. Nonetheless, the strategy served its purpose during the limited period in which the euphoria over the conversion issue rose to its highest pitch. For, within that limited time, the leadership of the Hindu community reiterated its commitment to the uplift of the Scheduled Castes. At the Janamasthami ceremony at the Birla Mandir a few members of the Scheduled Castes were also inducted to be priests, a status which Hindu opinion would have been most reluctant to otherwise concede, and Hindu leaders all over the country called for a relaxation of caste rules and untouchability practices. It remains to be seen how long this reiteration of good intentions survives, but it would seem that in the short-run the Scheduled Castes have been the principal gainers as a result of the conversion episode. At any rate, they can feel assured that the reaction against the reservation policy shall remain suspended for some time to come.

Our objective in this paper has been to work towards an understanding of the recent conversions to Islam, actual as well as threatened. It has posited that the conversions consisted of two distinct dimensions. These were the conversion to Islam of some Scheduled Caste families in Tamilnadu and the conversions threatened by the leaders and members of the Scheduled Castes elsewhere in the country. It has been our argument that both these developments were distinct and ought to be explained in terms of two separate explanations rather than accounted for in terms of a single factor. Our aim has been to indicate what these explanations could have been.

This discussion throws in bold relief the need for a more systematic explanation of the conversion phenomenon in greater detail. It has suggested two sets of questions on which data should be collected if the conversion episode has to be satisfactorily understood. The first of these relates to the conversions in Tamilnadu. The questions on which we should obtain data are the following: What is the nature of the relationship between the Scheduled Castes and Caste Hindus on the one hand and the Scheduled Castes and Muslims on the other in the areas where conversions actually occurred? What is the nature and thrust of Muslim missionary work in those areas and what are the organisations through whom such work is being carried out? What is the nature of Tamil Islam? Did the fact that Islam in Tamilnadu is Shafi'i rather than Hanafi in orientation have any relevance to the conversions? What is the nature of Hinduism and the organisational structure of caste and does this explain why a section of converts should have embraced Islam?

At a more specific level, research should seek to find out the social background of those, or at least a sample of those, who converted to Islam and those who did not convert to Islam. What reasons are articulated by the converts, their leaders and others in the areas where conversions have taken place for the Scheduled Castes to have embraced Islam? What is the emerging pattern of relationship between those members of the Scheduled Castes who converted to Islam and those who did not? (i.e., What limits are placed upon social interaction with converts after conversion?) What is the nature of interaction and relationship between the Scheduled Caste neo-converts and those who have been Muslims over a much longer period? Given the fact that conversion is not an irreversible process and groups or individuals who convert to another religion do often reconvert to their original faith, what steps, if any, are being taken by caste Hindu organisations or groups to bring the recent converts back into the Hindu fold and by Muslim groups and organisations to prevent such reconversions?

The second dimension relates to the threatened conversions elsewhere. Here the questions that call for exploration are the following: What is the nature of leadership within the Scheduled Caste community and was the strategy of threatened conversions

was worked out by the leadership or was it a spontaneous response precipitated by local considerations? Why did the threatened conversions not materialise into actual conversions? What role may inducements and foreign money operations have played in prompting the conversion threats? What are the perceptions of caste Hindus, Muslims and the Scheduled Castes both in Tamilnadu and elsewhere to the reported cases of actual conversions and threatened conversions and to what extent can the differences in perception be accounted for by recent social and political history and changes in the different areas? Finally, what role can political factors, if any, on the Hindu, Muslim and Scheduled Caste sides, be said to have had in the strong reaction to the conversion issue?

Of course, this is a long list of questions and one may reasonably ask if any useful purpose will be served by exploring them. Nonetheless, a detailed investigation may be rewarding not only for the insights that it may offer for understanding the conversions but also for the understanding of the emerging pattern of ethnic relations among the caste Hindus, the Scheduled Castes and the Muslims. This pattern may be a crucial determinant in the decades to come of the nature of development within the polity despite its superficial modernisation and rationalisation.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM¹

Imtiaz Ahmad

In the early seventies I carried out a study of social and political violence in Indian society. One of the objectives of that study was to identify the different categories of violence, to discern patterns in the distribution of violence in the country and to try to relate them in some meaningful way to certain social, economic and political characteristics of the areas where each category of violence commonly occurred. It was hoped that such an analysis would serve to reveal the socio-economic and political contexts in which social and political violence occurs, and help identify the factors which contribute to such violence in the country.

For the purposes of this analysis, it seems essential that all reported cases of violent acts occurring over the selected period should be arranged in separate categories so that the social, economic and political factors underlying each distinct category of violence could be separately identified. I, therefore, began by following the conventional method of classification and tried to arrange cases of violence and violent behaviour in categories based on the nature of the groups involved in the conflict situation. The categories were "agrarian", "industrial", "political", "educational", "communal", etc. The category of "communal"

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violence was designed to include all cases of conflict and tension between Hindus and Muslims. Cases of violence and conflicts between other social groups were proposed to be placed under a separate category called "sectional violence".

Each of these categories appeared quite distinct and exclusive, and I naturally assumed that it would be possible to classify all cases of reported violence into these categories. However, as the study progressed it soon became evident that this conventional scheme of classifying violent acts or behaviour was quite unsatisfactory and raised some difficulties. A particular difficulty arose in connection with the arrangement of cases of social group conflicts. According to the scheme of classification adopted for the study, all cases of conflict and tension between Hindus and Muslims were to be grouped under the category of 'communal' violence, while cases of conflict between other social groups were to be categorised as falling under the residual category of 'sectional violence'. This procedure was self-defeating as it imposed a somewhat artificial separation of structurally similar cases into separate categories. For, while many violent acts or conflicts shared common characteristics with Hindu-Muslim conflicts, they would be classified separately if the original scheme of classification was followed. This seemed especially to be the case in conflicts between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, Shias and Sunnis, caste Hindus and Scheduled Castes, and Hindu-Jain or Hindu-Sikh conflicts. I, therefore subsequently abandoned the initial attempt to arrange acts of violence according to the nature of the social groups involved and instead treated all social group conflicts as belonging to the same general category.

Looking at the initial attempt to categorise violent behaviour according to the conventional method I feel, in retrospect, that the difficulty in classifying cases of conflict actually arose from my failure to look upon the phenomenon of social group violence from a comparative perspective. I had assumed, following the general trend of thought on the subject, that cases of Hindu-Muslim violence constituted a distinct and separate category of violence from other kinds of social group violence and consequently, I was trying to build a typology of violence which would reflect this conventional framework of thought on the study of violence

in India. On the contrary, the answer to my problem actually lay in thinking about violence in comparative terms and also viewing Hindu-Muslim conflicts and tensions as one of the many forms of social group conflict found in Indian society. Once I was able to think about violence in comparative terms, it became clear that a consideration of all kinds of social group violence, including violence between Hindus and Muslims, irrespective of the identities of the social groups involved, was more likely to lead to an understanding of the social, economic and political factors which generate social group tensions, the contexts and situations within which these occur, and the aims they are designed to serve within the broader social and economic framework.

I now feel that this conclusion from my own attempts to analyse and understand a problem is relevant to the study of communal violence. I shall, therefore, attempt in this paper to highlight the insights gained from the study and to show how it suggests a way of looking at the communal problem in Indian history from a new perspective. I shall, first, examine some of the limitations of the current perspective on the study of the communal problem and trace some of the historical or methodological reasons for its persistence. I shall, then, go on to present an analysis of certain structural and behavioural characteristics of social group conflicts as they are indicated by studies, both of the communal problem in India, and of social group conflicts elsewhere. Lastly, I shall present a brief discussion of the social group conflict between Shias and Sunnis in one part of India to illustrate how this form of social conflict displays features which are usually considered characteristic of communal conflicts, i.e. conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. I shall argue that a comparative approach to the communal problem as commonly understood can serve to delineate those institutional and structural characteristics which generate communal conflicts better than an attempt to view the relations between Hindus and Muslims in relative isolation from all other forms of social group conflicts.

II

There can be three broad approaches to the study of the communal problem in recent Indian political and social history. First,

the analyst can define the communal problem specifically and narrowly as the problem arising out of the political division between the Hindus and Muslims and examine the causes underlying their growing estrangement in the political field from the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the time of partition. Second, he can consider all the different forms of social group conflicts which existed in Indian society during the same period as a single social phenomenon and then go on to analyse the conflict between Hindus and Muslims as a manifestation of the phenomenon of social group conflict and violence. Such an approach rests on the assumption that the communal problem in modern Indian history was actually a problem of group relations. It is not possible to arrive at an explanation of the communal problem, i.e. the political division between Hindus and Muslims, without first ascertaining what specific historical and structural conditions during that period promoted or exacerbated group conflicts and violence. Last, the analyst can view the communal problem in India from a still wider perspective as a phenomenon of social group conflict in all human societies. He can examine it cross-culturally to locate the forms it assumes in different societies, the structural situations which generate it, and the characteristics of the societies wherein such conflict occurs and exists. This perspective removes the communal problem from the socio-political setting in which it occurred in India and shifts the attention from the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India specifically to all social groups which may become actually or potentially involved in similar conflicts and tensions in other societies.

Social group conflicts and tensions are common to all human societies and the communal problem can thus be easily seen within a cross-cultural framework of analysis. It can also be seen as one of the many different forms of social group conflicts which have characterised Indian society in recent history. For example, at the turn of the century, conflicts between Shaivites and Vaishnavites were quite common and widespread in many parts of South India, and the Punjab often witnessed the rise of social tensions between Sanatanis and the Arya Samajis. Later on these conflicts gradually subsided and their place was taken by conflicts between Brahmins and non-Brahmins in South India.

Shias and Sunnis in Bombay and Lucknow, Hindus and Muslims in many parts of the subcontinent, and Muslims and Sikhs, and Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab. More recently, conflicts between Hindus and Jains, Sikhs and Hindus, sub-groups of the Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists, Hindus and Christians, Scheduled Castes and caste Hindus, have been added to some of the other, older forms of conflicts, while some others have terminated and subsided. Even so, the communal problems in Indian history have generally been analysed in terms of only the first of the three different perspectives outlined above. It is viewed mainly, and one might say exclusively, as the problem of political relations between Hindus and Muslims, and an attempt is made to locate the causes which contributed to their growing estrangement from the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is never viewed comparatively with other forms of social group conflicts either in India or in other societies, nor is any attempt made to examine the structural similarities between it and problems arising from other forms of social group conflicts.

How strong the tendency is among Indian scholars to analyse the communal problem in terms of the first perspective outlined above, can be seen both from the meaning attributed to the word 'communalism' in historical literature and the scope of the work which has been done on the subject so far. For instance, the word 'communalism' should technically refer to the antagonism between any two social groups and not essentially between Hindus and Muslims. Yet the word has come to acquire a highly specialised meaning in Indian historical discussions; it refers somewhat narrowly to the problem of political relations between Hindus and Muslims. Other forms of social group conflicts in India are neither regarded as an aspect of the communal problem nor studied as such. Moreover, much of the literature classified as dealing with the communal problem or communalism actually focuses, almost exclusively, on the relations between the Hindus and Muslims. Studies of other forms of social group conflicts, such as conflicts between Shias and Sunnis, or Brahmins and non-Brahmins, though available, are never classified under the discussion of the communal problem. It is, for example, somewhat interesting to note that the three bibliographies compiled during the last two years on the

communal problem list only the works dealing with the conflicts and tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Literature dealing with other forms of social group conflicts is completely omitted from them.

Several reasons can be seen for this orientation in the study of the communal problem in modern Indian history. Perhaps the most significant is the sheer difference in the magnitude and final impact of the problem created by the political conflict between Hindus and Muslims and by other forms of social group conflicts. While it is true that other forms of social group conflicts did exist in Indian society at the same time as the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims arose and crystallised, these other forms were considerably limited both in their geographical spread and their overall impact upon the future political development of the country. For instance, unlike these conflicts whose occurrence was confined to specific geographical areas, the conflict between Hindus and Muslims was widespread and occurred throughout most of what was British India. Moreover, while the impact of other group conflicts was generally felt at local or regional levels only, the conflict between the Hindus and Muslims resulted in the division of the country into two separate nations, India and Pakistan (itself now divided into two nations), and precipitated the catastrophic bloodshed of partition. It also embittered the relations between the two most numerous segments of India's population and continues to pose a serious barrier to the creation of a secular social order in Indian society. It is, therefore, easily understandable that students of Indian history should have been tempted to take such singular interest in the study of this particular form of social group conflict. It must, however, be remembered that the sheer magnitude, spread, and impact of the political division between Hindus and Muslims does not constitute sufficiently reasonable grounds for considering the relations between Hindus and Muslims alone as the communal problem. If structurally similar, other forms of group conflicts would seem to require consideration within the same broad theme.

A second reason why the discussion of the communal problem is restricted to the conflict between Hindus and Muslims seems to be that the subject has usually been studied by historians.

Political scientists, with a few notable exceptions, and sociologists have paid surprisingly little attention to its study. Even though history is a comparative discipline, there has been relatively little actual comparative work in history, especially in India, and few historians have employed the comparative method in their individual analytical works. By and large, they tend to confine themselves to the study of a single society, and occasionally the confinement is not merely to a particular society, but also to a specific period in the history of that society. Under this limitation of the historian's concern, his perspective remains both restricted and narrow.

I do not wish to imply that the limitation in the approach or perspective of the historian issues from his inability to be truly comparative. On the individual plane, many historians do wish to be comparative in their perspective. The limitation issues from the fact that their methods and sources of information are themselves a limiting factor in the application of a comparative perspective. The historian largely draws his information from documents and archival records which are scattered, scanty, and often incomplete. He has often to collect, organise and collate his evidence piece by piece from different archives, and it normally takes him many years of patient and careful sifting of documentary evidence before he can reconstruct a sufficiently reliable picture of a social phenomenon. Even so, his analysis remains confined to a single society and, more often to a specific period in that society. On the contrary, thanks to the methodological advances and the conveniences of data collection, the political scientist or the sociologist can usually hope to study at least two or more societies during his scholarly career and view the developments among them within a comparative analytical framework. (Among sociologists and social anthropologists, the study of at least two different societies is considered necessary equipment for their training.) This methodological and technical limitation of the historian's craft seems to have been partially responsible for his failure to view the communal problem within a larger analytical framework. Focussing himself entirely upon the modern period, the historian finds himself dealing almost exclusively with the communal problem as the problem of relations between Hindus

and Muslims, since, as earlier noted, this remained a much more common and widespread problem than any other form of social group conflict.

The third reason is also related to the limitation of history as an explanatory discipline and the orientations of the historians; it is that the communal problem has rarely been studied as a problem for investigation in itself. It has generally been studied as an aspect of the national movement. Most historians tend to view communalism as a deviation from nationalism and then set out to view the causes which contributed to this deviation. Even those historians who have viewed the communal problem in recent history as an object of study in itself, unconsciously tend to think that communalism represented a deviation from the national movement. Gopal Krishna has stated this theoretical position explicitly: "...in the pre-independence period politics was dominated by the claims of nationalism and the counter-claims of Muslim communalism." Given this unconscious bias among our historians, the Hindu-Muslim variant of social group conflicts is emphasised disproportionately and analysed as the only form of social conflict existing in Indian society.

III

The tendency to see the communal problem in India in terms of the political conflict between Hindus and Muslims alone, has had some unfortunate consequences for the analysis and understanding of this subject. For one thing, it has created the belief that communalism, understood as the antagonism between Hindus and Muslims, was a unique and extraordinary problem of Indian history. Several scholars think that the Hindu-Muslim conflict constitutes a unique category of social violence and that it has a logic of its own. For example, I suggested some time back at a seminar that this problem required to be seen along with other forms of social conflicts in Indian society and elsewhere. Many of my fellow participants immediately disagreed with me. They suggested that this communal problem was unique and nothing could be gained by comparing it with other forms of social group conflicts. Perhaps, the magnitude of the political conflict between Hindus and Muslims was quite extraordinary, but there is no

reason to assume that it was not structurally or behaviourally comparable to other forms of social group conflicts, or that social group conflicts, of the type represented by the Hindu-Muslim conflict are not more common than has been naturally assumed. As a matter of fact, there is now a growing recognition among social scientists that social group conflicts are a persistent feature of life in every society. When the priorities of one conflict or tension are somehow terminated, they are replaced by others that are as potentially dangerous and insoluble as the ones they replace. Such a perspective has been hampered by the view that is commonly taken that the communal problem was a unique and extraordinary feature of Indian society and policy in the nineteenth century.

Because the communal problem has been viewed as an extraordinary problem, it has also affected our attitudes and feelings toward it. This is particularly so since the events of partition and the accompanying bloodshed are still too recent in time. Thus, any discussion on the communal problem, even today, arouses the deepest emotional response from people. And, in the face of such emotional reactions, quite frequently the immediate tendency is to try and fix the blame on one of the participants of the political drama rather than to analyse it in an objective manner. Such attempts are quite well known to us all and require no elaborate discussion here. Clearly, the communal problem is a complex one and it would be nearly impossible to apportion blame on anyone for such a development. It seems to me, however, that if the problem is viewed comparatively, it would be possible to see that social group conflicts are much more widespread and then it may also be possible to view it more objectively.

Lastly, since the communal problem has been viewed as a problem of political relations between Hindus and Muslims alone, our explanations of it have been somewhat superficial. Most historians have put forward either simple psychological, cultural or historical explanations for the communal problem rather than explaining it in terms of the structural features of the society within which the conflict between Hindus and Muslims occurred and crystallised. Those who are oriented in favour of a psycho-

logical explanation tend to see the conflict as a kind of frenzy and ignore the deeper social and economic conditions responsible for its emergence. Those who resort to cultural-historical explanations see it as arising from (a) the lasting heterogeneity between Hindus and Muslims, (b) the pattern of historical relations between them, and their differential access to power before and during the British Rule, (c) the nature and content of the national movement which is alleged to be either strongly underscored by Hindu sentiments or secular, (d) the relative backwardness of the Muslims and their failure to benefit from the cultural renaissance of the nineteenth century, (e) the separatist ethos of the Muslims as a religious community and their aspirations for political dominance. All these factors may serve to explain the occurrence of conflict between Hindus and Muslims from about the beginning of the nineteenth century, but they certainly do not explain why Hindus and Muslims remained socially distinct and separate, advocating different political positions, nor do they show why such a conflict occurred at all. Such an analysis can only emerge when all the different forms of social group conflicts are collectively and comparatively served and attention is diverted from the peculiar pattern of the relationships between any two communities to the structural features of the societies within which these conflicts arose.

IV

It has been my contention in this paper that the communal problem requires to be viewed in a wider framework than the one which has traditionally been employed in the historical study of this phenomenon. I have implied that the communal problem requires to be viewed comparatively along with other forms of group conflict which have characterised Indian society. Such a comparative approach, in my opinion

- (i) will enable us to see the communal problem in its own right rather than as a deviation from nationalism and a vitiating element of Indian nationalism,
- (ii) will shift the focus of attention from the *sui generis* character of religious solidarity to other forms of identities and

thereby highlight the dynamics of communalism as a manifestation of group conflict, and

- (iii) will lead to the emergence of a comprehensive theory which explains all group conflicts, not just the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims.

I need hardly emphasise that implicit in these suggestions has been the assumption that close similarities are discernible between communalism, as we understand that word today; and other forms of group conflicts in Indian society. In the remaining parts of this essay, I shall try to work out a model of communalism and then go on to describe another form of social conflict which, though it shows remarkable similarities with communalism, is not included in discussions of the communal problem.

The basic elements of communalism are quite easy to identify from the numerous studies on that subject. It becomes clear that communalism refers to the form of group violence wherein the conflicting groups are self-conscious communities. In its more narrow sense these self-conscious communities are generally assumed to be Hindus and Muslims, though occasionally, and somewhat rarely, the conflicts between the Sikhs and Hindus on the one hand and Muslims on the other, are also regarded as a form of communalism. Each religious-group treated as an element of the communal problem is conceived as an identity group. Such a group is said to have "agreed values, understood internal relations, accepted roles for various members at developing stages of life, a language and channels of communication, a shared interpretation of the past and hopes for the future, common heroes, common symbols and common myths. The members of such a group are aware of their membership, and the group is identifiable by other groups and individuals in society." Such groups are also supposed to have differential access to power and resources, so the conflict between them over the control of those resources comes to be posed in terms of the group identity rather than other ideological considerations.

The question of the stability of group identity remains somewhat ambiguous. It has been assumed that the identity of the group is *sui generis* and historically stable. In other words the groups are permanent structural entities and their violence ema-

nates from the fact that they have not only remained historically distinct but the points of contact between them have been characterised by antipathy, mutual distrust and hostility. Nevertheless, a somewhat closer examination of the historical evidence on the processes of identity articulation seems to suggest that group violence treated as communalism does not always occur between groups whose identities are stable and permanent. On the contrary, such identity as serves to highlight the violence and antipathy between them may be a consequence of the historical processes generated by the conflict situation itself rather than their permanent feature as historical entities. The social identity of a group may be built up gradually as it becomes increasingly involved in a conflict over resources, or as it begins to assume semi-sovereign functions as a challenge to or substitute for the weakened legitimacy of the State.

Such an evolutionary pattern is attested to even by the Indian situation. Notwithstanding the assertions that communalism in Indian society arose from the historical distinctiveness and antipathy between Hindus and Muslims (a point which the leaders of these groups themselves emphasised greatly) the distinct identity of the groups evolved contextually only towards the end of the nineteenth century. Earlier, that is, until the second half of the nineteenth century, Islam and Hinduism no doubt existed as religious traditions, but their adherents had not come to constitute closed communities. Adherents of each religious tradition were deeply fragmented by ethnic, linguistic, and geographical differences. It is well known that during the Sultanate period, the Muslims were clearly divided on the basis of ethnic differentiation between those who claimed an alien origin and those who had been converted to Islam indigenously. Each group of alien Muslims also constituted a separate ethnic stratum, such as Arabs, Persians, Turks, Afghans and Mongols, and emigrant ethnicity was their dominant form of self-identification. Religious unity was felt to be a part of the ethnic heritage, recent or remote, but it remained weak. The Mongols contributed towards a shift from ethnicity to religion as the dominant form of group identification by cutting off the possibility of large-scale emigrations from Western Asia, and Islam subsequently had to rely increasingly on

indigenous converts whose pattern of living hardly differed from that of the larger community amidst whom they lived. Nevertheless, ethnic and regional cleavages remained quite critical throughout this phase, and each group possessed a distinct identity through an intricate use of cultural symbols and endogamous alliances. It was only during the later part of the eighteenth century that the Muslims came to constitute a somewhat closed identity group.

The rise of radical political consciousness produced the emergence of Muslims as an articulate solidarity group. It replaced the sub-communities by socio-religious communities as the principal and dominant form of self-identification in India. Specifically, this meant a shift from caste, sect, ethnic origin, and locality as the order of social life to religion as the dominant form of social and self-identification. Self-identity thereon came to be progressively viewed in religious terms and new symbols and historical myths were invented to reinforce that identity. All problems of co-operation and conflict, unity and diversity, were interpreted in the light of this social fact. Such, then, was the social framework of Indian society within which conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims arose and took their course during the later phase of the independence movement. It was a social framework characterised by religious identification and belonging.

This discussion of the rise of Muslims as a solitary identity group in the course of a relatively short period serves to show the shifting character of an identity group. I have emphasised this point at some length because it is widely believed that identity groups involved in a situation of conflict are relatively stable and permanent. Our discussion shows that there is no primordial and lasting stability in these groups. On the contrary, outer boundaries are quite often situationally determined. What may appear to be a deeply segmented social group in one situation may become a closely knit and closed community in another. And the case of the Muslims clearly confirms this point.

A second basic feature of communalism is that the relations between the different solitary identity groups is characterised by conflict and frequent outbursts of violence. Such violence is

usually sparked off by fairly superficial and trivial causes, though underlying them are deeper considerations of political representation, control of and access to resources and power, etc. These trivial causes come to occupy a symbolic significance for the group, and conflicts arise from any interference with the group's autonomy, security and identity. Thus, in the case of the conflict between Hindus and Muslims, the starting point of most incidents of violence was the playing of music in front of mosques by Hindus and the slaughtering of cows by Muslims. Both these acts were common and rarely led to an outbreak of violence in natural circumstances, but when violence did break out, it was usually on account of one of them. Yet, the real causes of conflict were deeper questions of political representation and the position of Muslims in India's emerging power structure.

The third feature of communalism is the dominating influence which group identity comes to exercise on the perception of social and political issues. In situations of communal conflict, every question of public policy is transformed into an issue of group conflict, and thereby removed from the realm of serious and judicious discussion. In this sense, communalism has a logic of its own which operates completely aside from the general logic of events, attitudes, and perceptions. In India, such was the case with the so-called 'Urdu question', with the question of reform of the legal structure, and with a score of other questions where religion so obviously impinged upon social policy.

These general features of communalism found their most elaborate concrete, and direct expression in the case of the relations between Hindus and Muslims, but there were several other groups whose relations also displayed similar traits. As mentioned before at the turn of the century conflicts existed between Shaivites and Vaishnavites, Sanatanis and Arya Samajis and their structure was quite similar to what is commonly discussed as communalism. Later on, these conflicts subsided, but their place was taken by conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in many parts of India, the Brahmins and non-Brahmins in South India, and Shias and Sunnis in Lucknow and Bombay. These conflicts continue to occur in varying degrees of intensity, and since independence the conflicts between Scheduled Castes and Caste Hindus, Hindus

and Jains, and tribals and non-tribals, have been added to them.

I turn now to a consideration of the conflict between Shias and Sunnis which assumed a considerably serious proportion and I hope that it will show that the structural similarities between it and the conflict between Hindus and Muslims are sufficiently remarkable to require the consideration of the communal problem within a larger framework of analysis.

V

The conflicts between the Shias and the Sunnis have been fairly widespread in many parts of India in this century, but the two areas where they can be said to have been frequent and common are Bombay and Lucknow. Bombay experienced Shia-Sunni conflicts and tensions of varying intensity almost annually from the beginning until the third decade of this century. However, since the thirties there have been no cases of Shia-Sunni riots in Bombay and this form of social conflict seems to have completely subsided. On the other hand, Lucknow continues to witness Shia-Sunni conflicts even today and as recently as 1969 there was a serious Shia-Sunni riot in the city in which several people were killed and considerable property was destroyed. For nearly thirty years the Shia-Sunni conflict had completely subsided in Lucknow, but its recent reappearance, naturally, highlights the relevance of its study. This revival and re-emergence of Shia-Sunni conflict, as well as certain other practical considerations, prompted the selection of Lucknow as a suitable location for the study of this form of social violence.

The population of Lucknow is predominantly Hindu today, but the Muslims constitute a substantial proportion of it. According to the 1961 Census, the Hindus made up over sixty per cent of the city's population, the Muslims a little over thirty per cent and Christians about six per cent. The remaining four per cent included Sikhs, Parsees, Jains and Buddhists. Some of the present strength of the Hindus is the result of the influx of refugees after partition, and there is reason to believe that the proportion of the Muslims in the total population was probably higher before independence. It was certainly substantially higher at the turn of the century.

The Muslims are divided into two major sects, the Shias and the Sunnis. Their relative proportions in the present population are not possible to ascertain as the census does not enumerate the sectarian affiliation separately. According to the 1881 Census, when the Shias and the Sunnis were last enumerated separately, the Shias accounted for nearly twenty-three per cent of the Muslim population of the city. Local informants and politicians suggest that the Shias constitute approximately twenty-three per cent of the Muslim population of the city today.

Notwithstanding the presence of several religious groups, especially the Hindus and the Muslims, in substantial proportions in its population, Lucknow has been relatively free from religious group conflicts of any type. In marked contrast to the strained and abrasive relations between the Shias and Sunnis, the relations between the Hindus and Muslims have been particularly cordial and friendly. Even during the most active phase of separatist Muslim politics and the struggle for Pakistan, the relations between the two communities remained cordial and friendly, and the city was relatively free from communal discord. Again, there were no riots here in the wake of partition or the communal disturbances which usually accompanied it.

One of the main reasons for cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims is said to be the economic symbiosis between the members of the two communities in the commercial life of the city. The major industries in the city are *Chikan* work, delicate ivory work, and magnificent gold and silver brocade work. The craftsmen are all Muslims, but the trade is entirely in the hands of local Khatri and Rastogi traders and moneylenders. Local residents argue that there have been no communal disturbances because both the communities do not wish to disturb these mutually convenient arrangements. No less significant, nevertheless, is the composite cultural tradition and the close connections between the Hindus and Muslims over the centuries.

The antagonism and mutual hatred between the Shias and the Sunnis is of long standing, based on the point that the Shias differ from the Sunnis in their belief that Ali, the companion, son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, ought to have immediately succeeded the Prophet instead of Abu Bakr, Omar and

Usman. The Shias assert that Muhammad had definitely nominated Ali and his descendants at the Pool of Al-Ghadir and that on different occasions he had indicated his preference for Ali. They argue that Ali should have been the rightful successor to the leadership of Islam. Instead, the succession of Ali to the leadership was blocked by Abu Bakr. According to the Shias this disturbance was due to one of the widows of Muhammad. She procured the election of her father Abu Bakr and also instigated the murder of Hassan and the usurpation of the leadership by Maovia.² Accordingly, the Shias regard the first three Caliphs as usurpers. On the other hand, the Sunnis believe that the first three Caliphs were not usurpers but beloved of the Prophet.

These theological disputations, though basic to the self-definitions of the sects, had not produced any fundamental cleavage or antagonism in Lucknow. Locally the Shias were culturally dominant, as the Kings of Oudh, themselves Shias, had been great patrons of the creed. Moreover, the Sunnis were by and large, artisans and menials or small traders, and they ungrudgingly followed the customs and the practices of their Shia patrons. Thus, over the years, Shia festivals and religious practices had come to be observed even among the non-Shias, particularly the Sunni Muslims of the lower stratum. Sleeman, who undertook a journey through Oudh and spent considerable time in Lucknow as an agent of the East India Company, notes that the Shias and the Sunnis participated with equal enthusiasm in the annual celebration of "the great Muslim festival of Muharram". He stated that, "With the display of gorgeous piety, the whole city was *en fete*" at the time of Muharram. Perhaps, the extent of Shia cultural dominance over the religious life of Lucknow can be judged from the fact that even the singing girls of Lucknow, the majority of whom were supposedly Sunni at the time, observed certain restrictions during the Muharram celebrations. For instance, they depressed themselves in black, tore off their bangles, and abstained from practising their trade for the first ten days of the month.

Later accounts, however, suggest that the Sunnis had begun

² The Shias do not maintain that Ayesha was instrumental in the murder of Hassan or the usurpation of leadership by Maovia. (Ed.)

to object to the celebration of the festival. According to one source, "The Silks, I observe, are of many different colours, forming an agreeable variety, some blue, purple, green, yellow, etc. Red is not used; being the Sunni's distinguishing colour at Muharram it is carefully avoided by the zealous shahs — the Sunnis are violently opposed to the celebration of this festival." Even the Shias and the Sunnis concede that the Shia-Sunni conflict in Lucknow is not of long-standing. A pamphlet entitled *This Happened in Lucknow*, put out by the Majlis-e-Tahaffuz-e-Millat, a Sunni organisation formed soon after the 1969 riots, reads: "Lucknow is the unfortunate place which has been the centre of Shia-Sunni controversy for about the last eighty years." Likewise, another publication entitled *Madhe-Sahaba-Tabarra Controversy and Law and Order*, published by the Shia organisation Tanzeem-e-Millat agreed that the controversy dates back to the year 1905. It is clear, then, that the relations between the Shias and the Sunnis at the beginning were not characterised by their present antagonism and friction and that the Shia influences were much more preponderant over the social and cultural life of the city on account of their political dominance.

The first Shia-Sunni riot occurred in Lucknow around the middle of 1908. The starting point of the conflict was the dispute over the form of celebration of the festival of Muharram. The festival in Lucknow was marked by frequent processions of the *tazias*, or models of the tombs of the martyrs of the battle of Karbala (the holy city), and the banners, attended by readers of the *marsiyah* (funeral elegy). The readers select such passages as are particularly applicable to the part Abbas took in the affairs of Karbala, and these are chanted at intervals, the procession pausing for that purpose. The *marsiyah* is a peculiar innovation of Lucknow. Earlier both the Shias and the Sunnis had been celebrating the festival jointly (some of the well known composers of the *marsiyahs* were actually Sunnis), but in that year the Sunnis decided to introduce a peculiar innovation. Rather than recite the *marsiyahs* according to existing practice, they decided to recite verses in praise of the first three Caliphs whom they described as friends and comrades of each other and of the Prophet Moham-

mad. These recitations subsequently crystallised into what is known as the *Madhe-Sahaba*,³ or precisely, the companions. The Shias retaliated by employing the *Tabarra*. Literally *Tabarra* means the shouting of *lanat* (curses) on Satan, but in practice it has come to mean the shouting of curses and abuses on the Sahabas, the successors and the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, and the praising of Feroz, the assassin of the third Caliph, Omar.

Public memory of the 1908 riot is considerably hazy, but a few general details stand out clearly. It is said that riots broke out as the *tazia* procession of the Shias was proceeding through one of the predominantly Sunni localities. A group of militant Sunnis hiding in a Sunni mosque nearby started pelting stones on the bystanders and onlookers, men, women and children. The crowd began to run for safety and protection and a riot started. Judged by the scale of Hindu-Muslim riots, as well as the scale of subsequent Shia-Sunni riots, the 1908 riot was a minor one. There were no deaths, and relatively little loss of property, public or private. Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code was imposed throughout the area and regular patrolling by the city police of the predominantly Muslim localities brought the situation under control. Seven persons, mainly Sunnis, arrested in connection with the riot were later released on the assurance that they would desist from such provocations in the future. Life returned to normal after the Muharram festival, and the friction that characterised the two sects seemed to disappear.

The *Madhe-Sahaba-Tabarra* controversy nevertheless remained. The self-conscious members on both sides asserted their claims to recite the *Tabarra* and the *Madhe-Sahaba* respectively. On the one hand, the Shias claimed that the recitation of the *Madhe-Sahaba* (the praise of the successors and the companions of the Prophet Muhammad) as part of the Muharram festival was a recent innovation, and that it injured their religious feelings. They asserted that they would engage in the shouting of curses on the first three Caliphs (*Tabarra*) if the Sunnis were allowed to recite the praise of their religious leaders (*Madhe-Sahaba*). On the other hand, the Sunnis argued that the recitation of *Charyari* verses had always been a vogue, and it was a fundamental religious right

³ The praise of the companions of the Prophet.

of the Sunnis to recite the praises of the first three Caliphs. Cognizant that the trouble might start again at any time, the Government appointed a four member Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice T. C. Piggott, a judge of the High Court to investigate the claims of the two sects. Of the remaining three members, one was an Englishman and two were local Hindus. The real issues before the Committee were mainly two: (a) whether the recitation in praise of the first three Caliphs as part of the Muharram celebrations was an innovation, and (b) whether the Sunnis could be allowed to undertake organised public recitation of such praise. Self-conscious members of both the sectarian groups tried to marshal evidence in favour of their claims. "The Shias called a number of respectable witnesses who deposed generally that the recitation of such verses in connection with the Muharram procession was a complete innovation... On the other hand the Sunnis laid before us (the Piggott Committee)... that verses of a similar character (as the ones they recite) had been printed and published a good many years previously; and they called a number of witnesses who deposed positively, and as of their personal knowledge, that the occasional recitation of verses in honour of the four Caliphs in the course of the *tazia* procession was a practice kept up by the Sunnis before 1905 and not then objected to."

The conclusion of the Committee was that the attempt to transform the *tazia* processions of Muharram into processions in honour of the first four Caliphs was an innovation. "The personal knowledge of those members of the Committee who are well acquainted with Lucknow is on the whole favourable to the Shia view," reads the Piggott Committee report, and the documentary evidence seems to preponderate in the same direction. All the six booklets laid before the Committee by Mr. S. Abid Husain as containing the verses to which his co-religionists object are of recent origin." The Committee, therefore, concluded: "The general feeling of the majority of the Committee is that, while we are not prepared entirely to disbelieve the witnesses who speak to the occasional recitations of verses in honour of the four Caliphs in connection with Muharram celebrations before 1906, we are satisfied that such recitations were at most occasional and infrequent, and not calculated to attract general notice." The Com-

mittee also recommended that there should be general prohibition against the organised recitations of such verses on three days, viz., *ashra* (the tenth day of Mubarram), *Chehlum* (the fortieth day after *ashra*) and the twenty-first day of Ramzan. The Shias contended that the recitation of such verses was highly offensive to them at all times. The Committee thought that the question of the public utterance of verses in praise of the first three Caliphs at times other than the three days mentioned should be left to the operations of the ordinary law.

The Government accepted the prohibition on the three days, viz., *ashra*, *Chehlum*, and the 21st day of Ramzan, and left the question of prohibition on the other days to some extent open, with due regard to the provisions in Section 298 of the Indian Penal Code. But while the theoretical position adopted by the authorities was, doubtlessly, that there should be no general prohibition of the *Madhe-Sahaba*, in practice no public recitation was permitted. Each time the Sunnis threatened to engage in a public recitation in praise of the Caliphs, the authorities invoked the relevant section of the Indian Penal Code which reads, "Whoever, with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person, utters or makes any sound in the hearing of that person or makes any gesture in the sight of that person, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or with both." Moreover, the route of the Muharram processions each year was carefully worked, police protection was provided for the processionists, and Section 144 was imposed to prevent the breach of public peace. These precautions apparently caused the religious controversy to subside and peace was restored between the Shias and the Sunnis.

The 1908 riot was fanned by religious controversy, but significant economic and political developments underlay the emergence of the controversy. It has been noted that the Shias were a very numerous and influential group in Lucknow, and they owed this influence to their political dominance. The annexation of Oudh by the British had adversely affected them. These adverse effects were uniformly felt by all sections of the Shias but its implications were greater for the middle stratum. Earlier this stratum had

depended entirely upon the patronage of the locally influential Shia families for their sustenance. The decline of the Shias, precipitated by the annexation of Oudh, took away the patronage of the middle social strata. Meanwhile, the Sunnis, who previously had been mainly menials and artisans, were now able to improve their social status on account of the new opportunities created by the establishment of British rule. As a result of their subsequent social and economic growth, an awakening had taken place among the Sunnis which was not only a reaction to British political domination but also an act of self-assertion against the erstwhile economic power of the Shia groups. The religious controversy was thus a symbolic mechanism designed to assert the self-awakening of the Sunnis. It was of course, helped by the emergence of a revivalist and puritanical tendency among the Sunni Ulemas who condemned the Shia celebration of Muharram as idolatory.

VI

The religious controversy relating to the public recitation of the *Madhe-Sahaba* and the *Tabarra* remained dormant until 1935 when, on the day of *Chehlun*, some Sunnis defied the order and recited the *Madhe-Sahaba*. Tensions immediately arose and there were some skirmishes between the Shias and the Sunnis in the city. The Government immediately made some arrests and brought the situation under control. However, the following year witnessed the emergence of a much stronger and more organised Sunni movement. A regular practice was started by the Sunnis of reciting the *Madhe-Sahaba* every Friday. Attempts were also made to take out *Madhe-Sahaba* processions in defiance of the prohibitory orders. This state of affairs continued for more than three months. A considerable number of arrests were made. Sensing that the Sunni pressure was increasing, the Government agreed to consider the issue afresh. The Sunnis called off their agitation, and those who were in prison for defying the prohibitory orders were released. Other reconciliatory efforts having failed, the Government appointed the Allsop Committee to consider the question of the public recitation of the *Madhe-Sahaba* afresh.

The Allsop Committee reiterated the position of the Piggott Committee of thirty years before. While recognising the theoretical right of the Sunnis to recite the *Madhe-Sahaba*, the Committee felt that, in the circumstances that existed in Lucknow, it was a provocative action and should not be allowed. "Where," the Committee observed, "there is a conflict between the tenets and points of views of different communities, it becomes the duty of the Government to intervene in order to ensure public tranquillity and to maintain the balance of public convenience." Eventually, on 28 March 1938, the Government published the Allsop Committee's report and stood by it. The Sunnis were dissatisfied with its decision. A civil disobedience movement was started under the leadership of the Ahrar Party which, after their failure in the Punjab and Kashmir, found in the Shia-Sunni controversy a suitable chance for gaining popular support. The civil disobedience movement met with a considerable and growing degree of success. A large number of people were arrested and *jathas* were organised from many other districts.

Earlier, certain political developments had taken place which subsequently had a far-reaching influence on the conflict. Principal among these were the election of the Chairman of the Lucknow Municipal Board and the formulation of the Congress Ministry in U.P. In February 1935 the four-year term of the earlier Chairman expired and the election of the Chairman became due. It seems that an agreement existed between the Hindus and Muslims in the city by which the Chairmanship alternated between them each term (a similar agreement has been found to exist in Amroha, which too has a sizeable Shia population and where Shia-Sunni relations have been tense). On previous occasions all the Muslim Chairmen had been Shias. In the period 1932-35, a Hindu had been the Chairman, and in 1935 it was again the turn of a Muslim to become the Chairman. There were, on that occasion, two candidates belonging to the Muslim community: Sayed Ali Zaheer, a Shia, and Choudhry Khaliqzaman, a Sunni leader of the Muslim League in the city. Choudhry Khaliqzaman won the election, but the contest promoted the polarisation of the sects and heightened the tensions. Local residents saw the contest as a tussle between the Shias and the Sunnis.

The second development was the assumption of office by the first Congress Ministry in UP. The Congress enjoyed the support of the Shias in Lucknow. The All-India Shia Conference which commanded much local support was pro-Congress, and several members of the organisation, including Sayed Ali Zaheer, the most prominent leader of the Shias in the city, were simultaneously members of the Congress. Elsewhere in the province, the Congress was able to secure considerable support among all Muslim groups but in Lucknow the Shias supported the Congress and the Sunnis sided with the Muslim League. Choudhry Khaliquzzaman had been able to win the election to the assembly from the city with the support of the Sunnis. The Congress leadership was interested in splitting the Sunni support. Some local leaders of the Jamat-e-Ulema apparently assured Pandit Pant, the Chief Minister, that the Government could win over the Sunnis if they were allowed to recite the *Madhe-Sahaba* and take out *Madhe-Sahaba* processions on the *barawafat* day. Pandit Pant seemed inclined to allow the *Madhe-Sahaba*, though Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a Sunni and a member of the cabinet, vehemently opposed the decision.

The Sunni agitators were encouraged by the knowledge that the Ministers were in favour of making concessions to them. At the same time, the district authorities felt that "they were fighting a losing battle which would end in the granting of Sunni claims after the agitation went out of control". They therefore pressed for some well defined decisions on policy. The Governor accordingly raised the question at a meeting of the Council of Ministers on 22 March 1939, when it became clear that the Ministers were considering a concession to the Sunni demand and held themselves committed to giving the Sunnis an opportunity to recite the *Madhe-Sahaba* publicly sometime during 1939. After further negotiations with the Sunnis, the Congress Government issued, on 31 March 1939, a communique which stated that "the Sunnis will in any circumstances be given the opportunity of reciting *Madhe-Sahaba* at a public meeting, and in a procession every year on the *barawafat* day subject to the condition that the time, place and route thereof shall be fixed by the district authorities." The communique was evidently issued in some haste, and the intention, which had been previously expressed, that the Shias

would be informed beforehand of what was intended, was not carried out.

The Sunnis called off their civil disobedience movement as a result of the communique, but its effect on the Shias was far greater than what had probably been anticipated. It proved to be an overwhelming blow to them. Their view was that they had the authority of two separate Committees and the practice of thirty years in support of their position. They had been ingratiating themselves with the Congress in order to make their position stronger. The sanction of the *Madhe-Sahaba* set up a condition of intense emotional hysteria among them. A civil disobedience movement was at once started. Some 1800 Shias courted arrest, including many members of the most respectable families. Shia leaders threatened that if *Madhe-Sahaba* was actually recited, *pardah* ladies of high families would come out into the streets, recite the *Tabarra*, and go to jail. Shias from outside Lucknow, and even from outside the province, were seriously disturbed.

If the Congress aim was to split the Muslims, it would appear that its leaders over-reached themselves. While the Sunni agitation was going on, the Shias took great pains to conciliate the Congress and the substantial support among them for the Muslim League on account of the Raja of Mahmoodabad was considerably weakened. The effect of the Congress order was to swing the Shia opinion in the most violent way against the Congress. The Shias felt they had been betrayed and that a gross injustice had been perpetrated on them. At the same time, the Sunnis, other than the Congress Sunnis, were not in the least grateful to the Congress and there were even traces of a feeling that the whole matter had gone too far and that something should be done on the part of the Sunnis to waive their rights in view of the tremendous strength of opinion shown by the Shias. The Ministers too were perturbed and were anxious that tensions should be relaxed and a settlement reached.

A settlement could not, however, be reached. Maulana Azad, appointed an arbitrator by the parties, called a conference of the Shias and the Sunnis, but it failed to produce a negotiated settlement. Meanwhile, the Congress Ministry resigned at the outbreak of the Second World War. Azad conveyed to Sir Haig, the Governor, his view that the communique was 'based on inade-

quate appreciation of the situation and, therefore, an error of judgement'. However, his statement came just a day prior to the *Barawafat*, and a *Madhe-Sahaba* procession was taken out. The Shias too were allowed to take out a counter-procession. It was disturbed and resulted in a serious riot. Several lives were lost and the police had to open fire several times. The following year, the district authorities promulgated Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code banning the public recitation of *Madhe-Sahaba* and *Tabarra* in processions and meetings held in public places. Peace thus returned to the city and tranquillity prevailed thereafter.

COMMUNAL POLITICS IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE

Riyaz Punjabi

Backdrop

The state of Jammu and Kashmir presents a colourful socio-cultural milieu. Comprising three different regions, viz., Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, it represents the richest religious, cultural, linguistic, ethnic and geographical diversity in the country. The entire state, particularly Kashmir Valley, represents distinct and unique socio-cultural features. Kashmiri Muslims as well as Hindus represent customs and traditions which are quite dissimilar to their counterparts elsewhere in the country.

The Kashmiri outlook on the history of Kashmir is quite non-communal. "Kashmiri leaders trace their freedom struggle to 1586 when Kashmir was conquered by the Mughal Army. For them [the] dividing line in the History of Kashmir is not between Hindu and Muslim periods but between Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri rulers. The first period of Kashmiri rulers is largely that of Hindus and is considered as period of freedom. On the other hand, the major part of the latter period referred to as the period of slavery, was dominated by the Muslims." (Puri 1981, 17.)

Population Composition

Though people belonging to all faiths live in the State, Muslims constitute the majority of the population as seen from Table 1. As Table 2 indicates, Kashmir has the highest percentage of Muslim population whereas they are in a minority in Jammu and Ladakh. It is pertinent to point out that Muslims were in a major-

Table 1
Population of Jammu and Kashmir since 1941

Year	Total Population (in lakhs)	Hindu Population (in lakhs)	Muslim Population (in lakhs)	Percentage of Total Population	
				Hindu	Muslim
1941	29.46*	5.94	22.71	20.12	77.11
1951	Census Not Held				
1961	35.60	10.13	24.32	28.45	68.29
1971	46.16	13.86	30.40	30.02	65.85

- * The 1941 Census Count is adjusted for the present boundaries of the State.
(Source—*Census of India*).

Table 2
Region-wise and Religion-wise Breakup of Population in
Jammu and Kashmir for 1971

Region	Muslims	Hindus (excluding Scheduled Castes)		Scheduled Castes	Others	Total
Kashmir Valley	94.0	4.7	N	1.3	100	
Jammu Province	33.8	62.4	18.3	4.1	100	
Ladakh Province	46.9	N	N	51.8*	100	
Total (J&K State)	65.8	30.4	8.26	3.8	100	

Note: * Followers of Buddhism. N = Negligible
(Source: Puri 1981, 14)

ity in Jammu Province too, but were reduced to a minority after partition.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir came into being as a single political entity in 1846 under what is called the 'Treaty of Amritsar'. According to this treaty, the state was sold to Maharaja Gulab Singh by the British for seventy-five lakhs of rupees and Maharaja became the supreme sovereign of the state. The struggle for the freedom of the state was launched in 1931 under the banner of 'All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference'. In the beginning, the movement confined itself to the specific issues like unemployment of educated Muslims and their non-representation in the Government departments and administration. The movement gathered momentum and the liberation of the state from the autocratic rule of the Maharaja became its cherished goal. The name of the organisation notwithstanding, non-Muslims and people from Jammu province were also a part of the movement against the Maharaja.

In 1939, the Muslim Conference changed its name to 'All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference'. The new banner, apart from bestowing a secular image on the organisation, prompted more non-Muslims to join the freedom movement in large numbers. The prominent Hindus of the Valley as well as from Jammu joined the struggle. However, the absence of a forceful local leader and lack of an organised grass-root level political party in Jammu afforded vested interests an opportunity to confuse the people and divert their attention from genuine issues to flimsy affairs. Prominent, among others, was the Hindumahasabha. It is relevant to point out that the Hindumahasabha was opposed to the accession of the State to India and instead was in favour of an independent State. In fact, they were advocating the cause of the Maharaja who was determined to retain the state as independent. Moreover, "the reaction against Kashmir oriented character of the National Conference, in fact, tended to divert the politics of the region (of Jammu) into communal channels which further divided its people." (Puri 1981, 45). Thus, the communal organisations projected the freedom struggle led by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as an endeavour to overthrow a Hindu Maharaja. The Hindu-

mahasabha thrived on this sentiment and communal politics became the bane, particularly among the urban middle class, of the people of Jammu. This section of the population believes even today that "it was not difficult for a powerful orator like Sheikh Abdullah as a leader of the Kashmiri Muslims to rouse the passions of the innocent and illiterate Kashmiri Muslims against the Maharaja taking full advantage of his alien character and his being a Hindu. His 'Quit Kashmir' movement, notwithstanding the interpretation of 'Quit Autocracy' given to it by Mr. Asif Ali, his defence counsel, smacked of regionalism." (Chitragupta 1982).

It is very important to mention that in order to meet the challenge of Sheikh Abdullah, the Maharaja not only aroused the communal passions in Jammu but openly aligned with communalist parties. Bakshi Gulam Mohammad is reported to have written to Nehru that the arms that were sent to him for the Home Guards had been kept back and distributed to RSS members by Mehar Chand Mahajan, the Dewan of the Maharaja. (Das 1971, 89). (Bakshi Gulam Mohammad who later became the Prime Minister of the State was busy organising Kashmir Home Guards to meet the challenge of Tribal raiders from Pakistan.) The communal tensions grew to such an extent in Jammu that a large number of Muslims were massacred at the time of the partition in 1947. Mahatma Gandhi's views about the role of the Maharaja in the communal trouble in Jammu have been expressed by Pyarelal as: "Following upon the Punjab upheavals, in October, 1947, Muslim evacuee convoys going out of Jammu were attacked and massacred by non-Muslims who at times were directed by the RSS. The State army played a very discreditable part in these massacres. When Gandhiji came to know of it, he said that the Maharaja as the absolute ruler could not be absolved from responsibility for such happenings; he was unfit to continue to hold power." (Das 1971, 133).

The Kashmir valley remained free from any communal tension during this period. In fact, the valley provided asylum to many a Hindu sufferer from the neighbouring areas of the valley which were scenes of communal riots. There was no communal riot at the time of the partition in any part of the valley. This is perhaps why Gandhiji saw a 'ray of hope' in Kashmir.

Communal politics was rejuvenated in Jammu after the liberation of the State from Maharaja's rule in 1947. The seeds sown by the Hindumahasabha and RSS in connivance with the Maharaja created an atmosphere where any political party with overt or covert communal manifestations would win support from the people of the region. The spate of communal tensions in the Jammu region provoked the Prime Minister (as he then was called) of the State, the late Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to lash out against communal parties. While addressing a rally of his party workers in Srinagar in July 1952 he said that "the communal happenings of last year have shaken the foundations of our relationship with Indian Union, and responsibility for this does not lie at our door but on those sections in India who are attempting to force the State to merge with India. The confidence created by the National Conference in the people here (for accession to India) has been shaken by the hostile attitude of Jana Sangh and other communal organisations in India." (Vashistha 1968, 97.)

The composition of the State legislature and some of the local bodies amply bear testimony to the fact that communal parties are strong in the urban areas of Jammu province. In the elections to the Jammu Municipal Council in 1972, the Jana Sangh and RSS backed members were returned in an overwhelming majority to the Council. In the Legislative Assembly to which elections were held in 1977, of the 75 members about 10 members directly belonged to the erstwhile Jansangh or RSS cadre. It is ironical that the National Conference has had to align at times with the communal parties in Jammu in pursuit of the power game in the State. The Jammu Municipal Council is administered jointly by a coalition of the National Conference and (now) Bharatiya Janata Party. It appears that National Conference has recognised the potential of communal forces in Jammu. For historical reasons, the Kashmir valley has, by and large, remained free from communal tension. During its protracted conflict with the Centre, neither Sheikh Abdullah nor the National Conference gave up the slogan:

*"Sher-i-Kashmir Ka Kya Irshad?
Hindu-Muslim Sikh Itihad."*

(What is the command of the Lion of Kashmir?
Hindu, Muslim and Sikh Unity.)

In fact, with his charismatic personality, Sheikh Abdullah never allowed the Muslim identity of the people of the valley to take precedence over Kashmiri identity. However, the estrangement of Sheikh from Indian national politics afforded the communal elements with an opportunity to organise themselves and appear on the political horizon of the valley. Attempts were also made to disrupt the communal amity in the valley. The attempts might have failed to yield the results in so far as no communal flames could be fanned, but it certainly succeeded in building up tension and strengthening the communal organisations in the valley.

The disappearance of a Holy Relic from Hazratbal in 1964 is an illustration of the point. Hazratbal, near Srinagar, houses the Hair of Prophet Mohammad. The shrine has a great socio-cultural and religious sanctity for the Muslims of the State. It draws thousands of Muslims on Fridays and on other Muslim holy days. It is regarded as the second Madina by the Muslims of the State. Historically, the shrine has acquired a historical and political importance too. The theft of the Holy Hair from Hazratbal led to great disturbance in the valley, in 1964. The State Government had to resign due to the disturbances. In fact, the episode would have led to a great communal clash in other states. Ironically it had its repercussions in Calcutta where a riot broke out when some newspapers created mischief by publishing a false news item of communal riot in the valley. However, the Kashmiri people maintained their proverbial communal amity during these days of trial. The disappearance and reappearance of the Holy Relic remains a mystery.

In 1967, another attempt was made to disrupt the communal amity in the valley. An agitation was launched by one section of the population and the marriage of a Hindu girl with a Muslim boy was made the pretext. Important RSS and Jansangh leaders of national stature visited the valley and made provocative speeches. In spite of many provocations, the attempts failed to instigate a communal riot.

The emergence of the *Jamat-i-Islami* as an important socio-political entity needs to be mentioned in detail. The *Jamat* in the first instance emerged as a cultural organisation in the valley devoted to the cause of education and stressing the great need of resuscitation of Islamic values. Over a period of time, the *Jamat-i-Islami* built up strong cadres especially among the semi-literate and educated classes of Muslims. There was a void on the socio-political scene because the Sheikh and his party had drifted away from the National mainstream. There was no political party with a mass base which could replace the National Conference. Thus, in early seventies the *Jamat-i-Islami*, which was hitherto a cultural and educational organisation, emerged as a political party joining the election fray. In 1972, they won five seats in the State Assembly. It is widely believed that they were encouraged to join politics by the then ruling Congress Government which was supposed to have provided at least some semblance of opposition in the valley and maintained the facade of democracy. The phenomena of communal violence in India and the insecurity of Muslims within the Indian dominion highly projected by the *Jamat* during its campaign. This is the reason why the hard core of the *Jamat* is drawn from educated Muslims rather from the illiterate masses. The organisation has been able to penetrate deep into the educated class of Muslims belonging to different walks of life. However, the position of the *Jamat* was weakened by the Indira-Abdullah Accord of 1975 and the active participation of the National Conference pushed the *Jamat* into the background. In the 1977 elections, the *Jamat* was able to secure only one seat in the Assembly. It is intriguing that execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan should have also given a great blow to the *Jamat* in the valley. The *Jamat* had to face the fury of the people who believed that it had a hand in the execution of Mr. Bhutto.

The Islamic wave on the international scene had its import on Kashmir Valley too. In May 1980 the 'International *Seerat* Conference' was organised by the *Jamat-i-Islami* which was attended by well-known Ulema of the country. The Imam of *Kaaba* also attended the conference.

The *Jamat-i-Islami* has not been able to create a mass base in the valley for two main reasons: firstly, their opposition to

'*Aastanas*' and *Dargahs* which they consider to be un-Islamic. There is a strong tradition among the people, of visiting *Aastanas* and *Dargahs* and holding congregations there. It is curious to note that these places have not permitted communal tensions to grow. Another reason, the *Jamat* has pledged to struggle for the establishment an Islamic order with the Sovereignty of *Allah*, and on the other hand, taken an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of India. The double standards of the *Jamat* have come in the way of its holding sway on the masses.

The *Jamiatul Tulaba* the student and youth wing of the *Jamat-i-Islami* has recently become very active. They have established a network of study circles and libraries throughout the valley. They have been successful in building up strong, though small cadres, in schools, colleges and even in the University. The success of the *Seerat* Conference organised by the *Jamat-i-Islami* encouraged the *Jamiatul Tulaba* to organise a World Islamic Youth Conference in August 1980 but this was prevented by the State Government. The *Jamiatul Tulaba* is gradually getting organised and many a youth is attracted by their slogans. The group rates India as their 'enemy number one' and hence they even challenge the accession of Kashmir to India. Thus, to popularise themselves they are using a double edged sword. It appears that they draw inspiration from the *Jamiatul Tulaba* of Pakistan.

The Institution of '*Mir-Waiz*' (or head priest) is yet another phenomenon which is found only in Kashmir. The *Mir-Waiz* no doubt represents orthodoxy but not fanaticism. In fact, the *Mir-Waiz* represents a trend which aims at the preservation of Kashmiri culture as well as the upholding of Islamic values. *Mir-Waiz* have been covertly or overtly dabbling in the politics of the state. The present *Mir-Waiz*, youthful Maulana Farooq heads the 'All Jammu and Kashmir Awami Action Committee'. The organisation is the product of the disappearance of the Holy relic. The members of the organisation, though small in number, owe their loyalty to the *Mir-Waiz*, whosoever he might be. The *Mir-Waiz* traditionally holds his congregations in the historic Jamma Masjid of Srinagar which is his exclusive domain and has a great socio-political significance for his followers

Conclusion

The state of Jammu and Kashmir, having a strong tradition of secularism, seems to be drifting away from its past and traditions. The political phenomenon and power-game being pursued in the state is largely contributing to the polarisation of forces on communal lines. The rhetoric of the politicians has changed from secularism to communalism. The leaders of the State under the trepidation of losing their hold over the masses have started taking asylum in communal slogans. They are diverting the attention of the people from genuine problems. The trend in the State indicates the strengthening of communalism.

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COMMUNAL RIOTS IN THE POST-PARTITION PERIOD IN INDIA: A STUDY OF SOME CAUSES AND REMEDIAL MEASURES

Hussain Shaheen

The well known Urdu writer, the late Mr. Krishna Chandar, in his collection of stories about the communal riots during the turbulent period of the partition of the sub-continent of India, had aptly titled his book "*Hum Wahshi Hai*" (We are savages).

The book, more than fiction, was a chronicle of heart-rending events and true incidents, which had occurred in many States affected by the partition, in the name of community and religion. Considering the heinous nature and appalling magnitude of the inhuman atrocities and brutalities committed by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs against one another, in the name of their respective community and religion, I think the title of Mr. Krishna Chandar's book, aptly epitomised the level of the culture and civilisation of the people who inhabited the sub-continent of India.

The incidence of frequent communal riots in India during the pre-partition days was, of course, always ascribed to the evil machinations of the British imperialists, who, in pursuance of their pernicious 'Divide and Rule' policy, were supposed to have engineered communal strife in the country. But the picture of communal strife and violence which has emerged in post-partition India, far from encouraging or consoling in any manner, is in fact quite distressing.

In the report of the Citizens for Democracy (1981), a team headed by Mr. Asghar Ali Engineer, with Dr. Aloo Dastur and Prof. Jayant Pandya, which visited the riot affected town of Godhra in Gujarat in September 1981, it has been stated that "communal violence has become a fast recurring phenomenon in

the post-partition period in India. Communal violence was an integral feature of the political strife before partition, the causes of which are well known. However, it was hoped that the partition would put an end to this meaningless violence. In fact, many envisaged partition of the country as one of the solutions to this accursed problem. Its continuance, in fact, its increasing recurrence from the early sixties, has shocked many right thinking people."

Seeing the horrifying nature and extent of the communal riots which have occurred during the post-partition period in India, one cannot but wonder whether we, the people of India, have made any progress at all in raising the level of our national culture and civilisation from the level described by Mr. Krishna Chandar in 1947.

How else can one explain the human tragedy of the merciless burning to death by a mob, of the helpless refugee occupants of an ambulance van, comprising old and infirm persons, as well as women and children, during the communal riots at Jamshedpur in April, 1979, nonchalantly watched by the police personnel, who were supposed to have been posted by the Government to discharge their duties as custodians of the law and protectors of human life? In the communal riots of May 1970, at Jalgaon in Maharashtra, twenty-five children were similarly killed (with quite a few of them were burnt alive). The only crime of the victims appears to be that they belonged to the minority community.

The three member-judicial commission, which had been appointed by the Government of Bihar to conduct an inquiry into the causes of communal riots in Jamshedpur, has stated in its report that "the administrative failure, and provocative behaviour of Hindu chauvanists and panicky reaction by Muslims, had led to the disturbance." It has specifically blamed three organisations, namely, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), the Janasangh (now re-named the Bharatiya Janata Party or the BJP) and its labour wing, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh for "*authoring, inciting and fomenting the riots.*" As far as the attitude of the police personnel is concerned, the Commission had found that not a single Hindu could be identified as having been killed or

injured by the Bihar Military Police in 22 hours of firing, resorted to by the Police for quelling the riots.

"This strange phenomenon," says the report, and "coupled with it the fact that when the Hindu mob had been driven from the disturbed area, a number of Muslims were found dead and injured with bullet injuries, gave credence to the allegation of *connivance of the police with the rioting Hindu mob.*"

This picture of the pattern of the Jamshedpur communal riot, more or less holds good for the communal riots which have occurred elsewhere, notably in Moradabad, Patna, Aligarh, Banaras, Jabalpur and Ahmedabad.

In Maharashtra itself, there were communal riots at Bhiwandi and Jalgaon in May, 1970, resulting in a considerable loss of human life and destruction of property due to arson and looting.

The Government of Maharashtra appointed on 11 May, 1970, a commission of inquiry, consisting of Shri Justice D. P. Madon, Judge of the High Court of Judicature at Bombay, to enquire into and report on:

- (i) The causes and course of communal disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad on 7th and 8th of May, 1970 on the occasion of Shiv Jayanti celebration.
- (ii) The adequacy of the administrative measures taken to prevent and deal with the communal riots and
- (iii) Whether there was any organisation or group at the said places or outside, which had fomented communal tension or was directly or indirectly responsible for the communal riots.

The Madon Commission in its report submitted to the Government of Maharashtra observed:

'Like all communal disturbances, the basic and underlying cause of the Bhiwandi disturbance was the same, viz. communal tension.

The causes of the communal tension in Bhiwandi were:

- (a) Misbehaviour during the Shiv Jayanti procession every year from 1964 to 1969.
- (b) The insistence of certain sections of Hindus that the Shiv Jayanti procession must go past the Jumma Mosque, and the refusal by Muslims to allow this.

Noting that among the persons killed in riots, as well as in police firing, Muslims had outnumbered Hindus, the commission had held branches of communal organisations like the Shiv Sena, Bharatiya Jansangh, Hindumahasabha and Majlis Tamire-e-Millat responsible for formenting communal tension.

Regarding the adequacy of the administrative measures, the commission has recorded that (i) the authorities had failed to take steps to check communal propaganda, (ii) the authorities had failed to judge correctly the objectives of the organisers of the Shiv Jayanti procession, (iii) the authorities had failed to take action against the misuse of temples by the organisers for carrying on communal propaganda, after communal riots had taken place in Ahmedabad in 1969, (iv) the Commission had recorded several instances which proved that the concerned police officers and personnel did not prevent the Hindu rioters from their acts of arson and rioting and showed communal bias and actively assisted the Hindu rioters in burning and looting Muslim properties, and (v) the commission had noted that the communal discrimination was also practised in making arrests. While Muslim rioters were arrested in large numbers, the police turned a blind eye to what the Hindu rioters were doing.

“Some innocent Muslims who went to take shelter at the Bhiwandi Taluka Police Station, were arrested instead of giving shelter and protection.” (Madon 1970, 302-317, Vol. III)

Conspiracy

Since it has become almost a political fashion to blame “foreign hands” and some sort of “conspiracies” hatched by the Muslim minority for having started most of the communal riots in post-partition India, it would be worthwhile to cite the Madon Commission’s findings on the alleged conspiracy for the communal riot of Bhiwandi.

Regarding the charge of “conspiracy” levelled by the police and certain Hindu parties against the Muslims for organising communal riots at Bhiwandi, the following findings of the Commission are rather revealing:

“The evidence led before the Commission has conclusively established that there was no conspiracy entered into by any Muslims, as alleged by the special investigation squad of the police and Hindu parties; and the other evidence before the commission gives rise to a strong interference that a conspiracy had in fact been entered into. It was a conspiracy not *before* the riots but *after* the riots, entered into, not by the Muslims, but by the Police officers and some local leaders of Jansangh and Shivsena along with some other Hindu Communal Organisations to fabricate a case of conspiracy against the Muslims.” (Madon 1970, 287, Vol. III).

The outbreak of communal riots can be described as more or less a regular feature of those States lying in the Hindu belt, viz., Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, where communal violence erupts at regular intervals, somewhat like an epidemic of cholera or plague.

The Causes

On an analytical study of communal riots, we will find that there are socio-economic, as well as religious and political causes though in different ratios and proportions with reference to different States and regions, and more particularly with reference to the historical and cultural background of states in North and South India.

It is a well-known fact that people in the South, both Hindus and Muslims, are generally more religious and orthodox and less fanatical than their counterparts in the North, more particularly in the Hindi belt areas. People in the South seem to live up to the lofty Hindu ideal of “*Sarva Dharma Samabhav*” or respect for all religions, in both letter and spirit. It is strange that though people in the North (both Hindus and Muslims) have more in common regarding their food and dress habits, as well as language and culture, they are more communal and fanatical, in the matter of attitudes to national problems affecting them, and more aggressively revivalistic in the matter of their respective religions.

The reasons for this glaring disparity between the attitudes of the people of the two regions may be traced to their different historical backgrounds. The North having experienced the greater impact of invasion and rule by various foreign dynasties and

powers from time to time, there are deeper traces of feudalism in the communities each imbued with strong feelings of the glory and grandeur of their pasts. This inhibits the normal process of national growth and integration.

It is also to be remembered that only the states in the North had in fact borne the actual brunt of the partition of the country, when millions of persons were uprooted and displaced on either side of the new political borders, leaving a trail of communal hatred and bitterness.

Apart from these psychological factors viewed against their historical background, the socio-economic as well as the religious and political causes of the communal riots are very relevant at present. It is universally acknowledged now that the partition of the sub-continent on a communal and religious basis, not only failed to solve any problems for the minorities but instead aggravated their problems.

The Muslims in India to this day, continue to suffer serious handicaps in the social, economic and political fields.

Despite repeated assertions to the contrary by the various governments, both at the centre and in the various states in the country, the Muslim minority feels aggrieved that it has not been able to make any substantial headway in the matter of employment and economic advancement because of certain prejudices which seem to be too deeprooted, both at the official and unofficial levels.

Efforts by Muslims to make some progress in the field of small and medium-scale industry in order to attain some degree of economic self-sufficiency have been often frustrated by communal riots. Moradabad, Jabalpur, Godhra and Bhiwandi, etc. may be cited as a few vivid examples, where concerted efforts have been made by fascist communal organisations to destroy the economic base of Muslims belonging to the middle classes.

It may be mentioned that the religious and political causes of communal riots deserve to be seriously considered as well.

In pre-partition India, the usual causes of communal riots included such subjects as music before mosques, processions during the Hindu and Muslim festivals, cow slaughter and Hindi-Urdu controversy

It is rather astonishing that even after more than 34 years of independence we still sometimes come across incidents of communal violence caused by the above mentioned trivial issues. Any mature community should be able to find an amicable and peaceful solution to such issues on the basis of mutual respect and without resorting to any violence. As for the political causes of communal riots, *it is a matter of concern and regret that some political parties in India seem to have developed a deep-rooted vested interest in communal riots for the sake of retaining their stranglehold on their followers in the name of their religion and community, circumventing the prevailing constitutional provisions.*

It is sheer political expediency and opportunism which makes a political party "national" in one state and "communal" in another state. It is, therefore, essential that our national parties and leaders prescribe a *proper code of conduct for the people and for themselves, and if necessary modify and or amend the Constitution of India, whereby no political party shall be able to exploit the religious feeling or communal sentiments of a community for political purposes.*

It is also necessary that "nationalism" and "communalism" are properly defined, so that the communalism of one community is not mistaken nationalism, or the isolation of another community is not branded as communalism, just on the basis of numerical strength of the communities.

Remedial Measures

It has been very aptly said that wars are born in the minds of people. Communal violence like wars, is also born in the minds of people. The socio-economic, religious and political causes only aggravate the disease of communal violence. It is, therefore, imperative that efforts are made not only to secularise, but also to humanise the minds of the people, at the level of the Government and the administrative machinery, particularly Police personnel, as well as the masses who must learn, not only to tolerate each other, but also to respect human life and dignity and to respect law, with reference to the rights and duties of all citizens, irrespective of caste, creed and community.

The mutual dislike and distrust prevailing between an average Hindu and an average Muslim in India has been aptly illustrated by Mr. A. D. Gorwala, who edits the *Opinion*, as follows:

“To the Hindu, the Indian Muslim is a renegade or the son, grandson or great grandson to the IVth degree of a renegade. He is either himself or through his ancestors, a man who has been false to the original faith, in which he or they were born. Clearly then, he must be *ab initio* a doubtful character. As Firdausi says—

‘In the end the wolf-cub becomes a wolf,
Even if he grows up among men.’

And as if this was not enough, this wolf ranged over almost the whole of India, slaying, robbing, ravaging and ruling for hundreds of years, until the British spread their power over the whole land. Nor is this all. When the British were anxious to hand over power, this same wolf would not allow it to be done, until the country was broken into two and he given his share. Since then too, has he tried to live at peace with us? Alas, no.

To the Muslims, the Hindu is a crafty, low person, born only to be ruled over, and because of his numbers always trying to filch away others' rights. There is in the Hindu neither frankness nor generosity. He is a mean, calculating, saving type, full of cunning, but with no breadth of mind or spirit. You must always be on your guard against him, for you never know when he will cleverly do you down. Deception is his forte, and fairness is to him a quality to ridicule. And this creature claims not only equality with, but even superiority over us, the rightful rulers of the land, who held it by force of arms for hundreds of years and treated them as subjects, not at all badly.”

It is obvious that the mutual dislike and distrust between the two major communities living in India, as indicated above, are mainly due to ignorance and prejudice, which must be eradicated through liberal and secular education.

The Jalgaon Communal Riots

Jalgaon after the communal riots of May, 1970 had the dubious distinction of being known by the name of “*Jal-Gaon*”, i.e., “the

burning town", because of the large number of cases of arson and deaths of many innocent victims, due to their being burnt alive by insane communal mobs.

The Madon Commission had in its findings severely indicted the Police and Administration for their several acts of omission and commission, in dealing with the communal riots at Jalgaon, which were more or less on the same pattern as at Bhiwandi.

The communal riots at Jalgaon were as a sequel to the riots at Bhiwandi. The role of the communal parties was as elsewhere.

It is a pity that (like many similar reports) the voluminous Madon Commission report on the communal riots at Bhiwandi and Jalgaon is only gathering dust in the Government archives at the Secretariat. It is unfortunate that no effective follow-up action has been taken by the authorities on the findings of the judicial inquiry reports. Except for some stray temporary suspension orders, passed on a few defaulting government officials, not a single effective step has been taken to tone up the efficiency of the official machinery and weed out inefficient and communal-minded official personnel. Similarly, almost all the miscreants involved in the communal riots appear to have managed to go scot-free, despite severe indictments by the commission of enquiry, mainly because of the power of their money and their political influence. It is most necessary that miscreants found guilty of fomenting communal tension and or organising communal riots are awarded severe punishments for killing innocent people. The law, if necessary, must be amended to facilitate this drastic action.

More than preaching pious platitudes on the virtues of secularism and tolerance, such deterrent positive action on the part of the authorities can stem the tide of communal violence in the country.

In this respect much can be achieved by way of preventive measures and constructive action through the mass media of information and education. It is unfortunate that during the periods of communal tension, some sections of our so-called "National Press", have aggravated the tense situation by publishing irresponsible and exaggerated or distorted reports. When communal riots erupted at Moradabad, a leading English paper published

from Bombay, instead of exercising any restraint or moderation in its comments, had summarily held the Muslim community responsible for starting the riots, as if the community was obsessed and seized with a sudden wish to die! The Muslims at Moradabad, as elsewhere, were the worst sufferers, both in terms of loss of life and loss of property.

A Positive Approach

Likewise, though the Governments at the centre and state, have been repeatedly urged to have the textbooks of Indian history re-written with a view to promote communal harmony, mutual tolerance and national integration, very little seems to have been done in this regard, and history books with biased and prejudiced versions continue to poison the minds of younger generations. It is necessary that the re-writing of books of Indian history on the proper lines is done at the earliest and without any further delay, which would be a positive factor for promoting communal harmony and national integration and thus prevent religious bigotry and communal violence in the country.

It is also necessary that the Governments at the centre and in various states, implement their oft-repeated promises and policies of providing fair opportunities of employment to the members of the minority community in both the private and public sectors. In particular, there must be proper representation of Muslims as also of other weaker sections of the society, in the recruitment to the Police and other armed forces, more or less in proportion to the population of each community. A police force comprising members of different communities in fair proportions would be more healthy and balanced. This would enable the Police personnel to be efficient, responsible and impartial in discharge of their duties and thereby inspire confidence and a feeling of security in all the sections of people.

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THE 1969 COMMUNAL RIOTS IN AHMEDABAD: A CASE STUDY

Ghanshyam Shah

Hindu and Muslim communities have deep-rooted prejudices against each other and tension between the two has been persisting in one form or another for several centuries. The extent of tension, however, varies from time to time. Often it is at a low ebb and members of both the communities interact in socio-economic and political spheres. They adopt each other's cultural practices (including religious beliefs) in their day-to-day life. But occasionally, tension reaches a high pitch, turning into mad fury. Overall economic crises and scarcity of economic opportunities accentuate all kinds of tensions in the society, providing fertile ground for communal and other kinds of riots. In such a situation, local and immediate factors such as business rivalry or power struggles among various local bosses, communal agent-provocateurs, etc., aggravate the situation and turn tension into riots. One instance of such riots was furnished by the 1969 communal catastrophe in Ahmedabad which continued for more than four days and spread to various parts of Gujarat. The purpose of this paper is to analyse this communal riot with a view to understand how various local factors succeed in turning tension into communal violence.

The Background

The performance of the Indian economy in the mid-sixties was of a retrogressive character (Shetty 1978). The decade since the mid-sixties had been characterised by "a marked neglect and even mismanagement of the economy." (Pai-Panandikar & Varde

1977). Though the 'green revolution' gave hopes for agricultural growth in the late 'sixties, the tertiary sector had grown at the expense of the primary and even of the secondary sector until then. Between 1948-49 and 1968-69 the share of the tertiary sector in total net domestic product increased from 34.2 per cent to as much as 44.5 per cent, whereas that of the secondary sector fell from 17.7 per cent to 16.7 per cent. Per capita availability of foodgrains did not increase. Unemployment increased. The backlog of unemployment was 5.3 million in 1950, 7 million in 1961 and 9-10 million in 1966 (Davey 1975). The prices of essential commodities increased; whereas the wages of factory workers remained stagnant at a low level.

After the Fourth General Election of 1967, the Indian polity faced many crisis. Some of the states experienced political instability as frequent party defections and floor crossings in the State Assemblies took place. The Congress which had provided stability to the system, split in 1969. Adhocracy in decision making and manipulative politics became a major feature of Indian politics after 1976. Earlier, India had had to fight two wars; against China in 1962 and against Pakistan in 1965.

With the deepening economic and political crises, the law and order situation started deteriorating. The number of crimes per 100,000 of population in eight major cities including Ahmedabad gradually rose from 415 in 1961 to 473 in 1970. The number of riots in these cities had risen considerably from 548 in 1961 to 2,319 in 1970 (Pant 1973)¹. In Ahmedabad, violent incidents such as protest demonstrations, processions, strikes *bandhs*, *dharnas*, riots, etc., had increased fifteen-fold between 1951 and 1970. Sometimes anti-price-rise agitations turned into communal riots.

The number of communal riots of varying intensity increased in Gujarat between 1963 and 1968. Since the end of 1968, riots became more intensive and widespread. On November 27 and 28, 1968, Veraval experienced riots in which several Muslim shops were looted or set on fire, about 100 Muslims were killed and the total loss amounted to Rs. 2 crores. During the first quarter of 1969

¹ According to official sources between 1954 and 1959, there were 367 instances of communal violence, whereas between 1960 and 1969 there were 2938 such instances.

in some villages of Kutch, Saurashtra and South Gujarat, mosques and shrines were demolished. Muslim shops were looted and Muslim property was set on fire. Communal feelings of a violent kind have been evident in Gujarat ever since the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. The death of Balwantrai Mehta, the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, as a result of his plane being shot down by Pakistan, had particularly disturbed the people of Gujarat. Since then the Gujaratis have been bitter against Pakistan, anti-Pakistan feelings often finding anti-Muslim expression. In this way historic prejudices received a new lease of life.

Hindus in Gujarat have found it easy to think of a Muslim as a natural spy for Pakistan and one without loyalty towards this country. As observed by Shivaprasad Sinha, an Ex-High Court Judge: "Not a day rises when acts of aggression are not perpetrated against minorities — Muslims are special targets for these aggressive activities. The aggressors have a nice handle to wield. When no tangible proof of any subversion against the Muslims is handy, they vociferously cry them down as Pakistanis — or agents of Pakistanis indulging in anti-national activities".²

This attitude of the Hindus became sharp and open during the war. Rumours were current about the espionage activities of Muslim Government officers. No one was above suspicion so much so that there was a widespread rumour, not verified by any one, that Nawab Mehdi Navaz Jung, the then Governor of the State, was a Pakistani spy who transmitted information from India to Pakistan.

The arrest of several hundred Muslims under the Defence of India Rule as a preventive measure during the war, further confirmed the Hindus in their suspicion about Muslim loyalty to India. The gallant part that Muslim jawans played in the war against Pakistan evoked lukewarm response in Gujarat. On the whole, anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan feelings among Hindus in Gujarat were high.³

² Quoted by Vakil Abbasali A. Saiyed, Secretary Gujarat Muslim Convention Vadodara in the Memorandum on behalf of the Distressed Muslims presented at the 66th session of the All India Congress held at Bhavnagar between 6th and 8th January 1960

³ Hatred towards Pakistan was evident in a few remarks on a book that I saw in a Baroda library. The book was *Pakistan Zindabad* by

Cow Agitation

Agitation against cow-slaughter further alienated Hindus and Muslims. There was a widespread belief among Hindus that the Government did not ban cow-slaughter because it wanted to appease the Muslims, while the fact is that there was already a ban on cow-slaughter in Gujarat and the Muslims had not opposed it. Hindu religious leaders who led the agitation against cow-slaughter became very popular. Jagadguru Shankaracharya, who was hardly known to Hindus until then became a household symbol in this agitation. During this period the appeal of religious leaders increased, the number of religious *kathas* (stories) went up, and so did the circulation of religious journals and magazines. One of the magazines, the *Jan Kalyan*, had a readership of a lakh and forty thousand

At the same time, owing to the communal attitude of the Congress leaders towards local Muslims during the Indo-Pak war, some Muslim leaders were enraged. They decided to defeat the Congress and were drawn towards the Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawat. The appeal that was issued to the Muslims on the eve of the Fourth General Elections in 1967 is revealing: "It is generally felt among the Muslims that the party which has been continuously in power for the last 19 years has failed to abide by its lofty principles and has not proved itself earnest particularly in the amelioration of Muslim grievances — something which could be rightly expected from any principled organisation. The past history and the fundamental principles of Congress had raised hopes that it would treat with justice and equality all the communities of the country, and will try to implement those rights which have been granted by the Constitution of India, and would be above all communal considerations in this matter.

D. I. Hawley in which the author has described his experiences in Pakistan during the pre-Ayub days. In fact it is a critical account of Pakistan. However, one of the readers, annoyed by the title (obviously he had not read the book), changed the title to read "NaPakistan Murdabad". Further the reader had written two notes on the cover of the book: "It is against the national interest to keep such a book in the library" and "request" to Readers: please do not try to read this book 'NaPakistan Murdabad'

It was in view of these expectations that the large majority of Indian Muslims supported this party in the last three General Elections. The Muslims, however, now feel that the indifferent attitude of the Congress party is perhaps due to the misunderstanding that the Indian Muslims have for ever tied themselves to its coat-tails. The Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat wants to make it plain that the Indian Muslims do not consider themselves in bondage of any party and should not be taken for granted... (*All India Muslim Majlis-Mushawarat*, 1967).

Having rejected the Congress, the Majlis-e-Mushawarat decided to support the Swatantra party. The leaders of the Majlis concentrated their energies on defeating the Muslim candidates of the Congress, and succeeded in their attempts. Only three of the eight Muslim candidates put up by the Congress won. Thus the Muslims for the first time after Independence were being slowly alienated from the Congress.

Conflict Re-emerged

Though Muslim leaders achieved their purpose through the Swatantra party, they found it very difficult to operate in that party. For one thing, the *Majlis* emphasised the safeguarding of the personal law of the Muslims; they did not want to come out against the traditional world-view of Islam. This attitude came in their way. Secondly, the Swatantra party in Gujarat was mainly a party of Patidars and Kshatriyas who were traditionally anti-Muslim (Shah 1975). The result was that the traditional conflict between Hindus and Muslims re-emerged after the elections.

The Jamiat-UI-Ulema organised a conference of the Muslims of Gujarat in Ahmedabad on 2 June 1968. A large number of Muslims from the upper and middle-class participated in it. Hindus were also invited to the conference; and some of the leading Congress leaders of the Hindu community addressed the meeting. The meeting accepted sixteen resolutions, some of which, such as one demanding special facilities to Muslim government officers for offering *namaz* on Friday and another opposing any change in the Aligarh Muslim University (*Sandesh* 1968a), sounded dis-

tinctly communal. Some secular minded Hindu intellectuals wrote articles on the conference emphasising that such resolutions created obstacles in the way of national integration. They appealed for reforms among Indian Muslims and said that the hold of religious leaders on Muslim politics came in the way of the 'modernisation' of the Muslims.

The resolutions of the conference and comments thereupon strengthened the prejudices of the commoner Hindu against the Muslims. The Hindus strongly felt that the Muslims were backward and did not want to be integrated with Indian society. They also felt threatened by the organised attempts of Muslims to extract concessions in Government jobs. The middle class Hindus felt that such concessions to Muslims would work to the detriment of the interests of the educated Hindus. Therefore, Hindus cited the demand of the Muslims as evidence of Muslim separatism.

The conference of the Muslims was followed by a mammoth rally of the RSS in Ahmedabad in December 1968, attended by 1,615 volunteers from different districts of the State. Addressing it, Guruji Golwalkar emphasised that only the Hindus were secular in this country as they had tolerated all sorts of suffering at the hands of others. Golwalkar pleaded for '*Hindu Rashtra*', a concept on which there had already taken place a long discussion in the Press. Iswar Petlikar, a noted Gujarati writer, had criticised the idea. Immediately rejoinders started. A content analysis of the discussion that followed suggests that (a) the theory of '*Hindu Rashtra*' had powerful support among the Hindus in Gujarat, not a few of whom felt that Muslims had destroyed Hindu culture and enjoyed special favours in the country; (b) '*Hindu Rashtra*' and the activities of the RSS were synonymous with nationalism. (*Sandesh* 1968b, c; *Sandesh* 1969). By the time the RSS rally was held, Golwalkar's theory had already found a fertile ground in Gujarat, helped to no small extent by the reaction to the propaganda of Muslim organisations like the Majlis-e-Mushawarat.

Another provocation from the Muslims came only a fortnight before the Ahmedabad riots. Muslims took out huge processions

in almost all the towns of Gujarat to protest against the attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque; the one in Ahmedabad was the largest of all. Slogans such as "*Jo Islam se Takraega, Dunia se Mi Jayega*" (Anyone who strikes against Islam will disappear from the world) and "*Muslim Ekta Zindabad*" (Long live Muslim unity) were shouted in the procession. Hindus interpreted the procession and some of its slogans as both a demonstration of Muslim strength and solidarity and a threat to the Hindus. Various rumours got circulated about the procession. One of the rumours was that slogans like '*Pakistan Zindabad*' were shouted in the procession. Some middle-class Hindus thought that the story, viz. the Muslims were planning to attack Hindus, was based on fact. Retaliation from Hindu communalists was immediate. Gujarati newspapers carried articles criticising the procession and the behaviour of Indian Muslims. One of the authors said, "Muslims of India, while sharing the anguish with other Muslims, made their frenzy more dreadful than Muslims of Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia; they should understand their limitations as citizens of a secular State like India" (*Gujarat Samachar*, 1969 a). Another article stated: "The feelings of Muslims were wounded by the Al-Aqsa mosque incident; Hindus understand it and sympathise. Muslims would remove historical injustice by handing over to the Hindus that portion of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple which is being used under the name of Aurangzeb Mosque and that portion of the Shiv Temple Rudramal at Sidhpur which has been converted into a mosque. The Shiva Linga made into pieces by Mahmud Ghazni which are under the threshold of the mosque should be returned, not trampled upon." (*Gujarat Samachar* 1969 b).

Then came the visit of Balraj Madhok, the Jansangh leader, only a week before the riots, when he addressed a number of meetings in Gujarat. He criticised the Muslims for raising a hue and cry over a mosque which was thousands of miles away from India. He is reported to have added that the same people did not utter a word when Pakistan attacked the Dwarka temple during the India-Pakistan war. "Do they think that Hindus have no feeling for their religion?" Madhok asked. Discussing Indo-Pak relations, the Jansangh leader raised the possibility of

a Pakistani attack on India across either the Rajasthan or Gujarat border.⁴

Some recent incidents had confirmed the feelings of anxiety among Hindus. On the eve of the Municipal elections in March 1969, a copy of the *Quran* had fallen out of a pushcart at the hands of a Hindu police officer. In protest local Muslims attacked a police station and caused injuries to several policemen. Some persons from the crowd shouted, "*Is se to Pakistan Achha Hai. Agar Hindu ka Mandir Jala Diya to Kya Hota?*" (Pakistan is better than this. What would happen if a Hindu temple was set on fire?) However, the police officer was twice asked to apologise to the local Muslims on a microphone. The attitude of the Government attracted bitter criticism. It was alleged that in order to secure Muslim votes the Congress had compelled the police officer to apologise though he was, in fact, performing his duty.

The Formation of the Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti

At almost the same time a Muslim police officer was alleged to have insulted the *Ramayana*. It is said that in the Baherampura area some people were performing *Ramlila*, which continued after twelve at night. The police officer on duty, who happened to be a Muslim, asked the people to close down the show as it was against the law to use microphones after twelve midnight. This led to some pushing about. It was alleged that in the tussle the Police officer kicked the *Ramayana*. This led to a demand for the dismissal of the police officer. Two days after the incident, some religious leaders and Jansanghis formed the Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti (HDRS) (Committee to Defend Hindu Religion). The HDRS organised fasts in support of their demand for action against the police officer. It also organised a procession in which slogans like, "Protect *Hindu Dharma*, and let the irreligious perish" were shouted. Consequently, the

⁴ It should be noted that Umashankar Joshi, Vice Chancellor of Gujarat University, who presided over Madhok's meeting on the 'Pakistan Problem' expressed his disagreement with Madhok's argument. Because of the different stand that Joshi took, he was not allowed to address the audience. He was abused and shouted down. This indicates the height of anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim feeling among Gujarati Hindus.

police officer was suspended and a departmental inquiry was instituted. However, some Hindus compared the *Qurun* and the *Ramayana* incidents and alleged that the Government was quick to appease the Muslims, whereas it took days to act when the Hindus were similarly insulted.

Counter-Attack by Orthodoxy

The formation of the HDRS was, of course, not just a response to a single incident but was an expression of a mood among orthodox Hindus. The latter had felt threatened by other developments too. During 1967-69, Rajneesh a prominent preacher of an unorthodox approach to religion, had become a controversial figure in Gujarat. Because of his fluent and simple language, he had attracted large crowds in the region, especially from among the modernised strata of society.

Rajneesh bitterly criticised Hindu religion and the Hindu way of life. He was very harsh on traditional religious leaders. He criticised Gandhi and the national leadership. All this created an uproar in the state. *Sanatani* leaders challenged his views and branded him anti-religious and anti-national. But they were also thrown on the defensive. Other forces of modernity had also been disturbing the traditional ways of life of the Hindus. The communal incidents came in handy for the orthodox to mount a counter-attack.

The prejudice against the Muslims also had other overtones. Thanks to the prohibition policy of the Government, the business of illicit distillation had flourished in the urban areas of the state, encouraging anti-social elements. Though both Muslims and Hindus were engaged in this occupation, middle-class Hindus entertained the belief that most of the distillers, street-corner bullies and *goondas* belonged to the Muslim community. It was said that although these *goondas* harassed the common citizens, the Government took no action against them because some Congress leaders protected the *goondas* as the latter secured votes for them. Moreover, there was a widespread belief that the police and bootleggers were hand-in-glove. As a result, the common citizen entertained a sense of helplessness against the system.

Hindu-Muslim alienation had thus many causes and a deep base in Gujarat and this had been sharpened by some local incidents. Anti-Pakistani feeling, developed under the garb of Indian nationalism, had turned against local Muslims. Communal forces gradually got organised and built up their strength bit by bit, increasingly turning the Hindu mind against the Muslims. And there had been some incidents too. All that was needed was a spark to start the trouble. The Jagannath temple incident provided the spark that set Gujarat ablaze.

The Riots of September 1969

We shall now try to reconstruct the sequence of events that produced the holocaust in Gujarat. We report the events in some detail in order to bring out the point that the causal sequence in collective violence is not so much determined by the "first cause" as by certain intervening factors which transform a low tension situation into a high tension one.

The Jagannath Temple Incident

On 18 September 1969 some sadhus and Muslims were reported to have clashed near the Jagannath temple, situated at the end of Jamalpur area, thickly populated by Muslims. (When the last major communal riots had taken place in Ahmedabad in 1946, the cause had been similar, namely a *Rathayatra* of Jagannath.)

As a part of a festival held every year, about a thousand Muslims, including women and children, had assembled for an *Urs* near the Jagannath temple along a narrow road about 9 metres wide. Also, as happened every day, at about 3 p.m. a herd of cows were returning to the temple, led by two sadhus who were quite familiar with the Muslims of the area. One of them, a dwarf, had always been an object of fun for the Muslim youths of the locality. The sight of the crowd disturbed a cow, which in its fright hurt a woman with two children. Angered at this, the lady complained to the *sadhus*. At about the same time some Muslim youths were making fun of the short-statured *sadhu* who, in anger, lifted his rod which accidentally touched a Muslim woman standing behind him. Annoyed, the woman shouted at the *sadhu*.

In this atmosphere of tension and commotion a scuffle developed between the Muslim young men and the *sadhus*. The two *sadhus*, being in a minority, rushed into the temple upon which the crowd threw stones. The two *sadhus* returned with a few others to retaliate. But they were still too few against the crowd. About thirteen *sadhus* were injured by stones and there was also some damage to the temple, such as the breakage of the glasses of photoframes covering pictures of deities. Meanwhile, the police arrived and brought an end to the fighting. On the whole, it was an ordinary incident sparked off by a minor accident.

Organised Protest

After holding a meeting at 8 p.m. the trustees of the temple issued a Press statement expressing distress, appealing to the Government to appoint a commission of inquiry and punish the criminals and asking the people of Ahmedabad to offer a prayer to Lord Jagdish and maintain peace.

On the same night, several *sadhus* of the temple including Sevasdasji, the head priest, went on a fast to protest against the attack and to demand justice. Similarly the HDRS called a public meeting on the 19th at 7 p.m. outside the Raipur gate, to condemn the attack on the temple.

Although there were these loud expressions of protest, life in the rest of the city went on quite normally. Of course, several rumours went round the town. Also, as a measure of retaliation, on the 18th night and the early morning of the 19th three shops belonging to Muslims at three different places were set on fire.⁵

19 September 1969

The next morning the newspapers spread the news to their readers. Different newspapers gave different descriptions of the episode. We shall examine the role of newspapers later in this article. Suffice it to note here that the news media only succeeded in spreading confusion in the minds of the people. People also read the statement

⁵ One of these was an oil shop outside the Sarangpur gate, the second was a laundry at Raipur Chakla, and the third was a laundry on Relief Road.

of the trustees of the temple and the call of the HDRS. From all this they drew two conclusions: the attack on the temple by the Muslims was a serious one and had been pre-planned; and the Government and the Press were not giving a correct picture of the casualties. Though newspaper reports were short, it was mentioned that the attackers used acid bulbs and arms. The burning of shops, however, was not reported.

However, despite this general impression and the expression of concern about it, there was as yet no sign of an outburst of communal feeling. That morning in Ahmedabad appeared to be near normal. Workers went to the factories, students attended their classes and businessmen carried on their work as usual. The overriding topic of discussion was, of course, the Jagannath temple, and the many discussions revealed deepseated prejudices.

In the course of the day, however, these prejudices were to be actively nursed and incited. Unsigned handbills giving exaggerated accounts of the Jagannath temple incident from the point of the view of the Hindus were circulated. The reports contained in these handbills were taken at their face value, and most people were furious against the Muslims. Secondly, at about twelve noon, organised groups of people began moving around various areas, asking people to close their shops. By 2 p.m. most of the markets were closed. Schools were closed a little later. Evening shows of cinemas were cancelled. By the afternoon itself a grim atmosphere of suspense pervaded the city.

Meanwhile, several delegations met the Chief Minister to press for the appointment of an inquiry committee on the Jagannath temple episode. The government declared the appointment of such a committee. Leaders of all communities including Muslims issued appeals, condemning the attack on the temple and urging the citizens to maintain peace. Fifteen Muslim leaders belonging to different parties condemned the attack on the Jagannath temple, demanded an immediate inquiry, and asked for severe punishment to the offenders. They appealed to Hindus and Muslims to maintain peace. But the news of all these appeals, and the Government's decision to appoint a committee of inquiry, were published only the next day in the newspapers. Long before that,

mob fury had taken hold of the situation. And there was no sign yet of any firm action on the part of the Government.

Already between twelve noon and the evening several scattered instances of arson and fire had taken place in different places within the walled area of the town. At 7 p.m. the scheduled meeting of the HDRS was held outside the Raipur gate, despite the fact that Section 144 of the Cr.P.C. had been promulgated. It was a big congregation. The leaders of the HDRS came to the venue of the meeting in a procession. Anti-Muslim slogans were shouted. The speakers condemned the attack on the temple in very strong words and asked for an inquiry committee, failing which, according to a swami of Gita Mandir, all the sadhus of the Mandir would observe a fast from the next day and would not hesitate to sacrifice their lives on the issue. Another very popular religio-political leader said that he would violate Section 144, Cr.P.C., no matter what sacrifice was involved. Most of the speeches at the meeting were delivered in a firm and decisive tone.

Mob Fury

Although the meeting was dissolved in twenty minutes, while it was in session a section of the meeting attacked a radio shop of the area and set fire to it. The fire-brigade soon came but was met with stones from the crowd and was forced to return. Later on the police controlled this particular situation. But mob fury had been sparked off and there was no stopping the looting and large-scale rioting in various parts of the city. However, the Government imposed curfew in Khadiya, Jamalpur and Kalupur wards from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

This partial action of the Government directed the mob to the other parts of the city which were left to the mercy of the rioters. They first turned to Gita Mandir Road, adjoining the Raipur gate. The *sadhus* in the Gita Mandir here, were active in the protest organised by the HDRS. The inhabitants of the area also had a special grievance against Muslims, as a local political bully, whom the Congress leaders were alleged to have

protected so far, was a Muslim. Residents who felt helpless and were critical of the Government, now in the general excitement against the Muslims, found an opportunity to retaliate against the hooligan and his community. They became active in the riot. Nearby, in the Beharampura where the *Ramayana* incident had taken place only a week ago was the slum Shah Alam Taka, reportedly the abode of many a hooligan. This combination of circumstances provided fertile ground for the spread of the mood of retaliation and revenge after the Raipur meeting.

Evidence of Planning

By 11 p.m. the mob had complete control over the area. There was not a little planning in their actions. In order to prevent police vans from entering the area they dug ditches at the three ends, some volunteers occupying seats near the ditches and watching. Meanwhile, Muslim shops were broken open, goods were looted or set on fire. Even in this the mob showed a calculated sense of discrimination. Muslim shops in Hindu-owned buildings were plundered but not set on fire; shops run by a Hindu and Muslim in partnership remained undisturbed. It was reported to me that riot organisers in this and other areas moved with voters' lists to identify Muslim houses. On the whole, though they tried to resist the attackers in the beginning, the Muslim population found itself overwhelmed numbers and utterly demoralised in the face of such a massive attack.

The momentum came with the burning of two big "kabadi" markets dealing in second-hand tubes and tyres, colour and cloth printing (for which Ahmedabad is famous) and oil, which provided the rioters with ready fuel. No fire-engines came to the help of the Muslim shopkeepers, most of whom were themselves not on site. The flames spread wide. Even the roads were hot. Yet throngs of Hindu householders, including women, were out as participants, as observers or simply to enjoy the fun. Some of them joined in shouts of "Jai Jagannath" while others distributed *prasad* to the onlookers.

20 September 1969

Later, Hindus forced the Muslims also to shout "Jai Jagannath". A gruesome episode in the afternoon brings out the depth of animosity against the Muslims. A young Muslim, enraged by the destruction of his property said he would take revenge. Upon this the crowd seized him, showered blows on him, and tried to force him to shout "Jai Jagannath". Staying firm, the youth refused even if that meant death. To this someone in the crowd responded that he may indeed be done away with. Wood from broken shops were collected, a pyre prepared in the middle of the road, petrol sprinkled on the pyre as well as on the youth, and he was set alight with ruthless efficiency. What is remarkable is that there was no resistance from any Hindu. The wails of the Muslim inhabitants of the area were drowned in the celebration of the incident by the Hindus. Thereafter, the riots took a new turn — from looting and arson to murder and physical attacks. Upto now incidents of killing had been sporadic; they now became frequent and organised on a large scale.

By the afternoon the flame of Gita Mandir and Raipur had spread through the whole town — labour as well as upper class areas. The mob violence that was let loose did not spare even the Sabarmati Ashram, when in the evening a relatively small crowd of about fifty people went to the Ashram to attack Imam Manzil, the house of 70-year-old Gulam Rasoon Qureshi, an Ashram inmate since 1921. For him, it should be noted, this was not the first attack by communalists. In 1939 he had been assaulted by Muslim Leaguers. But this time as the ashramites stood together against the crowd, no serious damage was done to Imam Manzil. However, the house of Qureshi's two sons one of whose Hindu wife still practices the Hindu religion, was set aflame burning both the *Quran* and the *Ramayana*.

No One Spared

In the same way, the crowd attacked the house of Ranjan Lakhani whose brother Rajab had sacrificed his life to prevent

Hindu-Muslim riots in 1946.⁶ Similarly high officers who lived in the Government colony were not spared. Officials could not protect their Muslim colleagues and neighbours. In the Kamal Hostel (a Muslim hostel for University students) at Vadaj lived 30 Hindu boarders. The hostel provided a possible platform for expressing solidarity among the two communities. Instead it was completely destroyed, pillars and slabs of the huge building were physically removed, suggesting that skilled engineers were employed in the destruction.

The worst affected areas were the labour areas: Khokhara-Mehrnadavad, Amaraivadi, Raipur, Rakhial, Bapunagar, Chamanpura and New Mental Hospital Colony. Villages nearby, Sabarmati and Ranip, were also affected. Chawls consisting of rows of huts had been destroyed, their wood-work burnt and mud and brick walls demolished. Even such property of Muslim labourers as earthen pots, a set of clothes, a bed or a broken chair were burnt or destroyed. Old cycles, the only vehicles of mill labourers, were broken into bits.

Atrocities multiplied by the evening when several poor labourers were either burnt alive or murdered. In some places they were thrown into fires. Scythes, axes, knives and spears were used for killing people. Women were raped or stripped bare and forced to walk naked on the road; children were beaten against stones or their legs were torn apart. Limbs were cut out of dead bodies, women's breast were cut and sex organs were mutilated or torn apart. In this mad orgy, animal instincts of the worst kind seem to have got hold of the people of Ahmedabad.

Orgy of Violence

The riots had spread from Ahmedabad into various parts of the state.' Trains were not spared. On the 20th night, when several

⁶ During the 1946 communal riots Vasant Hegiste, a Hindu, and Rajab Lakhani, a Muslim, sacrificed their lives. They have been immortalised through a memorial, the 'Vasant Rajab Shahid Smarak'.

⁷ Our investigation also covered several other riot-affected areas of Gujarat. This report is mainly confined to Ahmedabad, but, in order to highlight a few points, there are a few references to other areas.

Muslims were escaping from Ahmedabad, four trains were stopped and seventeen passengers killed. On the 23 September, when the Government lifted the curfew for three hours, forty persons lost their lives.

The orgy of violence — massacre, arson and looting — continued non-stop for three days. By Tuesday (23 September) afternoon Ahmedabad was under the control of the army. The coming of the army brought about a radical change in the situation, but scattered instances of stabbing continued to take place for more than a month. More than one thousand people, a large majority of them Muslim, lost their lives. Several hundreds ran away to their native villages. About fifteen thousand took shelter in relief camps. Fire destroyed 3,969 dwellings and shops and 2,317 more were physically destroyed. About 6,000 families lost their belongings and shelter (Bhatt 1969). The value of property destroyed ran into crores of rupees. There was a loss of income of at least Rs. 33.70 crores as a result of the inactivity caused by the imposition of the curfew.

The Participants

A major issue in all chain occurrence of collective violence how stray incidents got transformed into conflagrations, who were the organising agents and what were the positive and negative contributory factors.

Planned Effort

By the nature of the destruction in Ahmedabad, one is led to believe that there was some sort of planned organisation of the riots. Soon after the Jagannath temple clash, rumours appear to have been systematically spread. By the noon of the 19 September hundreds of printed and cyclostyled handbills stating that a cow had been killed and the Mahant seriously injured, that the Muslims had entered the temple and that the idol of god had been damaged were distributed. There was no truth in any of this. (In Baroda too rumours were spread about the burning of the Swaminarayan temple.) During the riots, handbills giving false, exaggerated and provocative news were published.

They instigated Hindus to take action against Muslims. One of the handbills appealed to Hindus, "Hindus get organised, be bold. Take weapons in your hands and attack the Muslims who are out to destroy Hindu religion and Hindu temples. So every Hindu to save his religion, caste, sisters and daughters must awaken and learn how to attack and learn the policy of defence not cowardice." Moreover, black patches (black-boards) on the walls of the buildings in different middle-class localities were used to provide news or rumours in the form of news to local inhabitants. Most of the black patches gave an exaggerated picture of the Jagannath temple episode.

The Raipur Gate meeting in Ahmedabad also provides evidence of advance planning. It is clear that local neighbours did not do any harm to each other; most of the damage was done by crowds who came from outside. In certain mixed localities every house and shop belonging to Muslims had been gutted. Voters' lists were used to locate Muslim houses. Muslims living in Hindu houses and Muslims living in their own houses were separately marked. Kerosene and petrol were freely available at the trouble spots. Transportation facilities were provided to take belligerent crowds from one place to another. Some persons in the crowd are said to have covered their faces with masks in order to conceal their identity. Jagmohan Reddy Inquiry Commission (1971, 217) observed: "This evidence shows that organised attacks were being made on Muslim properties and Muslims, lorries being used to carry rioters and weapons, the crowds being led and directed, at any rate, in one instance by a worker of the Jansangh though we have nothing to show that the party as such had taken part or was involved, that diversionary tactics were being employed to overawe the defenders. One fact emerges clearly: that the entire Commissionerate was enveloped and many sections including large number of workers were involved and some of them with technical skills."

The Middle Class

By and large, all strata of the Hindu community participated in the riots in one way or another. The lead however, was provided

by the middle class, which was hard hit by the price rise and was emotionally more disturbed than the other classes by the Indo-Pakistan war. They subscribed to the '*Hindu Rashtra*' theory and participated in religious discourses and rituals. The members of the middle class not only formed the HDRS but also provided the moral and material support. They wrote articles in newspapers against the personal law of Muslims and the Al-Aqsa episode, participated in the processions and meetings of the HDRS, published hand bills and coined slogans. Educated youths of this class provided organisational and technical skills to direct the riots. A number of Hindu Sangram Samitis (Hindu struggle committees) were formed in various middle class localities.

Big and petty businessmen did not take a direct part in the riots. They were more worried about their day-to-day business. Many of them could not afford disturbances and, they also feared that their business with Muslim merchants would be affected. Nevertheless, there were some businessmen engaged in building, construction and owning small factories, who supported the rioters with money and materials, gave them their vehicles and even participated in planning riots.

The Workers

The most active participants came from textile workers, manual labourers and scavengers, who constituted almost half of the working population. Devotion to Jagannath was marked among the workers. Sevadasji, the chief priest of the temple was held in high regard by them. When they heard of the attack on the temple and the *sadhus*, they were very angry. Later, when the rumour spread that the chief priest had been killed, they were ready to take revenge.

The crisis in the textile industry was also an important factor in aggravating Hindu-Muslim rivalry among the textile workers. Several textile mills had been closed down during the early part of 1969, rendering six to seven thousand workers jobless. They were mainly immigrants who joined the industry late. Many of them were permanent employees in textile mills. Some of the

TABLE

Migrants Workers and Non-Workers of Ahmedabad according to

<i>Place of Last residence</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Total Migrants</i>		<i>Total Workers</i>
		<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	
Gujarat	496860	260545	236315	186175
	100*	52.44	47.56	100*
Maharashtra	53370	27630	25740	19795
	100	51.77	48.23	100
Punjab	3405	1965	1440	1440
	100	57.71	42.29	100
Rajasthan	78615	49910	28705	42166
	100	53.49	36.51	100
Uttar Pradesh	58350	42305	16045	35855
	100	71.64	27.17	100
Other States	48380	29395	18985	22575
	100	61.65	39.82	100
Other Countries	30800	16245	14555	14355
	100	52.74	47.26	100
Total Migrants	769780	427995	341785	321750
	100	55.60	44.40	100
Total Population of the City	1741522	951669	789852	494554
	100	54.65	45.35	100

* Column-wise percentages.

Sources: *Census of India 1971*, Series-5, Migration Table (DV to DVI).

—1

main activity classified by sex and place of last residence

<i>Cultivators, Agr. Labour, Livestock & Fishing</i>	<i>Main Activity</i>			
	<i>Manufacturing, Processing (Industry), construction and mining & Quarrying</i>	<i>Trade & Commerce</i>	<i>Transport service & Communication</i>	<i>Other Services</i>
2675	93580	31570	12965	45385
1.44	50.26	16.96	6.96	24.38
25	10050	3295	1495	4930
0.13	50.77	16.65	7.55	24.90
—	595	300	200	345
	41.32	20.83	13.89	23.96
165	18591	9890	4980	8540
0.39	44.10	23.45	11.81	20.25
360	25265	3580	2110	4540
1.00	70.46	9.98	5.88	12.66
30	11832	3625	1780	5308
0.13	52.41	16.06	7.88	23.51
20	4005	6290	1260	2780
0.14	27.90	43.82	8.78	19.37
3275	163330	58550	24770	71825
1.02	50.76	18.20	7.70	22.32
6105	245838	98264	37044	107303
1.23	49.17	19.88	7.49	21.69

unemployed Hindu workers might have thought that Muslim workers stood between them and new jobs.

A sizeable number of industries labourers (66 per cent) in Ahmedabad were migrants of whom 42 per cent were non-Gujaratis. They were from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and other parts of the country. About 80 per cent of them were Hindus. Classification of the migrants is given in Table 1. One can also see from the table that male population is strikingly larger among the UP and Rajasthan migrants. As many as 71 per cent of the UP migrants were male. This suggests that a large number of them stayed in Ahmedabad without their families. Workers from these regions are religious and have deep-rooted animosity towards the Muslims. Moreover, as they live alone, they have no roots in the cultural life of the city. And as they greatly value the *Ramayana*, the insult to it caused by a Muslim police inspector in the incident in which "Bhaiyas" from UP were involved had already inflamed them. Most of all, while it is difficult for a man who lives with his family to risk his life in riots, these immigrants were free from immediate family bonds. They were thus available for mob action.⁸

Majoor Mahajan

One would theoretically expect that industrialisation and trade unions develop class consciousness among the workers and erode ethnic identity. This however, had not happened in Ahmedabad even after more than fifty years of the trade union movement. The pattern of recruitment in textile mills as well as the functioning of the Majoor Mahajan, the dominant trade union in Ahmedabad, had obstructed the development of a sense of belonging to the working class among the labourers. Several departments were under the almost exclusive control of one or another caste or community. For instance, spinners were mostly

⁸ Some newspapers highlighted the role of non-Gujaratis in the riots. This immediately made Gujarati Hindus defend the non-Gujaratis. They argued that this was an attempt to divide the Hindu community into Gujaratis and non-Gujaratis. Some were grateful to the outsiders and said that, but for the non-Gujaratis, they would have been crushed by the Muslims.

Harijans, whereas winders and weavers were mostly Muslims. Labourers lived with their kin in particular localities and "would decline to leave them in order to be nearer a particular mill" (Gillion, 1968), thus reinforcing community patterns. The Majoor Mahajan also worked on the basis of departmental unions which often corresponded to caste and communal groups. All this had perpetuated social barriers and strong communal identifications among labourers, who had continued to be Harijans, Rajputs or Muslims and had failed to be identified as members of an urban working class.

Political Parties

By 1969, the Gujarat Congress was faction ridden and it was in the process of splitting, with one faction joining Mrs. Gandhi and the other the Syndicate. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that on 18 September Congress leaders from all over Gujarat were busy discussing the 'unity resolution' of the Congress party in Ahmedabad. Like the Majoor Mahajan, Congress party started working on caste and communal lines in the distribution of party tickets for the Assembly and the Parliament, for party positions and other offices. There was weak integration among Congressmen belonging to different castes and communities. The party leaders paid lip service to secularism but behaved as members of the Hindu and Muslim communities in their day-to-day activities. Ministers, MLAs and MPs performed Hindu rituals at the inauguration of public places and at public functions at the expense of the public exchequer without any hesitation. The average Congressman of Hindu or Muslim religion was not above communal prejudices. Hindu Congress leaders often favoured Muslims, not out of secular considerations but primarily to appease the latter for attracting votes in elections. Such an attitude was reflected in the Ahmedabad riots.

No Congressman in Ahmedabad had come out to stop the frenzy. Congress House distributed curfew passes in large numbers but did not refute any rumour or provide any correct information to workers. The only exceptions were some old Gandhian Congressmen who were really disturbed by the carnage,

but they were too old to do anything or had no moral courage to come out in the midst of looting and killing. They, therefore, simply offered prayers.

In words of a DCC President, most of the Congressmen were communal in their outlook. This was apparent during the post-riot period. Thus the District Congress Committee of Vadodara did not criticise the riots. On the contrary, it blamed the Muslims for them. It passed a resolution to the effect that the pro-Pakistan attitude of some Muslims had caused tension in the State. The same attitude was in evidence at meeting of Congress workers. Responsible Congressmen criticised Muslims for their communal attitude and suggested that they should go to Pakistan. A highly placed Congress leader of Gujarat, in a public meeting, exhorted the youth in these terms: "There are anti-national elements in this country whose loyalty is towards Pakistan. Police, having some limitations, cannot trace these elements. Therefore, it is your duty to find them out. You should enter their houses, catch hold of them, then do whatever you want to do."

A few Congressmen even took a direct or indirect part in the riots. Some deliberately misguided the administration. For instance while on the 20th evening many people felt that riots might also begin in Vadodara, Congress leaders assured the Collector that nothing would happen and allowed the SRP stationed there to be sent to Ahmedabad, thus providing an opportunity to rioters for looting and destroying mosques and shrines.

Jansangh and Swatantra workers were also subject to the same communal prejudices, although the Jansanghis were more active than the Swatantrites. The HDRS was formed at the suggestion and advice of Jansangh workers and its convenor was an old RSS member (Reddy 1971). A number of Jansangh workers, office-bearers and volunteers of the RSS, though technically not in their official capacity, seem to have played an active part in the riots, either by provoking the people, taking the initiative in leading mobs or by simply providing money or material to the rioters. In publishing and distributing handbills, there is little doubt that Jansangh and RSS workers were actively involved.

The only secular political forces on the scene were the leftist parties — PSP, SSP and above all, the Communists — who tried their best to prevent the riots. More than any one else, Communist workers even at the cell level functioned as secular citizens. Three prominent Muslim communists lost their lives in their attempts to prevent the riots. There were other elements too, more isolated but effective, such as the Radical Humanists of Ahmedabad and their labour union. I have come across several cases in which a Hindu communist or radical humanist had saved Muslim neighbours and vice versa. The labour area between Hathi Khai and Kamdar Medan known for frequent riots, where during the labour movement in 1960 a police officer was killed by local residents, is an illustration of this. It was an undisturbed area. In some of its chawls there were 60 per cent Muslims and 40 per cent Hindus; in others 70 per cent Hindus and 30 per cent Muslims. But both communities worked hard to maintain complete harmony. In thickly populated Muslim localities in this area, shops of Hindus remained not only undisturbed but were protected by Muslims. Both Hindu and Muslim communist leaders of this area worked day and night to avert any conflict.

The Press

The Press seems to have contributed its own bit to the worsening of the situation. It appears that most of the reporters did not move about in riot-affected areas. The editors had instructed them not to take any risks. Consequently, the reports that were published were based on either hearsay and rumours or on official versions released by the Government. Because of this manner of reporting, inaccurate and false reports were published which aggravated the situation. For instance, *Sevak*, an afternoon edition of the leading daily *Sandesh*, reported on 20 September that several women — Hindu from the description — had been stripped and raped in public in Lal Milni Chal. It appears that the reporters had not visited the place but got the news from someone he knew who had come from that area. On the next day the report was officially contradicted by the paper, but the molestation and raping of women had already begun.

Biased Reports

An objective analysis would clearly indicate that the reporters, being Hindu, were partial in reproducing the news. Whenever a temple was attacked, the news item read was "a temple was attacked", whereas when a mosque was attacked it read as "a religious place was attacked". The whole policy of spacing and display was biased. Newspapers gave headlines to rumoured reports of attacks on Hindu temples. For instance, a newspaper told its readers in the headlines that the Gita Mandir temple had been attacked on the 20th. The report was entirely false. In fact, by the 20th Hindus were in complete control of this area. Similarly, reports on the Jagannath temple were confusing to readers, and provocative. On the same page at three different places different figures would be available regarding the number of injured sadhus. The report would be embellished by descriptions of the attack as 'pre-planned' and 'cruel' and the revelation that acid bulbs and weapons had been used against the temple. The damage to the temple was exaggerated in most cases.

Newspapers generally suppressed news and letters which criticised the riots. Muslims did not get a place to express their reaction and views. This was true even in regard to clarification of facts, as when some Muslim — or a secular-minded Hindu — wanted to give a "true picture" of some incident or the other that had taken place during the riots, with a view to dispelling prevailing false impressions or bias.

As we have seen in Ahmedabad, rumours about the riots played an important role in worsening the situation. But no attempts were made by the radio to counter the rumours. The radio simply repeated the "do not believe in rumours" advice and broadcast the various appeals of political leaders. But no authoritative news was given to actually counter the rumours.

Of course, the Ahmedabad riots were not pre-planned before the Jagannath temple episode. But it is certain that the episode was exploited by middle class communalist Hindus who provided the lead. Perhaps they were waiting for an event to arouse Hindu sentiments. They formed *ad hoc* organisations to protect the Hindu religion. Initially, they organised meetings and processions

and made provocative speeches. They published and distributed handbills which appealed to the Hindus to attack the Muslims and defend the Hindu religion. They successfully mobilised Hindu working class who were either immigrants or of low castes — Harijans, Bhoi, Koli, etc. — for active participation in riots against Muslim workers. Skilled manpower was used, and materials were provided to the mobs to kill Muslim and destroy their property. Trade unions and political parties were ineffective and could not prevent the riots. In fact, some of the Hindu party leaders of non-leftist parties provided direct or indirect support to the rioters. The press which was also dominated by the middle class added fuel to fire.

The Role of the Government

Even a few days before the carnage, the Government of Gujarat believed that the state was "traditionally free from communal trouble." It did not, therefore, accept the suggestion of the National Integration Council for setting up State-level committees comprising representatives of various sections to help in the maintenance of communal harmony. For the same reason, the State Government did not heed the warning of the Central Government that communal tensions were building up in the state. Again, the repeated requests of the trustees of the Jagannath temple to the Government to locate a police station near the temple, as quarrels between sadhus of the temple and local Muslims were not new in Jamalpur, were not taken very seriously.

It is very difficult to ascertain the reasons for the State Government's illusion about the communal problem. Only some months earlier communal incidents had taken place in various parts of the region. Despite this, the Government was totally unprepared and failed to prevent the barbarous happenings in the capital. As a leading Congressman told me, "We never thought even in our dreams that such riots could take place in Gujarat." In the words of Morarji Desai: "The Government and leaders of Gujarat have been caught asleep on the communal problem."

When trouble started on the 18th, the police acted promptly and brought the situation under control. This was followed by

an appeal for maintaining peace by the Police Commissioner. But, at the same time, the government did not take measures to avert further disturbances, despite the burning of three Muslim shops on the same night. Again, while the Government promised the Mahant of the Jagannath temple on the 19th that a committee would be appointed to inquire into "the attack on the temple," no action was taken to promptly publicise the decision. By the time the news was read in the newspapers of the 20th, communal fanatics had already started their operations. In the same way if the Raipur Gate meeting had been firmly prohibited, it would not have given a chance to communal-minded Hindus to gather at one place in such a large number and then disperse with a sense of mission. The Government also failed to arrest anti-social elements as it had earlier done in similar cases whenever a tense situation developed. This turned out to be a serious lapse on the part of the Government because at most places known "goondas" took the initiative in starting looting, burning and killing.

Always Too Late

Decisive action came late and was patchy. On the 19th the curfew was imposed only at some places; curfew was later extended to other parts of the city. SRP and CRP forces were called in by the 20th morning. As these failed to control the situation, the army was called in on Sunday, the 21st, being first posted in suburbs. Later, they were given complete control of the city. 'Shoot at sight' orders were given to the soldiers on Sunday. Due to the vigilance of the army, the situation could be brought under control. More than five thousand persons were arrested for participating in riots during the ten days of the curfew.

The authorities were almost always late in taking decisions. The army was called after two days and according to reliable information, only after one of the Cabinet Ministers had insisted on this and threatened to resign, and after passing a whole day in discussions whether the entire city should be handed over to the army. (In Vadodara, Government Officers and politicians were engrossed in abusing each other while the city was under the control of rioters.) The Collector-in-charge, a determined lady,

could not contact the Home Secretary in Ahmedabad for three hours as he was with the Chief Minister. She wanted orders from the Secretary before calling the army (which was right there in the town!). In the somewhat terse words of a commentator: "It is true that Mr. Hitendra Desai did not fiddle while Ahmedabad burnt. He merely sat in his bungalow surrounded by his Cabinet colleagues and a reassuring number of security guards. It was a pathetic spectacle of visible incapacity to deal with the situation. It must be assumed that the long sessions at the Chief Minister's residence were directed to some useful purpose, but it is a risky assumption. One suspects that a good deal of the time was taken up in deciding what official accounts of the day's happenings should be fed to the Press and put over the radio." (Kagal, 1969).

Reluctance to use Force

Apart from the delay in taking decisions, the State Government was half-hearted in using force. Even on the 20th evening when large parts of the town were already ablaze, the Chief Minister was still saying, "The government will not hesitate to use force for restoring peace." Such warnings were too late and ineffective, for frenzied rioters had already taken control of the city. It is difficult to explain the government's reluctance to use force. But one possible explanation mentioned among Congress leaders was that "if the Congress government had come down hard on the rioters early when Hindu sentiment was still deeply aroused by the Jagannath temple incident, the political cost might well have been a Jansangh government in 1972.

Besides the government's reluctance to use force, the curfew was not strictly imposed in Ahmedabad till the army took control. A large number of organisations and individuals were authorised to issue curfew passes. I was told that Congress House alone had distributed about five thousand passes. Consequently, there was virtually no curfew in practice. I have come across some persons who participated in the riots with curfew passes in their pockets.

Instead of taking firm action to curb the riots, Gujarat politicians were in search of scapegoats. In the beginning they dis-

covered that the riots were instigated by 'Pakistani agents'. Later, they suspected Communists of creating disorder. As the commentator quoted above put it: "There was also a desperate search for alibis and scapegoats. One senior minister tried to persuade the writer that China had a hand in the disturbances. He said that Chinese money was being circulated in the city, and to clinch the issue he pulled out his wallet and flourished the evidence — a Chinese currency note. It would have been cruel to ask him whether Chinese currency would be of any earthly use in Ahmedabad, particularly when all the shops were closed. Such was the condition of the State Government when Gujarat was gripped by the worst communal riots in its history". (Kagal 1969)

The police in Ahmedabad had utterly failed in their duty of maintaining law and order impartially. At several places killing and looting took place in the presence of policemen. They often ran away from the place and allowed a free hand to the rioters. Often SRP and CRP cadets told Hindus that Muslims needed "such treatment".

The indifferent, and in some cases partial, attitude of the police can be attributed to two reasons. First, it is an open secret in Gujarat that police and anti-social elements have close ties. Oftener than not, illicit liquor, gambling and smuggling rackets which are rampant in the towns and villages of Gujarat run under police protection. The policemen get a regular monthly amount which is often many times their salaries. Such association between bootleggers and policemen has paralysed the functioning of the police. For the same reasons the police were reluctant to arrest known *chowndas*. If a few were arrested, they were released on bail immediately. In the course of my investigations, I have come across a case in which a police officer informed a hooligan in advance that a warrant was to be issued against him.

The second reason concerns the state of demoralisation of the police in Gujarat. In order to appease mischief-mongers, the Gujarat Government had time and again disowned responsibility for police actions, making the police themselves responsible for them. During 1969 in three cases Government did not defend police action but, on the contrary, asked the police to apologise to

mischief-makers.' This attitude was revealed when a senior Congressman close to the ruling circles told me that "the police might have failed in controlling the riots but not the Government". Obviously, such treatment had demoralised the police and made them indifferent and reluctant to take risks. They did not know when the Government would ask them to apologise for firing on communal fanatics!

Aftermath and Overview

The Ahmedabad riots took place at a time when the economy was in bad shape and the structure of non-leftist parties, particularly of the Congress and the Swatantra, was cracking. Such a situation provided fertile ground for communalists to exploit communal tensions and incite riots; with a view to "teach a lesson" to Muslims and also to embarrass the ruling party. Local factors and agent provocateur played a decisive part in Ahmedabad. They put their organisations and net-works into action and succeeded in prolonging the riots for four days because the Government was unprepared to handle such a situation.

The riots left a deep schism in Gujarat. Hindu fanaticism was at its peak. There was a feeling of jubilation among Hindus over their "victory over Muslims". Some thought they had now avenged Prithviraj's defeat by Mohamed Ghori after seven hundred years. "For the first time", a social worker and Congressman said, "Hindus are able to teach a lesson to Muslims."

Such attitudes are seen even among the educated and prosperous sections. The Chief Minister's Relief Fund for riot victims received poor response. Even rich Jains who were votaries of non-violence had refused to contribute to the Fund. There was a general lack of sympathy for the victims of the riots. Instead, Muslims were being blamed for their "backwardness" and held responsible for their sufferings by intellectuals, politicians, journalists and social workers. Some of them had concluded that

² The instances of the *Quran* and the *Ramayana* were discussed earlier. The third incident was of student riots in Vadodara in July 1969. In order to control a violent mob of students the police had used force. But later the police commissioner was forced to apologise for this.

"Muslims cannot be modernised. It is an impossible task". Some were seriously thinking of radical solutions. They thought of various propositions; either Muslims should become Hindu, or go to Pakistan, or to some other Islamic country. Some suggested that they should be given "secondary citizenship" in India without the right of vote. Such thinking resulted in the appearance of "Quit India" posters (addressed to Muslims). This attitude had continued throughout the 'seventies; and it is re-emerging strongly in the 'eighties.

After the riots Muslims felt miserable and isolated at their places of work. A sense of insecurity haunted them. Neither political parties nor trade unions provided them with a sense of identification and security. Consequently, the Muslims from various strata had come within the community's fold in the hope that the unity would assure their survival. For instance, a young advocate remarked to the author in 1972: "I have become active only during the last two years. Everywhere Muslims have to suffer injustice. In business, our shops are being looted, there is no security. And in the private sector, as a large number of industries and firms are owned by the Hindus, they do not take (employ) us. If we ask for jobs in Government departments, they brand us as communal... After the 1969 riots we have found that if we want to survive, we must get united."

Various voluntary organisations of Muslims had come into existence after 1969. These organisations were of three types. First, those which did mainly relief and rehabilitation work. They distributed food and financial assistance to the victims of the riots. Some of them later became inactive, but a few others had taken permanent shape. In the eventuality of fresh riots, these organisations aimed at providing essential commodities to Muslims. And they performed this function in the 'seventies. The second type were the welfare organisations. They concentrated on the economic progress of the Muslims. They advocated that Muslims must protect their distinct culture and religion and also establish harmony with the other communities. One of these organisations stated, "we have to be vigilant, we want to live in the country as dignified, self-respecting citizens". Such organisations promoted

education, women's welfare, cultural programmes, sports, relief and such activities. The third type were militant organisations. They did not require formal membership nor did they command mass support. But they played on the suspicions and sense of insecurity rampant among Muslims. They preached retaliation. They endorsed the feeling common among young Muslims that "we have to teach a lesson to the Hindus, otherwise they will not allow us to live peacefully." (Shah 1974).

Thus the 1969 communal riots have reinforced deep-rooted prejudices between Hindus and Muslims. Educated and otherwise secular Muslims were also pushed into a corner and were forced to seek shelter in communal organisations. Out of fear and insecurity they started supporting such organisations.

They do not find any alternative organisation which can develop secular identity. Trade unions and political parties also do not integrate them on secular lines. They have learnt a bitter lesson — that their fellow-trade union workers or partymen professing the other religion may ditch them at any time — either out of religious conviction or under the duress of fellow communal brethren.

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MORADABAD RIOTS, 1980: CAUSES AND MEANINGS

Satish Saberwal
Mushirul Hasan

Between mid-August and early November 1980, Muslims in Moradabad¹ experienced the most bloody orgy of violence. Officially verified deaths, for which the Government is paying 'compensation' run to about 400; a careful, responsible Muslim group estimates deaths at 2,500; other observers put the number between 1,500 and 2,000. This sustained, frenzied aggression was unmistakably engineered by city policemen in uniform. The events are no less shattering for anyone who cares about the state of society in present and future India.

Various studies have revealed that these events were not so strange as to defy belief; previous riots from Ahmedabad to Pune and Solapur presaged most of the themes.² Notable only are the intensity of the frenzy, the depth of official complicity, and the wholly unjustified confidence of the mass media — with but few exceptions — in the official versions of events. What happened in Moradabad has to be seen, however, in its historical setting, both in India as a whole and in the city of Moradabad. These pages seek to bring the events alive again, and reviewing the attitudes and actions in Moradabad might cause some of us to assess our own attitudes.

¹ Saberwal, a sociologist, was in Moradabad on 8 - 10 January; and then again on 29 + 31 January 1981, Hasan, a historian, and Saberwal visited the city together.

² Some of the notable studies on communal riots are Naidu (1980), Banul (1980), Ray & Chakravarty (1968), Bhargava (1970)

It is not, however, intended to provide an expose of events in Moradabad — although that is needed — but to illustrate several facets of contemporary Indian society. We wish to comment on the position of Muslims in North Indian society generally; we wish to advance a more candid examination of the tenor of Hindu-Muslim relationships in our past and our present; and finally, we wish to take notice of a chilling case of administrative regression, one that happens to be illustrative of more general tendencies around us too.

II

We begin with the general position of Muslims in North Indian society. There are enclaves of professional groups where one could almost forget whether one is a Muslim or a Hindu. We also know of areas like Chandni Chowk in Delhi where mutual understanding and exchange of services is widespread, if only because Muslim craftsmen have to rely heavily on the predominant Hindu trading community-in-the locality. To live apart—'within one's community', meaning kin or caste — is an old Indian pattern; but recent decades have seen a great deal of intermingling, especially in the new urban areas. Yet, one would not easily find many Muslims among the tenants or houseowners in the mixed, privately-owned urban localities. In part as this reflects the Muslims' general economic position, observations on this are not out of place.

The weakness of the Muslims' economic position, particularly in North India, is partly due to the fragmentation of the community in the wake of partition, and the exodus of certain powerful professional groups, traders and bankers to the newly-born country. This is evident in their sparse representation in the upper echelons of commerce, industry, administration, or the professions in India. Recent figures indicate that the percentage of Muslims in the coveted Indian Administrative Service is less than half their percentage in the total population; while barely two per cent of Government officials at the highest levels and less than

half per cent of Government clerks and peons are Muslims (See Table 1).

Table 1

Muslims in the combined gradation list of I.A.S. Officers 1948-1974

Years	All	Muslims	Percentage
1948-52	149	1	0.67 per cent
1953-57	242	5	2.06 ..
1958-62	361	5	1.38 ..
1963-67	596	10	1.67 ..
1968-72	500	9	1.80 ..
1973-77	689	21	3.04 ..
Total	2,537	51	2.01 per cent

Source: Shervani A. R., 'Muslims in Indian Administrative Service, *Journal of Rabitat Al-Alam Al-Islami*, p. 33.

Precise figures are not available for the army, but they are usually said to be about the same as for the police. The figure commonly provided is that Muslims account for about three per cent of the total Indian police force. In the PAC, notorious for its anti-Muslim venom, there are only 300 Muslims out of a force of two lakhs. (Khan 1978; Shahabuddin 1980.)

Politics is a rather special domain but if we ignore the decorative offices of President and Vice-President — the 'Sarkari Muslims who help the powers-that-be in sidestepping the major crises facing the country — (Dube, 1980) and concern ourselves with the substantive issues facing the Muslims, their weak base in politics would be plain. The same pattern is apparent in academia. Apart from institutions like Aligarh Muslim University³,

³ Rasheeduddin Khan (1978, 1514) however notes that the total number of Muslim students in the University is just about 5,000 out of a total enrolment of approximately 8,000. 'This should be indicative', he observes, 'of the fact that Aligarh is but an oasis in the vast desert-land of Muslim illiteracy. Its importance, in terms of the challenging task of spreading higher education for the Muslim masses is more symbolic than substantive.'

and limited fields like Urdu and Medieval Indian History, there is very little to cheer the Muslims. More distressing perhaps is the mushroom growth of *Dini Talim* schools — 6,000 in Uttar Pradesh with an enrolment of 600,000 students⁴ — where the pupils are lulled into an illusion of education with Islamic texts⁵. The importance of such blockages goes far beyond statistics or particular persons' incomes. At stake are the informal access to certain kinds of information, the orientation to the wider social order commonly transmitted in the informal social relationships, and the sense of efficacy and competence that comes from knowing those who know and who can help put the 'official' seal of approval upon things happening the way you would like them to happen.

We realise, of course, the difficulty with categories like Hindu and Muslim in such matters: differentiation and inequalities within the categories may well be much greater than between the categories. If we choose nevertheless to employ these categories, this reflects our judgement that during the past three decades the Muslims in North India at different levels have had to cope with considerable hostile prejudices. Given the background to, and the fact of, partition, the existence of some antagonism is not unexpected. What we need to recognise, however, is the co-existence of widespread public and private denial that any prejudice exists and the fact of its even more widespread, informal, active operation. (Saberwal 1981b) To be sure, Muslims are not excluded from opportunity completely. It is merely that this happens often enough to make all the difference.

This difference is magnified by the rules by which we play the game. These rules are permissive enough for our competitive situations often permit assertive aggression without limits, with no holds barred. In such situations, a Muslim always has to reckon with the possibility that his religious identity might be thrown at him, publicly or privately, in a threatening manner. He would

⁴ These figures are quoted in the articles by A. R. Sherwani in *Radiance* and *Mainstream*. The articles provide interesting clues to the state of Muslim education in northern India.

⁵ For a survey of this literature see Saberwal (1981a).

have grown up knowing the pain and the humiliation of being so insulted. More often than not, he chooses to withdraw, or at least not to press things to a point where the communal card would be played against him. The combination of active antagonism and this inclination to withdraw acts cumulatively to depress ambitions, especially in the generation which grows up taught, in a protective manner, to take a constructive view of the prospects in the immediate milieu. As one Muslim observer pointed out: "The demoralising effect of such perceptions is that people give up the struggle to improve their competence. Consequently, whenever opportunity is available, they are left behind. Thus, the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' come true:" (Saberwal 1981b)

The same point may be made from another angle. Economic weakness is by no means unique to the Muslims in North India. There are the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, but the compensatory programmes have been useful at least in certain pockets within these categories; there are no counterparts to these for the Muslims, nor are any likely. Yet other categories in the North Indian population — Kurmi, Yadav, Gujar — have been economically weak and have not had access to compensatory programmes; but they have in some measures sought to neutralise their weakness through mobilisation in the political domain, using their numbers and voting strength to secure attention. To be sure, such mobilisation, when it seeks politically allocated resources by way of job quotas, etc; has generated violent contentiousness in Bihar and elsewhere; but the magnitude of this contentiousness is small compared to the consequences that await Muslims when they seek to assert themselves, politically or otherwise. And this brings us to the general question of relations between Hindus and Muslims in these parts.

Concerning this relationship, various interpretations are abroad, often argued with intense passion. We have space here only to indicate our own understanding of the relationship in its historical context. We judge the relationship to have been highly ambivalent. The two traditions build upon widely divergent ideals concerning the nature of human beings and their relationship to the supernatural and to each other. In a milieu where the weight

of religious orthodoxy has been variable, but always considerable, with religious precepts and observances influencing much in daily life, these divergent premises have inevitably led the two traditions to grate upon each other. Yet most people have a large stake in the smooth flow of making their daily life, and therefore, the appropriate accommodations, sometimes extending into syncretic sects, have generally been forthcoming.

It is nevertheless difficult to deny that considerable antagonism has resided in this relationship over the decades. To account for it, we think serious consideration should be given to Ratna Naidu's point that there is a history of mutual humiliation between those anchored in the two traditions in India. (Naidu 1980, 128-9). The urge to humiliate an adversary may be unusually strong and widespread in our society; whether this is so, and if so why, are questions worthy of enquiry. Insofar as this proclivity is expressed through attacks on religious symbols, one would imagine that the religious specialists of the affected side would interpret political attacks in religious terms and their interpretations would be handed down in myth and legend.

When myths and legends identify certain adversaries as posing grave threats to crucial social identities, the basis is laid for neurotic fears and anxieties such as would foist apocalyptic intentions upon the most ordinary of acts. It is necessary to posit some such mechanism in order to account for the heady rumours which invariably take wing during communal tension. Two examples will suffice. During the Ahmedabad riots in 1969, a widely circulated evening daily carried on its front-page lurid, though totally imaginary, details about the molestation of Hindu women in the Lal Mill area, and the All India Radio broadcast a false rumour about the poisoning of the city's milk supply in that communally charged atmosphere (*The Times of India* 1970). In Moradabad in 1980, some activity on moving two *madrasas* to more spacious grounds, and some talk of starting a third, led to the inference, published in a pamphlet, *Burning Moradabad*, that the Muslims were planning to turn the city into a fortress, in order to lay the basis for another Pakistan. Also, 'a College built with foreign money (reference to petro-dollars from Saudi Arabia and

some Gulf States, in particular) will be (an) abode of foreign powers; one day this may even place our capital Delhi in jeopardy Though there is no objection to (the) spread of religious education there is valid objection in setting up of religious forces convertible into armies:⁹

Such fantasies are no monopoly of the Hindus: similar fears and anxieties lay behind the demand for a separate homeland in the 1940s, and, in more recent times, are served up by the Muslim communalist press, such as the *Da'awat Daily* and the *Radiance Weekly*. We wish merely to stress that these anxieties and fantasies are often pathological. As with individuals so with societies, such complexes, to be resolved satisfactorily, need to be brought into consciousness and tested against the probabilities in real life, not suppressed into unconscious — as is often done by *both* communalists *and* secularists — for that merely makes their resolution that much more difficult.

To account for the particular course of events in Moradabad recounted below, one more element — the city administration — has to be kept in mind. To expect to find a Solomon in every seat of local authority may be foolish. If the communal fears are as deeply ingrained as the foregoing has suggested, one may take it for granted that these percolate in some measure into officialdom — which, as we have suggested, is invariably largely Hindu. We know that elsewhere the local officials and the guardians of law and order have often acted brutally towards the Muslims, for example in Aligarh. (*Economic and Political Weekly* 1978). In Jamshedpur in April 1979, lapses on the part of the local officials, combined with the Bihar Military Force actively participating in the riot on the side of the Hindus, helped turn a minor fracas into the worst communal carnage since 1964 in that industrial metropolis (Singh 1979). Likewise Moradabad. The city's police, for long weeks, acted rather like a force organised to beat, loot, and kill the Muslims. The PAC, in particular, collaborated with communal elements and goondas in one community to bring about

⁹ The pamphlet was reported to have been written by a group of Hindu lawyers.

an open clash between Hindus and Muslime. The PAC, reported a *Patriot* correspondent on 27 August 1980, 'has . . . earned for itself the rather dubious distinction of being the most hated organisation in Mordabad'. This is not all. The various organs of administration including, alas, the judiciary appeared to act in a way supportive to the activities of the local police and the PAC.

We proceed now to consider the social setting in Moradabad and to recount the specific developments between August and November 1980.

III

The earliest known communal riot in Moradabad, once an administrative part of Rohilkhand Division, occurred in 1848 on the occasion of the Muharram procession, followed by a more serious outburst in 1872 (*District Gazetteer, Moradabad*). Similar riots in later years flowed from the structure of municipalities which were gradually being turned into arenas of intense communal battles. Tension arose in the 1980s over frequent reports of Muslims manipulating the electoral machinery to their advantage, leading the Vice-Chairman of the Municipal Board to complain that: "Ever since the introduction of the principle of local self-Government, the Hindus in Moradabad have had no share in Municipal administration, and are really worse off than they would have been if local self-Government had never been granted to Moradabad." (Quoted in Robinson 1975, 81)

The result of such complaints combined with the redrawing of ward boundaries that followed the 1900 Municipalities Act destroyed the Muslim majority, a trend also noticeable in other Rohilkhand towns, such as Budaun and Chandpur. Such losses mattered a great deal, for the victorious community often used its dominance to assert its religious interests. For instance, after the Hindus gained the upper hand in Moradabad, they compelled Muslim butchers to dry their hides outside the city; in Chandpur, they ended cow slaughter. Such pressure, often reinforced by the

¹ This account was corroborated by our respondents.

communal proclivities of national and provincial leaders, contributed to the growing communal animosity^a in Moradabad. (Robinson 1975, 81)

In the late 1930s, the Muslim League gained a strong foothold in Moradabad; in 1946, it captured a majority of Muslim seats in the provincial elections. This astonishing success of an organisation which had been so effectively displaced by the Congress in the 1937 elections reflected the widespread Muslim disillusionment with the Congress movement. (Brennan 1977, 476.) It was also indicative of the momentum gained by the League electoral machinery, which was geared up for the occasion by Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan, and Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, a 'deserter' from the Congress camp. In Moradabad, the initiative was wrested by Qazi Taslim Husain, a lawyer, who operated from the Muslim *Musafir Khana* — now frequented by the migrant Bihari workers and enthusiasts of the *Tablighi Jama'at*. Indeed, the *Musafir Khana*, across the Railway Station and located in a predominantly Muslim area, was the focal point of Muslim separatist politics in Moradabad.

Hindu communal groups, organised under the aegis of the RSS and the Arya Samaj, carried on their campaign against Muslims in general, and the Muslim League in particular. Raising the spectre of Muslim dominance, they organised *akharas* in the 1930s and revived the *shuddhi* and *sangathan* movements. Among those who joined such activities were traders, wealthy merchants, and some professional men who resented Muslim dominance in the law courts, in medicine, and in education. Following the Calcutta killing in 1946, such elements launched themselves with renewed vigour. After partition, their growth was markedly enhanced and in early January 1948, there were once again widespread riots. (Brennan 1977, 498.)

During the recent riots, in particular, the propaganda machinery made special reference to the 'Muslim atrocities' in the past in order to justify the killings in the present. Today, Moradabad is reached in a little over three hours by a fast train from Delhi;

^a Instances of communal squabbles in the Municipalities of Rohilkhand can be found in Hasan (1978).

a fast bus takes an hour longer. Physically, the city offers a marked contrast between the Civil Lines, with its cluster of courts, administrative offices and neatly laid out residences, and the wealthy Punjabi exporters' new residences off Station Road and showrooms on Station Road (an area built after 1950) on the one hand, and the very much more crowded bulk of residential areas on the other. In many of these areas, little bits of industrial activity — a furnace here, a grinder there — are virtually part of family life; a cluster of lathes may be located in a separate room. It appears that in areas like Katgarh where the bulk of small-scale industrial work gets done — and where the population happens to be predominantly Muslim — civic neglect is the greatest; nearly every crossing has its mound of nightsoil and other rubbish, awaiting leisurely removal. In many of these areas, drainage was bad even during a dry January; during the monsoons we heard that some of these streets become open sewers, heavy with acid and other industrial waste from the workshops. Given these conditions, it is not surprising that some of the new wealth in Muslim hands, which we discuss below, should have sought to flow into new housing colonies, or that these colonies should have been given Muslim sounding names. The beginnings of a few such colonies set some alarm bells ringing. Says the pamphlet *Burning Moradabad*: "They have a dream of creating a Muslim State within U.P., constituted of (the) western districts... So they are creating the same conditions of panic and disorder for bending the knees of Hindus as they did in 1945, 1946 and 1947.

Where does Moradabad's wealth come from? The city used to be a centre for making brass kitchenware in small-scale units. After partition, a number of Punjabi families, displaced from their ancestral homes in Pakistan, settled in Moradabad and, over the years, reoriented the industrial apparatus into producing decorative brassware — inlaid with other metals, wood, shell, and so forth — principally for export. The annual output, according to the *Patriot* (1980) is in the range of Rs. 100 crores, with about half exported. In recent years, the indigenous Muslims have been moving into this export business on a growing scale, attracting workers to the tune of 75,000 from different parts of U.P. and Bihar and providing employment to Muslims from the neighbour-

ing towns of Sambhal, Chandausi and Budaun. But their offices tend to be located in their homes, alongside may be some production facility. The workshops are virtually all small-scale, each concentrating on one or another of the scores of manufacturing stages in the production of the intricate designs. At each stage the partly-finished goods move to a different locale.

The district population according to the 1971 census was 24,28,971 while Moradabad city had a population of 2,72,355 in the same year. Moradabad has no elective municipal body.⁹ Lying next to Rampur, a state formerly ruled by a Muslim prince, Moradabad district has long had a concentration of Muslims who, in pre-1947 days, congregated in towns as absentee landlords, officials, traders, artisans and weavers, and who played an important part in the life of most Rohilkhand towns. In the city, Muslims represented nearly sixty per cent of the population. In the district, they held 42 per cent of the land. Indeed, Muslims were more powerful in Moradabad than in any other district of UP. But this is no longer the case. Muslims have gradually lost out to the enterprising Punjabis, selling off their land and property. Many of the houses now lined up in Adarsh Nagar, Kothi Bal Nagar and the Civil Lines were purchased from a depressed absentee Muslim landlord who, under force of circumstances, has withdrawn into the countryside to guard his limited landholdings.

The Muslims of Moradabad have lagged behind in education. Except for a few families who insist on sending their children to the Aligarh Muslim University, the majority of Muslims have stayed away from both Government and privately-managed institutions, a fact noted by Mr. Lawrence, Vice-Principal of Parker Intermediate College. Most of them flock to the five or six well known *madrasas* which impart instruction in traditional Islamic learning. They are pathetically under represented in the degree colleges. Discrimination against Muslims in admission, combined with their own indifference to western education, has created an

⁹ Uttar Pradesh is one of the several states where 'all civic bodies stand suspended, most of them for several years with no prospect of fresh elections being held.' (*Indian Express*, 1981.)

alarming situation which is the cause of much concern amongst the admittedly small Muslim intelligentsia. The answer, we were told, lay in imparting modern scientific-oriented education which would ensure Muslim representation in Government service and the professions. Such words are expressed by, among others, the *Nazim* of Anjuman-i- Madaris-i-Arabia¹⁰

The proportion of Muslims in the city appears to have been growing somewhat in recent years. The city's articulate Hindu opinion sees in this the Muslims' unrestrained fertility. How much of the growth is in fact due to immigration, to a preference for more children common to poor workers in the unorganised sector generally, and to a genuine fertility differential between Hindus and Muslims — this question we are unable to answer. Were elections to be held to municipal institutions, Muslims would probably be in a majority among those elected. The probability that in such a situation their political weight, however modest, might favour the Muslim exporters probably gives the Punjabi merchants an uneasy feeling. We discuss to this matter below.

Since manufacturing in Moradabad is organised in small-scale, subcontracting units, there are obvious difficulties in organising the working class. We could not investigate the matter in depth, but we suspect that the exporters corner the lion's share of the surplus value, while the subcontracting workshop owner may often be a direct producer himself, sharing the worker's religious identity in a milieu seen to be hostile. The tensions of class conflict, when active trade union organisation has no clear focus, may, therefore, often be felt as between Punjabi Hindu exporters and the local Muslim producers. There are Muslim exporters too; but these tensions, due to the reasons stated above tend to be articulated through communal terms rather than class terms. In the elections to the State legislature in May 1980, for example, the principal contest was between a Congress (I) Muslim candidate and a RSS backed Punjabi candidate of the Bharatiya Janata

¹⁰ Interviews with Maulana Kalzum Ansari and Mr. S. Najmul Hasan Advocate. Most Muslims we interviewed were aware of the importance of *Angrezi Talim* (western education) and regretted that, in spite of the efforts of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the community was educationally backward.

Party which drew political and financial sustenance from the rich brass merchants and grain traders of Moradabad, Sambhal ... and Chandansi.¹¹ The contest was turned by the Congress (I) organisations into one between the locals (of all religions) and the Punjabi outsiders, with somewhat menacing undertones of chasing the latter out of town. The Punjabis' connection with the RSS is said to be generally strong; they took the threat seriously.

These identities — Punjabi versus local, Hindu versus Muslim — are spacious enough to absorb varied other tensions too, e.g. those arising due to the substantial dent the Muslim traders are making by exporting to West Asia on their own account. In this 'free enterprise' economy, such ups and downs are routine—the Mahishyas in Howrah's small engineering sector outcompete the Brahmins and Kayasthas; Ramgarhia and other Sikhs in Punjab far outpace the Hindu Khatri in industry; Syrian Christians in Kerala buy up lands for plantations from the Nairs; aggressive Marwaris and Gujaratis often get the better of Parsis. But if the Muslims in Moradabad — or a handful among them — come into a measure of affluence, their rivals are quick to point to foreign money (a foreignness invisible in the Punjabi exporter's wealth), and to whip up communal frenzy resulting in large-scale destruction of property and the migration of people from one area to another. A senior police official has rightly observed that 'adventurism can succeed best only in chaos and confusion, and the political and economic adventure knows that the best form of confusion, instability and panic can be generated only by a communal riot'. (*Sunday* 1981, 9).

If social consciousness in Moradabad is organised strongly in religious categories, this is not unconnected with the strong Islamic

¹¹ We have not dealt with the role of the RSS because it was difficult to ascertain some of the facts pointing to its 'complicity' in the events leading to the communal outbreak in August. Some of the leading Congressmen were, however, closely associated with RSS activities. These included Mr. Vinod Gupta, a close associate of Mr. N. D. Tewari, Mr. Dinesh Rastogi, Mr. Mahesh Rastogi, a former MLA from Sambhal and Mr. Dayanand Gupta, President of the City Congress Committee. Prof. B. S. Verma of K.G.K. College, Moradabad, told us that the RSS activists published posters commending the role of the PAC and the CRP

religious presence in town. There are two long established *madaras*, providing religious instruction for the future *maulvis* and other religious workers. Given the town's composition, there is a large number of mosques, and the calls to prayer go out on loud-speakers regularly. Our stay in Moradabad was too brief for us to judge the specifics of communal organisation, Hindu or Muslim; but given the long history of communal conflict, with public force often poised against them in recent years, it would be surprising if the Muslims did not feel the need to secure for themselves a considerable measure of armed protection.

These engines of religious -- or communal -- consciousness are not much countered by secular institutions. We have noted the lack of elective municipal bodies and the weakness of trade union activity. There are a great many schools and a dozen colleges, these later controlled largely by their Hindu patrons. We often heard of the damaging consequences of many kinds of commercialisation for the content of education and for teachers' status. With a minor exception or two, these institutions are *not* neutral ground for discussing conflict or for mediating in disturbed situations. One meets articulate college teachers, but often hears only a communal view from them. We met only a very few individuals able to view their social milieu critically -- and to act upon it with disinterested passion.

IV

The bare bones of the events on Ramzan Id day, 13 August 1980, in Moradabad are fairly well known, but we recount them briefly to establish the context, relying largely upon the report in *Sunday* (1980) by the weekly's editor, Mr. M. J. Akbar, who reached the city on 15 August.

Some 80,000 Muslims had gathered at the Idgah, and the Id prayers were in progress. A pig wandered in, violating the Muslim sense of cleanliness appropriate to the sanctity of prayer. Some people asked the attending policemen why the pig had been let in, and were told that guarding pigs was not the job of the police. An altercation followed, and grew so rapidly as to make any precise sequence difficult to establish.

Brickbatting from the crowd, firing by the police, an injured police officer, and scores of *namazis* shot dead, all took place within about five minutes while the prayer drew to a close. "The tragedy of Moradabad", declared an aggrieved Syed Shahabuddin in Parliament, "is nothing but Jallianwala Bagh re-enacted. Both happened on a day of rejoicing. Both occurred in a closed place, and the firing in both instances took place, from the only exit and the point of entry that was there, against the people congregated there."

A stampede followed the police firing, in which 50 more people lost their lives. The furious crowd surging out of the Idgah roughed up policemen in different localities on its way. Later in the evening a Muslim mob attacked the Gulshahid police *chowki*, killing two policemen burning a portion of the *chowki*, and stealing two rifles. Nothing on that day can be construed as an attack by Muslims upon Hindus; it was rather the gross over-reaction of the police to the altercation at the Idgah, leading to Muslim fury, which in turn invited grotesquely brutal, escalatory reprisals by the police upon them, including in areas adjoining the police outpost of Gulshahid.

Before proceeding further, we may pause and wonder at the swift pace at which violence grew. Communal tension did not spring upon overnight; the climate for its growth had been assiduously, if thoughtlessly, nurtured over the months with the knowledge and often silent consent of the district administration.¹² Our probes for such prior antagonisms between the Muslims and police brought mention of various incidents a month or a year or two prior to this 13 August. Beyond that there is the petty tyranny of the neighbourhood policemen, which the ordinary Muslim is normally too weak to resist, but whose memory remains to prepare the ground for ultimate explosion. Such an explosion is, in turn, immensely punitive and, after a while one returns to the workaday life. Normalcy appears to be restored at least on the surface.

To return to the aftermath of 13 August. The disturbances in the city were usually long-drawn-out, with fresh outbreaks

¹² The background is provided in the *Sunday* (1981) and, more perceptively in the articles published in the *Patriot* (1980)

beginning on 10 September and 20 October. The particular events touching these latter half are inconsequential. Important throughout is the immensely punitive stance taken by the city police and the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) towards the Muslims. Hundreds of men were dragged out of their homes, beaten up, and locked up.¹³ Scores of men had their arms, knuckles, legs, and ankles broken by the police in cold blood. Except on the last occasion, the curfew was enforced only against the Muslims; Hindus were free to come and go at will.

Akbar's report and all other accounts agree that on 13 August and for several days after, there was no conflict between the Hindus — other than policemen — and the Muslims. The magnitude of police violence, however, had widespread repercussions in several towns in North India on 15 August; and the Moradabad police force appears to have been under pressure to divert attention from itself. It sought to do this by inciting Hindus to attack the Muslims, as in Barbaran *mohalla*, to simulate a communal riot. In this enterprise it may have received help from the group which had lost in the May 1980 elections; to have the socio-political boundaries reinforced in Hindu-Muslim terms would suit them too.

The police efforts succeeded. Several Hindus told us that policemen went around taunting Hindus to attack the Muslims, and, at least in one instance the PAC allowed students of K.G.K. College to launch an organised assault on the Muslims of Pul Pa'ar Colony. Students of the same college are reported to have led a mob to Ram Talaiya, a village across the railway lines, and burnt alive 15 men, women and children. (*Patriot* 1980).

To generate the requisite fire among the Hindus, diverse rumours were planted. The Hindu principal of a major college told us that he received a phone call, by someone who declined to identify himself, that the city's water supply had been poisoned; there were numerous such phone calls. A rumour announ-

¹³ Such were the varied experiences of Babu Nabi Husain, Akhtar Jahan, Jamil Ahmad (his brother-in-law was murdered on 18 October near the Katghar thana), Mohammad Hasan and Sadiq Hussain.

ced that the Shiva temple next to the cremation ground had been demolished and its priest killed; in retaliation, Muslims living in the Line-par area lost their lives and a mosque in the area was demolished.¹⁴ In fact, neither the temple nor the priest had been touched.

The rumour on 14 August that a certain PAC platoon had been wiped out by the Muslims persuaded other PAC jawans to kill ten men who had been brought into the Kotwali by the police, by beating them to death with sticks. A leading advocate in the town told us that when on 16 August, in Patparsarai there was a rumour that Muslims were going to attack the area and that; urging Hindus should get ready to defend themselves, Hindus assembled with whatever weapon they could lay their hands on. A police jeep came and shot a Hindu down. The advocate and some others who later asked the police the reason for their action were told that Muslims in police uniform, roaming around in a jeep, had done the killing! The victim's family was given Rs. 5,000 in compensation.

There was a rumour that a man, Sunil—no further detail—and a girl had been taken off a rickshaw; the hearer could draw his own inferences. The (Muslim) MLA was rumoured to be distributing arms from a white Ambassador car. Muslims were credited with large arsenals, gathered in preparation for an uprising. Hindu *goondas* enjoyed immunity; they took Muslims off buses coming into the city bus-stand and killed them in broad day light on Grand Trunk Road. The evidence of the frenzy among the Hindus being whipped up by the police is overwhelming. This is how communal frenzy is created.

During at least the first two bouts beginning 13 August and 10 September, the curfew was enforced for Muslims alone. The police are reported to have made deals with Hindu *goondas* over sharing the spoils from the looting of Muslim shops. Some Hindu looters were arrested too, but charged with the light offence of breaking the curfew. The advocate told us that a senior police official is reported to have said that some Hindus too had

¹⁴ Interview with Fakir Chand, an activist of the Students' Federation of India.

to be arrested in order to fill in the quota. Judicial action on the granting of bail and the like were generally such as to let the Hindus off lightly and to come down hard on the Muslims.

Clearly the Muslims were up against not only the police but also the judiciary. This applied to the news media too. Akbar's report in the *Sunday* (1980) is quite exceptional. Most reports were filed by newsmen who stayed away from Muslim areas, believing the administration's warning that their lives would not be safe there. These reports tended to reflect the police - and the Hindu-communal—view of what was happening in the city.

V

The events of Moradabad bear witness to the regression of a society and of its political, administrative, and judicial organs to a depth where one may no longer speak of the norms of a minimally civilised community. Within the city, to be sure, a few Hindus continued to help Muslims throughout the terror—among them Mr. Kishen Sharma, a trade unionist, and Mr. Umesh Caerey, a city journalist. They retained the Muslims' confidence throughout, and their good offices enabled us to reach a wide range of Muslims as well as Hindus during our brief visits. Such exceptions apart, what is striking about this bustling, 'prosperous' city is its woeful poverty in matters of head and heart, its lack of thought and effort over the manner in which life in the city might be organised, its lack of any feeling for a community of interests at any level.

How is it, one asks in despair, that the children of two great religious traditions, citizens of a country that lays claim to being a world leader, can be so inept and often so brutal in their mutual relations? Communal killings at Moradabad and elsewhere are discussed extensively, charges are traded, guilt proclaimed without any investigation, scapegoats sought, and appeals made for communal harmony. These shallow echoes of the poverty of thought, feeling, and effort noted earlier bespeak too profound a social crisis in Indian society, a crisis whose depths and dimensions we cannot consider here. It is evident, however, that even 'prosperous' urban centres like Moradabad lack the in-

tellectual and moral resources needed to use what is available for creating a halfway civilised round of life for their inhabitants. We are persuaded that, if those of us who present ourselves on our rational, secular worldviews are unable, or unwilling, to find ways to reach such centres, the malignancies being fostered there will in quick time come to engulf our metropolitan islands too.

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TWO SIDES OF A COIN :
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE RIOTS
AT GODHRA AND UDAIPUR

Dr. Zainab Banu

Communalism is an Indian characteristic. Other countries, too, have their national problems of racial groups or minorities. Each country employs its wisdom in diagnosing; and providing prescriptions for solving such problems. Our understanding of Indian communalism suggests that it has gained some new dimensions in post-independent India.

During the British period communalism—with communal riots as its major manifestation—was based on the 'two nation theory' and in that context it was presumed that partition would solve the problem for ever. But in effect our comprehension of the Hindu-Muslim reality appeared erroneous. It is claimed by a research monograph (Harman 1977) that after India's independence about eight thousand riots have occurred; this works out, on an average, to almost one riot a day. In the sixties of this century, the country was rocked by formidably frequent riots.

It was natural, therefore, to ask: When Pakistan has been created, why does the country still have riots? The question was answered by people from different sections of society—politicians, political scientists, national leaders and a few others—differently.

The present paper also attempts to answer this much-debated question. The argument is that some significant structural changes have occurred in the nature of Indian communalism since independence, mainly at two levels: one, at the level of Muslim social structure, and two, at the level of national politics.

The Muslims wanted to secure a reasonable share in the power distribution and the allocation of economic resources both in terms

of trade and services. With the emergence of independent India and the promulgation of the Constitution along with the implementation of various political and economic reforms, the numerical strength and political influence of the Muslim elite gradually declined at the national level. Soon after independence the Muslim elite further lost their economic base. The abolition of *Zamindari* and *Jagirdari* alienated them from the rural Muslim masses. The elite confined to urban areas only too soon realised that Muslim politics could only be effective with the incorporation of the educated middle class and the *Ulema* in the mainstream of Muslim politics. In the post-independence period, therefore, the elite came closer to the educated middle class and *Ulema*, thus widening their area of political operation. Their dependence on the *Ulema* to establish rapport with the rural masses made them appear, at least in public, as orthodox Muslims. The overall nature of Muslim communalism in free India did not change because of the numerical strength of the middle classes and the rural masses. It was a queer combination of westernised elite, traditional *Ulema* and the rural masses.

The tensions and riots involving Hindus and Muslims indicate that the Muslims have tried in free India to establish themselves as a strong national minority. Dixit (1974) characterises the Muslim minority group by three dimensional attributes: "Religion makes the Muslims a religious minority, their claim on behalf of Urdu converts this minority into a religio-linguistic minority, and separate cultural identity so assiduously maintained by the Muslims provides them the basis to claim, directly or in an implied manner, the status of a national minority as well."

To consolidate themselves the Muslims have been emphasising the acceptance of Urdu as the second official language and the Northern Indian Muslim culture as an important medium for establishing intra-communal unity.

The riots during the period between August 1947 and 1960 indicate a broad trend towards the emergence of Muslims as a national minority along with the emergence of Hindu political power. The reactivation of the RSS, and at a later stage the foundation of Akhil Bharatiya Jansangh in 1951 presented a complex political scene at the national level. Their ideology, it is

alleged, largely stems from Hindu nationalism and Hindu culture, for the Jansangh believes that the Hindu nationalism is Indian nationalism and the Hindu culture is Indian culture. Balraj Madhok, an ex-M.P. and a powerful leader of the Jansangh, expounded the theory of Indianisation. By Indianisation he tried to isolate Indian Muslims from the national mainstream. Its economic and social ideology is based on creating a feeling of equality and one-ness in Hindu society. This throws a challenge to the Muslim minority. In the democratic set-up of our country there are nationalist secular forces also. But Muslims have to combat the ideology put forward by organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and other similar organisations.

In the early fifties the Hindu leadership, partly with the support of some sections of national leadership, attempted to create a situation for the establishment of a theocratic and feudal state in India providing protection to Hindus. Recruitment of Muslims in the police was stopped under a Ministerial order saying that the Muslims had been over-represented in the past. The evacuees property law was used to deprive Muslims of their property on a mass scale (Mathur n.d., 8). As a result of official industrial policy the small-scale industries in which a vast majority of the artisans engaged were Muslims suffered a serious setback all over the country. Thus the Government axe fell heavily on the weavers of Bihar and eastern UP, lock-makers of Aligarh, bangle-makers of Firozabad, brassware workers of Moradabad, *zari*-workers and carpet-makers of Lucknow and Varanasi, and tanners and leather-workers of Lucknow and Agra. Similarly, the abolition of the *Zamindari* Act affected a large section of Muslim middle classes. (Mathur n.d., 9).

The economic policies followed by the Government of India, which were essentially capitalist, made the Muslim masses miserable. They construed their economic difficulties as a deliberate attempt to break their backbone and drive them out of the country. This feeling was strengthened as a result of the special features of the communal disturbances as "almost every riot was accompanied by efforts to seize Muslims'-property and give it to the refugees from West Pakistan (Mathur n.d. 9).

The conclusion drawn from the history of communalism is that it is an intercommunal class conflict between the Muslim and

Hindu elite through which both the communities become antagonistic and come in to conflict to gain political power. In a democratic setup there are various alternative ways to gain political power, one being the superior numerical strength of a group in a region. The Muslims as a minority group hardly have any local majorities except in regions like Kashmir valley. A surer alternative of gaining power is to win the battle of control over economic resources. In free India, the Muslims have now taken to competition with the Hindu elite in the field of controlling the means of production. In short, our guess is that in post-independence India Muslim communalism has been essentially a class conflict; communalism oriented to seeking political power.

The concept of class has assumed different attributes in the historical and socio-cultural background of our country. It has converged with ethnicity and it operates within the ethnic system. It lacks class consciousness beyond the ethnic or cultural framework. For instance, there would be 'haves' among the Muslims and also among the Hindus. The 'haves' of both communities do have some alignment in matters which concern them both, but when the question of their own ethnic group arises they would align with the latter. Within the Muslim or Hindu group itself the 'haves' would cherish class distinctions, but in matters of marriage and other socio-cultural obligations they would fall in line with their own people. This class-feeling causes them to arouse the sentiments of the masses of their ethnic group when their economic interests are at stake

Another aspect of the problem is that communalism has local specificities both political and economic. The nature of the relationship between the two groups in terms of class formation and political rivalry varies from region to region. The differential make up of the local economic and political structure, therefore, determines to a great extent the nature of communalism.

We may now compare Udaipur and Godhra. The choice of these towns is due to a common factor in both, viz., class rivalry between the two groups belonging to Hindu and Muslims. The common man, in both the groups and both the places, is manipulated and exploited on grounds of tradition and religion. But still there seem to be basic differences in the nature, mechanism

and causes of the communal violence in these places. Both have their own specificities in terms of historico-political and socio-economic make-up.

Since 1948 two communal riots have occurred at Udaipur, in 1965 and 1966. On both occasions the riots developed and grew on the same lines, and almost the very same shops of the Bohras (65 and 86 respectively) were burnt or looted in the old markets of Dhan Mandi, Mochiwara, Bara Bazaar and Moti Chohatta localities. The Bohras had no hand whatever at any stage in the development of the riot. Both times the riots erupted¹ due to a quarrel between a Hindu and a Sunni Muslim; but unfortunately the Bohras became victims. The local Sunni Muslims who are economically poor, socially backward and temperamentally aggressive hardly own any business, and are largely low paid wage-earners; they neither present any challenge in the competitive market economy to the non-Muslim groups nor have they anything to lose. The Bohras, on the other hand, are a potential, in fact, real, business force in direct competition with the Hindu business elite in the open market. The Hindu business elite had then been reinforced by the immigrant refugees from Pakistan who too found the Bohras a commercial impediment in their business prospects and activity. The tension between the two neighbours, essentially a private affair, nonetheless provided an opportunity to be grabbed for settling business scores by recourse to violence in the streets.

At Godhra too the communal violence was caused by class rivalry—between the Bhaiband caste of Sindhis Hindus and Ghanchi Muslims. The former came to the town after partition with a feeling of hatred and enmity towards the local Muslims. Their immediate need was largely to find places of accommodation in the old localities and partly to capture the prevailing petty

¹ The riot in 1965 broke out on 19 July, as a result of a minor scuffle between two neighbours, one Hindu and the other a Sunni Muslim. Two persons were killed in police firing and 12 injured. Property worth Rs. 12 lakhs was destroyed and 65 shops were looted.

The following year another riot broke out on 13 November, as a result of conflict between two wrestlers, one a Teli (a lower Hindu caste) and the other a Kunjara (fruit and vegetable selling Muslims). One person died in police firing and 86 shops were looted in the riot.

trades of the town. They therefore adopted the technique of violence by which they compelled the local Muslims to leave the town. To some extent they succeeded in their intention; in 1948 they occupied about 3500 Muslim properties after communal violence. In the four major riots since 1948, Sindhis continued to be the aggressors. These riots have been discussed in detail in Mr. Asghar Ali Engineer's article, 'Case Studies of Five Major Riots from Biharsharif to Pune'.

Although communal hatred has its roots in economy, the riots in both the places represent their own specificities—in the class formation, achievements, targets of attack, casualties political colour after rioting and other such matters.

At Udaipur the rivalry was between the haves of both the communities—the leading figures who had their hold upon the business of the city were the competitors. The control of the market was then in the hands of Bohras who are comparatively better educated, have a higher standard of living and are by nature and temperament very liberal and polite, having greater degree of tolerance.

Thus at Udaipur the riots were not so severe as compared to those in Godhra, in terms of the loss of life and destruction of residential localities. However, in Godhra the class rivalry even today lies between Ghanchi Muslims and Sindhis. Therefore, due to different patterns of class formation, the riots of Godhra involved a greater degree of cruelty and bloodshed. Both the communities here are equally militant, fanatic and have been obviously taking part in the violence.

The major result of the communal riot at Udaipur was to break down the monopoly of Bohras as wholesale dealers in different business areas. For example, Ismail Ali² monopolised for years the wholesale trade of bicycles and their spare parts, tyres and tubes. This dealer, known as the "King", served the neighbourhood of Udaipur in the fifties. In the 1965 riots his entire business establishment and the godown were burnt to ashes. In fact Ismail Ali was rendered penniless. The State Government, by way of compensation, offered him subsidies and loans to restart business. But by the time he could re-establish himself, several formidable competitors had already entered the market. In 1966

² For obvious reasons the name used is fictitious.

the godowns and the shop of Ismail Ali were again set ablaze. After the second disaster, Ismail Ali was more than bankrupt; he still had to pay the loans taken from the Government. Ismail Ali found himself completely ruined by the catastrophe of the riots (Banu 1978).

In Godhra the objectives (which are yet not fully achieved) were (i) to capture more and more accommodation in Ghanchi localities, (ii) to strongly plant their (Sindhis) foot in the retailer's business specially in rapidly developing areas.

The targets of attack in the Udaipur riots were only the commercial apartments, shops and godowns belonging to Bohras spread over the old markets of the city. Unlike in Godhra neither was any house burnt nor was any Mosque or temple desecrated. It may, however, be noted that shops owned by Bohras were looted and burnt. The Hindu apartments converted into shops and let out to Bohras received somewhat different treatment; their saleable consumer items were taken out and set on fire, but the shops were not burnt. Chamanpur, the iron and hardware market, was less hit primarily because of the type of commodities it stored and also because the rioters feared Sunni Muslims residing in the nearby lanes.

At Godhra, along with shops, residential properties were also set ablaze, as housing has really been a problem for the Sindhis ever since they came to this town, as stated by Mr. Engineer in his article in the book.

In Godhra besides houses holy places were also targets of attack by the respective communities. A Mahaprabhu temple was allegedly attacked by the Ghanchis³ and on the other side the Bhashbawa mosque near a police *chowki* was attacked and its front portion was greatly damaged. A school belonging to Muslims was also partly destroyed.

The casualty in terms of loss of life is much higher in Godhra than Udaipur.⁴ The simple fact lying behind this is that in Udai-

³ However, on proper verification this was not found to be true. (Ed)

⁴ In Udaipur, 2 persons were killed during the communal riots as a result of police firing. At Godhra, the greater number of alleged deaths were due to stabbing; since 1948 more than 10 persons have been killed some in rival group clashes and less than half of them in police firing.

pur the Bohras who remained sole victims never involved themselves at any stage in the riot, a characteristic of the elite classes of society who do not actively involve themselves in the act of rioting, but play their role from behind the scenes through their hired *goondas*. These hired rioters run away from the scene as soon as their goal is achieved. But at Godhra both the communities belonging to the lower strata participated equally in the rioting and could easily be identified by observers. Another important factor responsible for the higher casualty at Godhra is that here both the parties were victims and bore losses of life and property, though in different degrees.

All the above differences fairly prove that the local socio-economic structure of a region has a direct bearing upon the nature of communal riots.

The demographic picture of both the regions makes a great difference. At Godhra the percentage of Muslim population is 40%. Ghanchi Muslims alone account for 22.2% of the general population whereas their rival Sindhis account for only 8.8%. Obviously the Ghanchi Muslims have a comfortable margin of population over their rival Sindhis. Though the other Hindus also join hands with the Sindhis in most cases, the Ghanchis are a match for them.

Compared to Godhra, Udaipur has only 17% Muslim population (Government of India 1971, 28) of which the Bohras account for 9% of the total city population. This small group can safeguard its interest only by maintaining friendly relations with the majority community of the city.

The economies of the two regions with their respective groups represent two different models. At Udaipur until the occurrence of riots the Bohras always enjoyed a dominant position over their rivals. This monopoly was resented by the majority community in the city, and ultimately by engineering communal riots it achieved its target of destroying this monopoly. But at Godhra rivalry for petty trading and accommodation appeared after the advent of a new social group — the Bhaiband Sindhis who posed a challenge to the comparable group residing originally in the town, i.e., the Ghanchi Muslims. Prior to the advent of the Sindhis the Ghanchis had a hold on the petty trade of the city, but soon they were confronted by the new competitors in this

field and ultimately this rivalry changed into communal hatred and tension.

Historically speaking Udaipur is a city of 'Rajputana state' which had neither direct British rule nor any Muslim problem. The general communal hatred did not develop here and both the Hindus and Muslims lived in quiet harmony. But with the advent of the Sindhis (upper caste) after partition the city population was gradually injected with communal hatred which ultimately burst into communal riot, with the intention of breaking down the monopoly of the minority group in the city business.

Godhra has its own history of communal harmony before the partition of the country. But when newcomers landed on its soil there appeared clouds of hatred and tension which ultimately unleashed a severe communal riot in the year 1948. In Godhra, there was communal harmony before 1948. Ever since 1948, the Sindhis have posed a challenge to the Ghanchi Muslims causing riots in 1965 and 1966. Interestingly enough, from 1965 upto 1980 the city experienced communal peace and harmony. For over a decade both the rivals co-operated with each other in their daily business activities.

However, once again, after a 15-year gap there erupted the communal riot in October 1980 between the Ghanchis and Sindhis.

The inhabitants of Udaipur and particularly the Bohras, retained the capsule character of their society and therefore no outsider dared to try for accommodation in it. But in Godhra the Ghanchis who are in a majority within the Muslim fold, are spread all over the city and hold sizeable chunks of lands. This property holding by Ghanchis became a bone of contention and led to communal violence in the Sindhi bid to capture their properties.

To sum up, this paper claims that the problem of communalism is essentially an Indian phenomenon based on local level economic, social and political factors. The main thrust of the study has been diagnostic in nature and no depth analysis has been done to suggest remedial measures. It is assumed that several solutions have already been tried ever since the outbreak of communal riots. In view of the analytical findings of the study — giving the cause of the economic competition based on local factors one prescription can be hypothesised: To check the occurrence of riots it is necessary to develop competitiveness on rational lines. What we

need to emphase is that the trading classes should keep economic transactions purely on the plane of economics. Competition is a vital part of any modern economy, but it should surely not be on communal grounds.

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CASE STUDIES OF FIVE MAJOR RIOTS FROM BIHARSHARIF TO PUNE

Asghar Ali Engineer

I. Biharsharif Carnage — A Field Inquiry

It appears that caste and communal violence have become endemic in modern India. Caste violence and communal violence follow each other alternately in one part or the other of the country. Though caste and communal prejudices undoubtedly play an important role in the eruption of such violence, close investigations reveal that invariably various powerful interests, chiefly political and economic as well as some others of local variety, are pitted against each other, and these prove to be the real causes of caste and communal conflict. These powerful interests exploit caste and communal prejudice as an instrument for realising their own ends. Who cares if thousands of innocent people, caught in the cross-fire of these conflicting interests, lose their lives and properties?

The story of the Biharsharif communal carnage of 1981 is no different. We visited Biharsharif on 12 May when normalcy had apparently been restored and curfew relaxed during the day. Field investigations for understanding the nature of the communal conflict and the real causes of the catastrophe convincingly showed that much more than religious conflict alone was involved — much more than what meets the eye of a newspaper reader covering the events in a casual manner.

Biharsharif is a town — its population being around 1,30,000 in 1971 — situated on the Patna-Ranchi road about 80 km from Patna. It is the district head quarters of the newly-created Nalanda district. Muslims account for 48% of its population — a high ratio which is rarely found in other major towns of India. The

town also has religious significance. There are holy shrines of Makhdum Sahib — a Muslim religious saint — and Mani Baba — the Hindu saint. These shrines attract thousands of faithfuls from their respective communities from all over Bihar, and the anniversaries of both the saints are celebrated every year with great fanfare. Most of the people settled in the town have come from nearby villages in search of livelihood. The town is thus fast expanding with land prices soaring day by day. This fact is important and helps one to understand the nature of the present conflict.

The town has no record of previous major communal riots although it has not been free of communal tension ever since partition. Another significant feature of the town is its *bidi* industry which, according to Dr. Abdus Samad, a researcher of Patna University, employs nearly 15,000 workers, most of whom are Muslims. The others in the industry are low-caste Hindus. Next come the weavers who are the traditional residents of the town. Needless to say a large majority of the Muslim population is very poor and earns its livelihood by working in the *bidi* industry. There are some old Muslim *zamindar* families but their number is fast dwindling as they are taking up new professions. *Bidi* manufacturing units are generally owned by Muslims.

The low castes among the Hindus are either employed in the *bidi* industry or in other odd jobs. The Sonis and Telis are business communities while the Yadavas (who were mainly embroiled with the Muslims in the communal holocaust) are cultivators. Biharsharif is also known for potato cultivation which is quite profitable. A number of cold-storages have sprung up in the town for storing potatoes before they are sent out. This has brought a measure of prosperity to the town and has sent land prices soaring high. The large Muslim population accounts for the number of cemeteries. In fact certain localities are dotted with graveyards. In view of the soaring land prices many people have their eyes on these cemetery lands. It is not insignificant that the immediate cause of the communal flare-up was a dispute, between the Muslims and the Yadavas, over a piece of cemetery land.

According to Dinanath Singh of the *Indian Nation*, a daily from Patna. "The town of Biharsharif is full of graveyards most

of which have been shown in records as '*gairmazura*' lands. There are disputes regarding almost all of them and issues are also pending in courts of law for years together. While men of one community (i.e., Muslims) want these lands to be demarcated and fenced as graveyards, a section of the other community (i.e., the Yadavas) claims it as fields or '*khalihans*'. At some of the places the latter has succeeded in raising huts. There are 23 such points in the town where men are living since long in a state of strife and mutual distrust."

Towards the end of 1980 a dispute over a piece of cemetery land was going on between the Muslims and Yadavas at a place called Gagandivan. Azmat Husain Khan, a lecturer in history from Biharsharif, told us that this land on a hillock belonged to the Muslims but the Yadavas were claiming it as their own. The Yadavas, according to Mr. Husain, came in strength in the dead of the night, constructed a temple overnight and covered it with cow-dung to hide it from others. As the land was grazing ground for animals, cow-dung heaps were a normal sight. The plan was to 'discover' the temple a few months later in order to claim the land. However, the Muslims noticed it a month later and a pitched battle was fought between the two groups using bombs and bullets. Fortunately, there were no serious casualties and the police brought the situation under control.

The local CPI MLA told us that he pleaded with the authorities to settle the land dispute. Without any further action they simply kept the plot under police guard. Tension prevailed for about four months. According to Azmat Husain, a deputation on behalf of the Anjuman-i-Mufidul Islam met the district collector on 25 April and persuaded him to settle the question amicably to avoid further trouble. The collector agreed to call a joint meeting on 1 May and to survey the land under dispute. He also agreed to settle the disputes in respect of other cemetery plots. This news, according to the members of the Anjuman, disturbed the Yadavas who were not sure of proving their claim. The members of the Anjuman further alleged that the Yadavas were bent upon 'sabotaging' any such efforts on the part of the authorities.

Apart from this land dispute — which represents an economic factor — there is a political dimension of the conflict which is

equally, perhaps more important. Due to the high ratio of Muslims in the population, according to Dr. Abdus Samad, the town is a 'hot-bed of politics'. In the municipal elections 32 ward commissioners are elected, of which the Muslim share is 50 to 60 per cent. Of the chairman and vice-chairman, one is always a Muslim. In the first, second and third general elections the area was represented in the State assembly by Muslim candidates. In the fourth general elections, a communist candidate who was a non-Muslim was elected with Muslim votes. But due to its policy towards the Bihari Muslims in Bangla Desh, the CPI lost much of its influence and, in the 1972 elections, a Jansangh candidate won, obviously with Muslim support. However, the CPI regained its seat in the 1977 elections.

The CPI stronghold in Biharsharif is largely due to its trade union for *bidi* workers. According to the local CPI secretary, more than 3000 *bidi* workers are its members. The present MP is also a CPI candidate. Needless to say, the CPI owes this election largely to the Muslim vote. Even the members of the Anjuman-i-Mufidul Islam admitted this fact. The RSS, on the other hand, strongly resents this all pervading influence of the CPI, specially among the Muslims. The RSS is trying to spread its network in the area. Presently it runs a number of *shakhas* in different localities of the town. It finds its support among the business communities representing the Teli and Soni castes. It is making determined efforts to induce communal consciousness among the Hindus in order to combat the CPI influence. Moreover, it knows very well that communal riots make Muslims over-conscious of their religion and drive them into the fold of conservative forces.

A section of Muslims have registered greater upward social mobility. They have their share in trade and commerce. They have their own markets, cold storages and shares in cinema halls, according to the research paper by Dr. Abdus Samad. They have started two high schools and one college. This upward social mobility and greater ability for economic competitiveness on the part of Muslims creates resentment among the section of the Hindu community aspiring for a greater share in the economic development. The Yadavas are a fast-rising caste due to their

highly profitable cultivation of potatoes, and thus come into immediate economic conflict with the Muslims.

The RSS, I was told by some politically conscious people, used the resentment of the Yadavas against Muslims, specially on land disputes, to spark off riots. Of course behind the scene planning was done by the RSS. No conscientious observer of the Biharsharif scene can deny the role of the RSS in the Biharsharif riot. The then Chief Minister of Bihar Dr. Jagannath himself, in a press statement, unequivocally blamed the RSS for fomenting the communal trouble. Addressing a crowded press conference in Patna on 8 May Dr. Jagannath said that among the 550 arrested persons at Biharsharif were five well-known office-bearers of the RSS. He further said that a prominent RSS activist of the town, whose name has been mentioned in the dying declaration of a riot victim (a woman who is alleged to have been killed with her six-day-old baby by him) of Alinagar village, was wanted by the police. Orders for attachment of his property had been issued and were served; the district collector Mr. R. S. Singh confirmed on being questioned by me.

The person concerned, Raj Kishore, is *Nagar Karyavahu* (city in-charge) of the RSS and lives in Biharsharif itself. Many inmates of the refugee camps which we visited named him as leading the mob attacks.

The drunken brawl on 30 April was merely an excuse. Yadavas, who wanted to sabotage the district authorities' attempt to settle the graveyard disputes, came in conflict with the Muslims, and the RSS was waiting in the wings to start the massacre. After the brawl on the toddy plot at about 3 p.m. all the impartial observers in Biharsharif testify that the police, although nearby (a police post was established there due to prevailing tension), miserably failed to bring the situation under control. Soon after the brawl the town was bristling with rumours, and killing and looting started. By 7 p.m. shops and houses in far away localities were being burnt and looted. The first victim to die was a retired police constable Qamrul Hasan who was done to death couple of kilometres away from the original scene of the brawl.

Next day, during curfew hours, a mob attacked Alinagar where mostly poor Muslims lived. Akhtar Husain, a victim from a relief camp who had witnessed the scene told us that at about

12.30 P.M. a mob from Teli Mohallah came with bombs and guns and other weapons and attacked and completely burnt 12 houses in which about 120 people lived. One man and 14 women and children were killed. According to Akhtar Husain, Rajkishore and Pannalal (another RSS activist) led the mob. Those who survived ran away for shelter, and finally landed in the relief camp which until 10 May was being run by the Anjuman-i-Mufidul Islam activists.

Akbari, a 17-year-old woman told us that her husband was done to death in her presence. Her cries for mercy were heard by no one. In spite of her pleading with everyone who she thought could help to trace her husband's body, it had not been traced until 11 May. One Momtaz from Alinagar, we were told, lost 6 persons from his family and when he went to complain to the police, he himself was arrested. Admitting Momtaz's arrest, Mr. R. S. Singh maintained that he was wanted in another case and now orders have been issued to release him. So much for the human treatment by our police authorities.

It was a common complaint that the Bihar Military Police abetted the goondas in looting and burning properties and killing people. The victims testified before us that but for the arrival of the BSF and CRP the toll of life and property in Biharsharif town would have been much higher. The BSF and CRP displayed remarkable impartiality in handling the situation, and saved many lives and properties. The collector also had to admit this fact. The BMP, on the other hand, made no bones about its anti-Muslim bias.

The fact that the Chief Minister had to order the arrest of two district magistrates and the suspension of six, testifies to the role played by the local police and authorities. The charge against these magistrates, according to the CM's statement to the press, was that they abetted crime while on duty during the period of communal disturbances. However, in view of pulls and pressures and weak Congress (I) administration, many were doubtful whether these two magistrates were really arrested. The announcement, according to these sources, was made only to mollify public opinion.

In Biharsharif itself the loss of life was not more than 20. But actual disaster took place in nearby villages. The RSS macau-

nery worked systematically to spread false rumours in these villages. The local CPI MLA told us that the RSS activists visited rural areas in jeeps and scooters equipped with loudspeakers to announce that 200 Yadavas have been killed by the Muslims. From 1 May 1981, the authorities had clamped round the clock curfew in Biharsharif town. The villagers who normally go to the town during the day could not do so, and hence the rumour-mongers had a field day. Earlier there was no tension in these villages. Though the rumour about the killing of the Yadavas— a dominant agricultural community — created tense atmosphere, the village people did not take the initiative in killing the fellow-villager Muslims. The RSS organised mobs from the town went to attack the Muslims.

Umar Khan, aged 65, a peasant from Gulni village — one of the worst affected villages — told us that he did not remember having witnessed any communal riot since 1947. Hindus and Muslims had lived in complete harmony. There was no communal tension either. Only when rumours began to spread on 1 May they felt apprehensive. On 2 May a mob equipped with bombs, rifles and other lethal weapons attacked the village at 5 a.m. (Another victim insisted it was 6 a.m.). Other villagers, mainly Paswans (a Harijan caste) and Gwalas (Yadavas) joined the attackers. They kept on looting, burning and killing until it was dark. The police did not arrive. In all 13 persons were killed and 60 injured, many of whom were women and children. Draft animals were taken away and all belongings looted. The houses were either completely burnt or demolished. The inmates of the Nalanda college relief camp who came from Gulni village numbered around 200. They told us that they were penniless and had nothing to fall back upon. Many of them wept bitterly while describing their woes. Most of the Muslims in villages around Biharsharif are either *bidi* workers (*bids* are made in these villages also) or farmers with small holdings of 2-5 *bighas* or 10 *bighas* in some cases.

Going round the relief centres was an experience. These centres were full of women and children most of whom belonged to the very poor class. In the hospital also almost all the 21 victims still getting treatment were children and women. Barring a few

cases they appeared to be labourers. There were innocent children, housewives and old people. In not a single case did a victim appear to have anything to do with anti-social activity. Mr. Dina Nath Singh of the *Indian Nation* maintains that "from their faces it is more than clear that the people who attacked them were either mad or blind." Even if they were mad (they were certainly not blind) there was method in their madness. Otherwise, they could not have so systematically killed and maimed people and destroyed their properties.

The total number of deaths is anybody's guess. Officially 52 deaths have so far been admitted. However, a sober estimate varies from 150 to 200. The local MLA who visited most of the affected villages also believes that the number of deaths could not be less than 150 in any case. Even the Prime Minister saw 38 bodies in a highly mutilated condition in a truck on her visit to the hospital on 4 May. She could not help covering her face with both hands and weeping. On 7 May, a correspondent from a Patna daily saw at least two bodies of riot victims in a highly decomposed state dumped in the open space. In full view of the patients and doctors, crows were having a feast over them while the entire hospital staff and police officials posted there remained unconcerned. This speaks volumes about the utter callousness and lack of respect for human life.

There are many other sad events to recount and even newspapers are full of such pathetic stories of suffering and woe. What is important to us, besides this suffering, is the genesis of these riots. It was different in the old days. The present caste and communal riots are organised by those who want to stop the upward social mobility of the scheduled castes or minorities, as they do not wish to give any share of development or progress to these deprived communities. The Biharsharif carnage once again proves this proposition. The Yadavas, an upcoming backward caste, are trying with the help of Telis and Sonis — the two business communities among whom the RSS has its main following in the town — to frustrate the efforts of the minority community to move up the socio-economic ladder.

There is yet another aspect. Most of the sufferers have been poor Muslims. They have been supporters of the CPI. However,

it was rather sad to note that the CPI could not rise to the occasion to vigorously help the victims of the riot or help preventing it, mainly due to the lack of any proper organisation of the local CPI unit. This has alienated some Muslims and have driven them to the fold of conservative elements, and this is what the RSS politically aimed at. Although both the CPI MLA and MP still retain high credibility with the people of Biharsharif, the CPI has certainly suffered some set-back. It ought to have been more vigorous and better prepared organisationally to face the grave situation. What is worse is that while the CPI has not succeeded in inducing class consciousness among the workers, the RSS, at one stroke, has brought about communal divide and made Muslims and Hindus communally conscious. This is a great challenge to the leftist forces in India, and these forces do not seem to have shown much willingness to face this challenge thanks to their pre-occupation with parliamentary politics which has its own arithmetical logic of caste and community. The RSS has taken this virus to the rural areas. The rural areas are today witnessing acute struggles through the channel of caste politics. The reactionary forces are succeeding in sharpening caste and communal consciousness and there lies their strength. Will the leftist forces sit up and take the bull by its horns?

II. Communal Riots at Godhra

The Godhra riot which continued, on and off, for almost one year in 1980-81 provides very interesting insights into the local factors and thus makes a very useful micro-level study of communal violence in the post-partition period in India. A C.F.D. team comprising Prof. Aloo Dastur, Asghar Ali Engineer and Prof. Jayant Pandya visited Godhra for an on-the-spot inquiry in October 1981, and made a thorough investigation with a view to establish different linkages and specificities of the situation. Asghar Ali Engineer, with the consensus of the other members, prepared the report.

The recurring communal violence at Godhra resulted in the loss of several lives and property worth many lakhs. We met different sections of people, victims of communal violence, leaders of various political parties leaders of both the communities (i.e.,

Sindhis and Ghanchi Muslims) not connected directly with any political party or group, and other citizens in order to collect facts and form an opinion as to what led to the eruption of communal violence. We also met the District Superintendent of Police as well as the President of Godhra Municipality to collect some relevant information and to check the information already gathered from other sources. It would be interesting to note that the investigations carried out by us clearly showed that the eruption of communal violence was due not so much to religious differences (as often thought) as to the conflict of the material interests of the contending communities. It is significant that not all the Hindus and Muslims, but two specific communities from amongst them, namely, the Sindhis and the Ghanchi Muslims were mainly embroiled in the conflict.

Godhra, the district headquarters of Panch Mahal district in Gujarat, has a population of 86228 (1981 census). (The population in 1971 was 66853.) Of this, according to the Superintendent of Police, 28,000 are Muslims, 39,000 Hindus and 19,000 others. However, the Muslim leaders challenged the figure of Muslim population and maintained that it is not less than 35,000 and the latter figure was upheld by the President of the Godhra Municipality. Roughly the Muslim population of Godhra is around 35 to 40 per cent. Ghanchis, out of total Muslim population of 35,000 number 20,000 and have acute sense of separate identity. They distinguish themselves from other Muslims who like *telis* and others are lower in the social hierarchy. A few non-Ghanchi Muslims like the Syeds and Bohras are superior to them both socially and economically. The Bohras, economically much better off, are about 10,000 and the Syeds (supposedly descendents of the Prophet) are not more than 5,000. The Bohras and Syeds also insist on their separate identities. Among all other Muslims the Bohras are socially and culturally much more advanced. Thus it would be wrong to think that the Muslims are a homogenous group in Godhra. (The Hindus are also divided into separate groups with distinct identities.)

The Ghanchi Muslims are generally poor and extremely backward both socially and educationally. There are only three advocates among them and no doctor, whereas among the Bohras

there are 5 advocates, 10 male doctors and 5 lady doctors. Ghanchi Muslims are mainly agriculturists (the average land holding being 5 to 10 acres per family), truck owners and operators. Some 500 trucks, constituting 90% of the fleet in the town, belong to the Ghanchi Muslims. The Ghanchi Muslims have taken advantage of bank facilities to acquire trucks, and a section of them has prospered which has naturally added to their socio-economic status. This is an important dimension of the communal conflict in Godhra. We will throw more light on it later.

On account of backwardness and lack of education they are quite conservative and each Ghanchi couple has large number of children (on an average 5 or 6). Usually, among poorer sections children are treated as assets as they begin adding to the family income at an early age, and the Ghanchi Muslims are no exception to this rule. However, the middle and upper class Hindus resent this and feel that the Muslims are increasing their population too fast. This as pointed out and confirmed by some Hindu leaders, leads to communal tension. In this connection it would be well to remember that the Bohras, though Muslims, have small families with two or three children, the reason being that they belong to the upper socio-economic group. It clearly indicates that one's social status rather than religion determines one's attitudes towards such problems, although religion does, to an extent, influence one's outlook.

As the conflict is mainly between local Sindhis and Ghanchi Muslims we would also like to throw some light on the Sindhi community. The Sindhi population, according to the Sindhi leader Kishorilal Bhayani, a councillor and a journalist, is around 8,000. The veracity of this figure is borne out by other sources also. The Sindhis of Bhaiband section migrated from the rural environs of Karachi to Godhra in 1948. They are petty traders and as compared to the other section, Amils (who are generally well-educated and professionals), they are backward and conservative. Thus socially and culturally speaking, there is similarity between the Ghanchi Muslims and the Sindhis. In view of this social backwardness the Sindhis too could be expected to have comparatively large families, and during our inquiry knowledgeable people informed us that the average number of children in Sindhi families was four or five.

The Sindhi traders have set-up wooden cabins or stall boards in central business areas, as in the vicinity of a railway station or bus stand. Many of them carry on hawking in handcart, etc. Setting up of cabins or placement of carts for hawking often leads to quarrels between the Sindhis and Ghanchis and provides the spark for the eruption of communal violence. One such phase of communal violence started on 29 October 1980, with two banana vendors quarrelling over setting up their carts near the railway station. Subsequently, it led to the burning of many shops and houses and the stabbing and burning alive of a Sindhi family of five.

At this stage it would be useful to throw some light briefly on the history of communal violence in Godhra since the major conflagration there in 1948. The arrival of the Sindhis in Godhra created an explosive situation. The atmosphere was surcharged with communal feelings on both sides due to partition, and it was further aggravated by the advent of Sindhis who narrated their tales of woe. The Ghanchi Muslims were, by and large, supporters of the Muslim League and were also known to be quite militant and aggressive.

The communalists among the Hindus led by Vamanrao Mukadam took advantage of such a situation to incite feelings against the Ghanchis. A large-scale communal riot broke out in which, according to Mohammad Badanga, Yakub Bhatuk and other Ghanchi Muslim leaders, more than 3,500 properties belonging to the Muslims were burnt down. This riot, considered as a very major one, is still fresh in the memory of the people. Although the Sindhis do not seem to have played any direct role in the 1948 riot they did occupy the houses belonging to the Ghanchi Muslims many of whom fled to Pakistan after the riot. Since 1948 there have been four major riots of which the one in 1965 was quite serious in its proportions.

According to a prominent Congress (I) leader of Godhra, the initiative in the 1965 riot was taken by the Sindhis, and around 60 houses belonging to the Muslims in Chithyawar and other areas were burnt down. Also, four Ghanchi Muslims were killed (two in police firing and two were stabbed to death allegedly by the Sindhis). Later, according to the same source, these properties were bought over by the Sindhis and it was, as the Congress (I)

leader put it, a distress sale. Housing has really been a problem for the Sindhis ever since they came to this town and in fact it is one of the major causes of the riots. An interesting aspect of the problem is that the Hindus were not prepared to give accommodation to the Sindhis partly because they are non-vegetarians and partly because they are considered by them as uncultured and having lower social status. There was, on the other hand, no such gap between the Ghanchi Muslims and the Sindhis and the latter had their eyes on the properties of the former.

Although refusing to accommodate Sindhis, the Hindus make a common cause and express solidarity with them whenever communal trouble breaks out between the Sindhis and the Ghanchis. In order to emphasise the complexity of the situation, the other contradictory aspect of the problem must also be borne in mind. For the ten years prior to the recent communal riot there was close co-operation between the Muslims and the Sindhis. The Ghanchi Muslim leaders told us that the Sindhis and Muslims made joint efforts to capture co-operative banks and other similar organisations, In the Municipality also the Sindhis and Muslims formed united groups to capture various offices. The Sindhis supported the Congress (I) candidate Abdur Rahman Khalpa.

There are various reasons for this collaboration between the two communities. There is no direct business rivalry between Ghanchis and Sindhis who follow different avocations. Sindhis have made great deal of economic progress specially in the field of *kirana* (grain merchandise), a business in which the Hindus (Gujarati banyas) had had monopoly so far. Thus there was business rivalry between Sindhis and Hindus. It, therefore, suited them to come closer to the Ghanchi Muslims who usually brought from the Sindhi shops as the latter sold cheaper to compete with other *kirana* merchants, and also since the Sindhis in most localities are next door neighbours to the Ghanchis. Sindhis have also entered the money-lending business and most of the Ghanchi Muslims borrow money from them. This close collaboration, more than anything else, ensured communal peace in Godhra for almost a decade.

But in a dynamic situation areas of tension keep on developing. It is not clearly borne out by explicit statements, but it is quite

probable that the Hindu businessmen with whom the Sindhis compete may have subtly encouraged a divisive tendency between the Muslims and Sindhis so as to weaken or damage financial and political collaboration between them. This hypothesis needs to be tested by further intensive field inquiries before it is accepted in all seriousness, although its probability cannot be ruled out. Some Godhra citizens with no axe to grind did tell us that some dominant Hindu castes want the Sindhis to fight against the Muslims, while they remain in the background. It is a fact that during the current bout of communal violence between Sindhis and Ghanchi Muslims, some Hindus took the initiative to form the Godhra Hindu Mahajan which submitted memoranda to the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister and Governor of Gujarat, holding the Ghanchi Muslims solely responsible for the riots in Godhra ever since 1947.

The ever-increasing need for accommodation for Sindhis also impaired the collaboration between them and Muslims. Sindhis, for the reasons pointed out earlier, tend to produce more children and need more accommodation from time to time. With the Hindus unwilling to co-operate with Sindhis in this respect, the Sindhis covet the properties possessed by the Ghanchi Muslims, and the only way to gain control over these properties is to generate pressure for distress sale. After the 1965 riots also the Sindhis bought most of the properties sold by the Ghanchi Muslims. Since 1948 a number of buildings in Ghanchi Muslim localities have come into their possession.

The Congress-I leader referred to earlier told us that the Sindhis are trying to drive out the Ghanchi Muslims from the S.T. stand area and the station area where business prospects are high. This often leads to tension between the two contending communities. In the station area nearly 1,500 families of railway employees stay. Many Sindhis have opened *kirana* shops and do good business. They are also in the money-lending business and this location helps them to collect their dues from the employees on the day of payment. Sindhis are tempted, therefore, to drive out the Ghanchi Muslims from this strategic area of business. Thus any petty quarrel leads to the large-scale burning of the shops of each other in these areas by both the communities.

In view of what is stated above it is quite clear that communal violence is based less on religious considerations than on the material interests of both the communities involved in the conflict. In fact, perceptive social scientists know that religious attitude itself, more often than not, is determined by one's social condition. One tends to be more aggressive, militant and fanatic if one feels deprived and insecure and threatened by external conditions. Liberalism and tolerance is often generated by affluence, a sense of security and mastery over external circumstances. The Ghanchi Muslims and Sindhis have often lived under adverse circumstances and, therefore, often tend to be aggressive when their material interests are threatened.

However, it is not intended to suggest any mechanical relationship between a group's behaviour and its material circumstances. A problem has to be appreciated and understood in the fullness of all its complexities. It is not only one's social circumstances which determine one's social consciousness; one's consciousness influenced by ideology also influences external circumstances, and it is in this sense that religion also plays some role in communal riots. There is economic and cultural hiatus between the Sindhis and other Hindus on one hand, and, between the Ghanchi Muslims and Bohras and other Muslims on the other, but in the eventuality of communal tension they tend to close their ranks and express solidarity with each other. Here it can be proposed that religious consciousness gets heightened and intra-communal differences recede into the background when faced with grave external danger. Other things being equal, the degree of solidarity is generally directly proportional to the degree of external threat.

However, the complexity of the problem does not end here. Religious consciousness, it must be remembered, is also subject to the strains and stresses of one's perceived interests. What appears to be strong cementing force under the pressure of circumstances soon gives way to these overriding interests.

The third factor is a changing and developing situation. Godhra is a commercially developing town and although Ghanchi Muslims are generally poor and backward, a section of them have benefited from this development and have acquired better means than they possessed before.

This relative prosperity among a section of the community and the attempt to preserve or increase it leads to increased communal consciousness and is expressed through greater assertion of communal identity. It was pointed out to us by certain people that until the communal riot of 1965 the Ghanchi Muslims were at the receiving end. It was for the first time on 29 October 1980 that they retaliated rather aggressively.

Shantilal Patel, a Janata MLA, from Rajgadhi constituency near Godhra, ascribed this increased militancy among the Ghanchi Muslims to the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism in the Islamic world. But it would be gross oversimplification to do so. While Islamic fundamentalism may have increased the sense of religious pride among them, it would be difficult to accept it as an explanation of their militancy without linking it to the concrete material conditions of their existence. It has often been observed that if a section of a backward community acquires greater material and cultural means, it tends to increase communal consciousness leading to greater assertion of communal rights. The retaliation by the Ghanchis in the recent phase of communal riots can be explained better in this light rather than by invoking the operation of remote factors like Islamic fundamentalism. The leadership of the Ghanchi Muslim community in Godhra is in the hands of young advocates who have lately emerged on the scene. They are more assertive and aggressive in providing the lead to the Ghanchi Muslims for whom it is a question of consolidating their gains further.

We may now try to throw light on the main incidents which took place in Godhra between October 1980 and May 1981. In this phase of rioting the first major incident took place on 29 October, 1980. In Zahunpura, two hawkers (one Sindhi and the other Ghanchi Muslim) quarrelled with each other on the positioning of their handcarts. They hurled abuses and started beating each other. Soon the Sindhi crowd gathered from nearby and the Ghanchi Muslims too started collecting. Within a short little time incidents of burning and arson took place in distant localities. In view of the claims and counter-claims of both communities about who started the burning it is difficult to come to a categorical judgement. Only a thorough judicial inquiry can throw some light on the matter.

According to the Sindhi leaders, immediately after the quarrel a large crowd of the Ghanchi Muslims with lethal weapons gathered near Single Falia and set fire to the Sindhi shops and houses. The Muslims, on the other hand, claim that a large number of Sindhis gathered in strength carrying deadly weapons, and set fire to Muslim properties in Chitthiwad area. As a retaliatory measure, the Ghanchi Muslims set fire to the properties of Single Falia in which a family of five Sindhis was burnt alive.

Mr. Mohammad Badanga, Chairman, Muslim Relief Committee, felt very sorry about the horrific incident in which five members of a Sindhi family were burnt alive. According to his information, the arsonists asked the members of the family to come out before setting fire to the property, but they refused as they had valuable ornaments and a large amount of cash. The family was carrying on a money-lending business. "Nevertheless," said Mr. Badanga, "my head hangs in shame and the whole incident is indefensible."

In Single Falia locality, it is clear that the Ghanchi Muslims first set fire to the Sindhi properties in the morning. In the afternoon a large crowd of Sindhis, allegedly led by one Lacchu (who, it was alleged by our Muslim informants from Single Falia locality, is a notorious *goonda* owning illicit liquor dens and gambling dens) came from outside and set fire to the properties belonging to the local Ghanchi Muslims. It was also alleged by these sources that the houses were set on fire during curfew hours and in the presence of a police inspector. However, the DSP whom we met later denied the allegation of the presence of any police officer.

It is also alleged by the Muslims that the miscreants with the active help of some railway employees (some of whom are reported to have been transferred for their alleged complicity) brought diesel from a nearby railway depot. According to these sources, some 3,500 litres of diesel, is reported to be missing from the depot. According to one source the total number of properties burnt on that fateful day was 230, 116 belonging to the Muslims and 114 belonging to the Sindhis. Other areas were also affected.

Hindus allege that the Ghanchi Muslims had pre-planned the violence on 29 October, 1980. The Muslims also make a similar allegation against the Hindus. However, the District Superintendent of Police, vigorously denying both these charges, stated that his intelligence reports are quite categorical, and it was wrong to say that either community had pre-planned anything. According to him it was a spontaneous outburst of violence and both the sides were equally responsible for the incidents on that day. The Muslim crowd, the Hindus allege, tried to set fire to Mahaprabhu Mandir which is in the centre of the road. This charge, denied vigorously by the Muslims, is also disproved by an inspection on site.

A leading Hindu doctor told us that the Muslim crowd did not attempt to set fire to the Mahaprabhu temple. However, they did try to set fire to the Jainwadi where the Jain community holds communal dinners. It was slightly damaged. The Muslim leaders also denied the charge of having attempted to set fire to the temple. It was a false rumour to further incite communal feelings. On the same day, the Muslim leaders alleged, a Muslim boy, aged 17, who was standing near the corner of his house some 100 metres away from the temple was shot dead by a police constable. We also met the elder brother of the deceased who corroborated this version. Later on the Hindus honoured the constable who shot the Muslim boy and presented him with a purse of Rs. 1000.

In Baharpura area, according to Mr. Yakub Bhatuk, 55 to 60 houses belonging to poor non-Ghanchi Muslims were burnt and demolished and taken possession of by the Sindhis on 29 October.

We were told by Advocate Rashid, a Ghanchi Muslim leader, that on 30 October during curfew hours a 1,000 strong mob attacked the Badshahbawa mosque in front of police chowkie No. 5 and extensively damaged its front portion. Later we visited the mosque and found its front portion damaged. Similarly the Chamanpura mosque was also attacked and damaged in a number of places. However, we could not visit the mosque to inspect the extent of damage done to it.

In Baharpura the Iqbal Union School was attacked and 5 of its rooms demolished by a Sindhi mob on 30 October during

curfew hours. (Again on 10 September 1981, there was an attempt to demolish the remaining two rooms.) We visited the school and found that the rooms had been razed to the ground. The building, our inquiries showed, belongs to a Sindhi who, wanting to have it vacated, seems to have seized this opportunity to demolish the rooms to force the school society to vacate the building. Such instances are not uncommon during communal disturbances.

The next round of communal violence started on 29 March 1981. Its immediate provocation was the rebuilding of the wooden cabins of the Sindhis in the vicinity of railway station which were burnt by the Ghanchi Muslims during the disturbances of October 1980. The Sindhis collected funds from their community and decided to convert the stalls into *pucca* shops. The municipality allowed them to do so. The permission to construct *pucca* shops was granted not to individual owners but to the Sindhi Panchayat. It seems to have been resented by the Ghanchi Muslims, especially because a Bohra Muslim having a shop on the corner of the road, which was also burnt, was not allowed to reconstruct his shop on the plea that the road was to be widened on the junction. The Ghanchi Muslims argued that fifteen days before the October disturbances the planning committee of Municipality had recommended that the whole road be widened to 30 m. Though this plan to widen the road was dropped and the Sindhi Panchayat allowed to construct *pucca* shops along the footpaths on either side of the road, the Bohra was not allowed to reconstruct his shop.

Mr. Shanti Patel, the President of the Godhra Municipality, whom we met later, maintained that Mr. Nuruddin, the Bohra shopkeeper, was a tenant of a Parsi who had notified the Municipality not to allow Mr. Nuruddin to construct the shop. The municipal record bears this out. But other sources maintain that in such cases the Municipality allows the tenant to repair or construct the property on certain conditions (executing indemnity bond, etc.). According to Mr. Nuruddin, though he was prepared to leave 4.5 m along the corner for the widening of the road junction he was not permitted to construct his shop. Mr. Shanti Patel stated that he had told Mr. Nuruddin orally to construct the shop leaving the necessary 4.5 m and assured him that no

action would be taken against him. Mr. Nuruddin insisted on written permission which was refused.

However, there was one more complicating factor here. The land on which this shop stands belongs to a temple trust (the priest of the temple claims that it belongs to him and not to the temple trust) and has been leased to the Parsi gentleman for 99 years. The trustees of the temple started agitation that they be allowed to construct a temple there as the lease would soon be over. The Sindhis demanded that a Gurdwara for the Sikhs be constructed there as number of Sikh drivers pass that way everyday (there are very few Sikh families in Godhra town itself). This demand added a potentially explosive dimension to the whole problem. There seems to be no justification for establishing a temple at a place where none has existed for the last 100 years. The saner elements ought to have restrained those making such demands to defuse the situation. Such a demand, aroused apprehensions among the Muslims and made a section of them aggressive.

On being refused written permission to reconstruct the shop, Nuruddin and two other Ghanchi Muslims went to court and prayed for an injunction restraining the authorities from allowing the Sindhis to construct *pucca* shops. However, though the matter was fought upto the Supreme Court, the injunction could not be obtained. According to Mr. Kishorilal Bhayani, agreements thrice were arrived at between all the parties to the dispute (i.e., the Municipality, Sindhis, Ghanchi Muslims and others) but the Ghanchi Muslims did not withdraw the court cases as per one of the conditions of the agreement, and the problem could not be solved. However, according to Mr. Mohammad Badanga, Muslims were prepared to withdraw the court cases but the Sindhis did not sign the joint petition to the State Government requesting it to withdraw the cases against the Ghanchi Muslims involved in burning of five Sindhis as agreed to by them earlier. Apart from the merit of these contradictory versions, Municipal politics was also involved in the dispute.

The Godhra municipality consists of 35 councillors of which 22 are Hindus and 13 Muslims (12 Ghanchi Muslims and 1 Bohra). For the election of the post of President there is always some kind of understanding between different groups. The Sindhis and

Ghanchi Muslims usually came together to elect a President of their choice. However, this time there was polarisation on communal lines. All the 22 Hindu members met separately before the election and decided upon a particular candidate without taking the Muslim members into their confidence. The Muslim members resented this and subsequently walked out of the joint meeting. This added more heat to the already hot situation. It is also significant that the next phase of communal violence started on a day when a municipal by-election was taking place.

When the Muslims failed to obtain a restraining order from the court to stop construction of the *pucca* shops, the Sindhis decided to start the construction work of these shops. The work began on 29 March which was the day of by-election in a predominantly Ghanchi Muslim locality. The Ghanchi Muslims had collected in large numbers for voting. As they came to know that shutters were being fixed to the shops, they rushed towards the shops and started shouting slogans. Many councillors and Sindhis who had gathered there, sensing danger began to run away. Some Sindhi youngsters are alleged to have thrown stones at the Muslims. This enraged the advancing and slogan shouting crowd which now began to loot the shops of Sindhis in the station area. Many persons felt that it was rather imprudent on the part of the authorities to have restarted the work on a day of by-election when a large number of Muslims were to come together for voting. From this day onwards a fresh bout of communal violence started in Godhra. Attacks and counter-attacks were planned and the authorities had to impose curfew from time to time to prevent the outbreak of violence.

On 18 June there was quarrel involving a rickshaw driver near a civil hospital resulting in mob violence. This was followed on 29 June by a quarrel between a Ghanchi Muslim boy and a Hindu on breaking the dairy-milk queue in a Hindu locality (there was an acute shortage of milk during those days in Godhra and black marketing in milk was rampant). The mobs began stoning and the police had to impose curfew which remained in force for three days continuously without any break.

Thereafter on 29 July, a strong rumour of the plans of the Sindhis to take revenge by killing Muslims forced the authorities

to clamp curfew on the day of Id. The communal monster raised its ugly head on 1 and 2 August. On 1 August at about 10.30 A.M. in several Hindu and Sindhi areas, attacks were made on Muslims in which two Ghanchi boys—one 12-year-old boy who had gone to purchase ice from a Sindhi ice factory and another a poor vendor selling salt in a cart—died on the spot. Six Muslims were also injured.

The next day morning the Ghanchi Muslims retaliated by attacking a truck passing from the highway carrying some 20 persons. One died on the spot and another person succumbed to his injuries on reaching home. Again two innocent lives were lost in this war of attrition.

Again on 21 August, there began to spread a rumour that Sindhis were going to attack the Muslim houses on Friday (when Muslim males would go to offer *namaz* in the mosques) as it had happened in Biharsharif. We were told that to stave off the danger the Ghanchis collected in large numbers near Neelam Hotel (belonging to a Sindhi). When the Sindhis heard about it they also came in strength and thus there was a danger of serious clash between the two. The police rushing to the spot asked the crowd to disperse. However, each side wanted the other to disperse first. Police resorted to lathi charge. As the Ghanchi Muslims were refusing to disperse they became the main target of the police action.

According to the Pesh Imam of the Jama Masjid of Godhra, Inspector Bhogal ordered his men to enter the mosque and beat up those who were praying. The police entered with their boots on and even desecrated the holy *Koran*. The Pesh Imam maintained that on entering the Ghuiya mosque also, the police beat up people inside. On 23 August the police again entered another mosque and took 23 persons into custody along with the Imam of the mosque. The persons were praying when taken into custody, we were told by the Pesh Imam Maulana Qasmi. The role of Inspector Bhogal was controversial. The Hindus lionised him as a clean and honest officer while the Muslims were quite bitter about his role. We could not meet him as he had already been transferred. Inspector Bhogal is also alleged to have beaten up innocent Bohra ladies, or ordered SRP men to enter into their

houses and beat them up. The SRP was accused of having broken open cupboards and stolen ornaments and other valuables from these houses.

The communal incidents had stopped when we visited Godhra on 17 and 18 September, and a settlement had been worked out between the contending groups. The people were worn out with the strain of continuous fighting and curfew for more than eight months at a stretch. Wiser counsels seem to prevail at least for the time being.

It is no use apportioning blame. What is needed is restraint and proper understanding. Both the sides have undoubtedly suffered losses and will continue to do so if they do not work hard to maintain peace. Some of the leaders of both communities were quite sensible and it is for them to restrain the aggressive members of their community in the interest of peace. Once doubts and misgivings arise, even petty quarrels, as we have seen, lead to serious outbreaks of communal violence. There are powerful vested interests ready to exploit the situation.

It was our observation in Godhra also that rumours cause a lot of damage and lead to grave danger. In our opinion it is the responsibility of the Government, specially of the police, to quash such rumours and take people into their confidence. In view of complaints from both the communities about the role of the police (all the complaints may not be true or some of them may be exaggerated) it seems their role is not upto the mark and impartial. Also, the police are often subjected to pressures by the interested politicians. Unless the politicians themselves evolve a strict code of conduct in this respect nothing much can be achieved. The constabulary (and even some officers) are not free from communal prejudices. They need to be thoroughly trained and secularised, which is not an easy task to accomplish.

The Indian religio-cultural milieu is quite conservative and most people are conditioned to evolve certain stereotypes about the members of other communities. This is taken advantage of by vested interests to incite passion against the members of other communities. It is, therefore, necessary to bridge this gap and develop closer ties with the members of other communities to develop a realistic picture of them. What is most shocking is the

fact that even politicians of the level and stature of MLAs and MPs are victims of such stereotypes. They are no less prejudiced than other members of the society.

III. Communal Violence in Ahmedabad

In this study we shall confine ourselves to the riots which took place in Ahmedabad between 10 and 12, January 1982 in which one man was killed and several others injured by stabbing. This study is also based on extensive field investigation.

Ahmedabad is a highly crowded city with a mixed population (15,85,442 in 1971). Being a centre of the textile industry, with its large potential for employment, the city attracts a great number of poor people belonging to the scheduled castes and Muslims. There are several *bhaiyyas* from Uttar Pradesh already employed in the textile industry who compete for jobs with Muslims and Harijans. In the 1969 communal riots the *bhaiyyas* were used against the Muslims, competition for jobs being one of the factors in those ghastly killings. The middle and upper caste Gujaratis belonging to the lower-middle and middleclass trading communities are highly conservative and harbour strong prejudices against the Muslims and Harijans.

Poverty among the Muslims in Gujarat in general, and in Ahmedabad in particular, is very acute. According to J. I. Laliwala, an economist from Gujarat University who undertook a sample survey of the Muslims in Ahmedabad, 75 per cent of the Muslims of Ahmedabad were destitutes; Muslims were found to be economically and educationally much more backward than the other poorer classes. Laliwala noted: "The required monthly income per capita for not relapsing below the poverty line was determined in 1973 to be about Rs. 46. On this basis the required monthly income for a family of 7 members was Rs. 322. But about 75 per cent of the families in one survey had a monthly income below Rs. 322."

Daryapur and Kalupur localities, where communal violence erupted on this occasion, are localities with mixed population. In both the localities there are Muslims, Harijans and upper caste Hindus. Among the Muslims and Harijans in these localities there is acute poverty. Many of them are involved in boot-

legging and gambling dens, most of them controlled by bosses belonging to the Patel castes. There are a few Muslim bosses too. The gang rivalry between the bosses often plays its own role in keeping the tension between the two communities alive. Needless to say, they have powerful connections with the police authorities as well as ruling politicians.

The North Gujarat Patels are a rising middle caste with high ambitions, both economic and political, and are aggressive. The Patels were on the forefront in the caste riots too. The RSS in Ahmedabad derives a great deal of support from the Patel community. Daryapur happens to be the stronghold of the RSS and the BJP.

The riot in Daryapur started on 10 January when there was a quarrel between two groups on kite-flying, and soon both resorted to stone-throwing. Subsequently, there were organised attacks. The police had to resort to firing seven rounds to disperse the violent mobs. On the same day in an attack on bus passengers near Daryapur, seven persons, six of them reported to be Hindus, were injured. On 11 January, a small crowd entered into a house in Changiz Pole and killed a man aged 22. The police imposed indefinite curfew in the area.

The kite-flying incident was, as usually happens, merely a spark. For a long time systematic efforts were being made to build up communal tension in the city. Sometime before, several branches of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (which is actively supported by the RSS) have been formed in Ahmedabad. In Ahmedabad the VHP is carrying on a virulent campaign against the conversion of Harijans to Islam, and its activists are collecting funds in a big way.

The VHP organised a big meeting at Nilkanth Mahadev which was addressed, among others, by Gaubhakt Shambhu Maharaj and Morarji Bapu, a popular Ramayan singer. The Parishad has also organised a poster campaign in the city. Some of its slogans are: *Ramnam bolo ya Hindustan chodo* (Say *Ramnam* or leave India), *Vande Matram gana hoga ya Bharat se jana hoga* (Sing *Vande Matram* or leave India), etc. I saw several posters on the city walls showing the saffron map of India in which Pakistan and Bangladesh, are included.

Similarly, a large number of leaflets in Gujarati have been distributed. The leaflets strongly condemn the conversion of some Harijans to Islam and appeals for funds for saving the Hindu culture. A Gujarati leaflet believed to be published by VHP quotes Swami Vivekanand to the effect that "a person leaving the Hindu fold is not merely a loss of one Hindu but adding one more to the enemies of Hindus." Yet another leaflet where more aggressive language has been used argues that the conversion of Harijans to Islam is not on account of their persecution by the upper caste Hindus but because of the large amount of petro-dollars flowing into the country. The leaflet also says that this process (of conversion) has been on for the last thousand years beginning with Mohammad Ghori upto Aurangzeb and then from Jinnah to Yahya Khan (it interestingly omits naming Zia!). The Arabs, according to this leaflet, have maintained this tradition and they are sending crores of rupees under the pretext of constructing and maintaining mosques. The leaflet does not spare the Christians either. In the North-East and in Kerala they are alleged to be playing a destructive role.

Some people tried to draw the Gujarat government's attention to this virulent propaganda. However, no action was taken to stop it. In a situation of acute poverty (leading to criminal tendencies and lowering the threshold of violence), gang rivalries and caste and communal politics, such blatantly communal propaganda leads to actual explosion.

IV. Communal Fury in Pune and Solapur

The Bharatiya Janata Party, of political necessity, has had to indulge in secular cosmetics to hide its ugly communal face but it is not doing so at the cost of its real ideology of communalism and Hindu chauvinism. The RSS connection is of course there, but after the Meenakshipuram conversions, it has also linked itself with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). The VHP, apparently a non-political religious organisation, is now becoming a focal point of Hindu communal ideologies. In December 1981 there was communal flare-up in Ahmedabad as a result of its intensified campaign for Hindu unity and in February 1982 a similar

campaign resulted in communal violence in the two important towns of Maharashtra, namely Pune and Solapur.

One must sit up and think seriously over what is being done in the innocuous name of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. A most deadly communal poison is being spread, which is seriously undermining the cause of national unity. The *Jana Jagran* Campaign undertaken by the VHP in different parts of India is doing all the mischief. Even the walls of Bombay city can be seen plastered with posters showing the map of India in saffron colour (which includes Pakistan, Bangla Desh—the old slogan of *Akhand Bharat* being subtly revived again) along with slogans like “*Jab Hindu Jagega Is Desh ka Dukh Bhagega*” (When Hindus awaken then only will this country get rid of its painful problems), “We are Hindus and we are proud of it”.

The campaign is also being conducted from door to door—apparently for the collection of funds for the VHP, but the real intention is to harangue the Hindus on the Meenakshipuram conversions and to awaken them to the “danger lurking over their heads of being reduced to minority in their own country.” Some printed literature is also given and lastly an appeal for funds is made. In Pune many industrialists are known to have contributed substantially to the Parishad funds. In Solapur—a predominantly working class city—the Parishad volunteers have collected as many as Rs. 82,000 in a couple of days. It is also to be noted that the Parishad is conducting such campaigns in cities with industrial bases and substantial working class populations. Ahmedabad, Pune, Solapur, Bombay all fall into the same category.

The VHP has taken its cue from Islamic fundamentalism. A booklet distributed in Pune and Solapur entitled *Dharmantar—Nave Rashtriya Sankat* (Change of Religion—A New National Crisis) awakens the Hindus to the danger of conversion and of Islamic fundamentalism in countries like Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Also issues like the common civil code, family planning and the use of amplifiers in the mosques are being raised and made out to be principal issues facing the country. The conversion of a few Harijans to Islam has provided a great opportunity to the Parishad for launching aggressively communal propaganda.

Commenting on the activities of the VHP in his lead article in the *Sadhana* (a Marathi weekly from Pune) Mr. N. G. Gore, one-time Indian High Commissioner in London, maintains that in the olden days, in order that the screams of a woman thrown on the burning pyre of her husband may not be heard, the people around the pyre used to beat drums loudly. Similarly the VHP is raising hue and cry about the conversion of Harijans in Meenakshipuram so that the people do not pay attention to the screams of the Dalits burning on the pyre of discrimination. Also it was attested by many people that most of the persons associated with the VHP belong either to the BJP or RSS. Mr. S. M. Joshi, the well-known Maharashtrian politician, told me that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Patit Pawan are front organisations of the RSS. It is the RSS machinery which is working behind them. Mr. Joshi also said that it is an insult to Harijans to say that they have embraced Islam for the lure of money. Will any Brahmin of Sadashiv Peth (a locality in Pune) change his religion if he is given money? Mr. Joshi held the VHP totally responsible for the communal violence in Pune.

Before we deal with the incidents of communal violence in Pune we would like to throw some light on the economic conditions of Muslims there. The Muslim population in Pune is around 80,000 (out of total of 13 lakhs) distributed mainly in the eastern parts. This makes it 6.15% of the total population. There is acute poverty among Muslims. Most of them work in small private units, do vending or other odd jobs. The economic plight of the Muslims is so miserable that many of them happily accept the sub-employment from Dalit sweepers of Pune Municipal Corporation for Rs. 200 a month.¹ Dalit sweepers who get around Rs. 500|- per month from the Corporation employ Muslims for Rs. 200|- a month and themselves do some more lucrative jobs elsewhere.

Baba Adhav, a prominent social worker from Pune told me that more and more Muslim women are taking to prostitution for want of any other alternative. He also said that there are very few Muslim workers in big industries in Pune and none at all among

¹ This interesting piece of information was revealed during personal interview with Dr. Baba Adhav. (Ed.)

officers or managerial ranks. A glance at a Pune telephone directory establishes Dr. Adhav's claim. Dr. Adhav also says that due to the miserable plight of Muslims their number in the illicit liquor business is increasing. Even if the illicit business is owned by a Hindu, most of the workers are Muslims. Only a handful of Bohras and Khojas among the Muslims, are well-to-do, but their number, may not exceed five thousand.

The aggressive campaign of the VHP went on in Pune for more than a month towards the end of 1981. It created a scare among the Muslims. They were terrified. They even stopped using amplifiers in the mosques after the first week of February 1982 as the use of amplifiers was under attack and they had been apprehending trouble for quite some time.

The VHP announced its intention to take out a procession. The Police Commissioner first declined permission. But, it is said, the deputy mayor of Pune who is a former Shivsainik, pressurised the Commissioner to grant permission. The procession was joined even by members of the Congress (I), Janata Party, etc. The Janata Party members joined the procession despite an appeal not to do so issued by its State General Secretary Bhai Vaidya through a press note on 4 February 1982 after exposing the communal nature of the VHP. Strangely enough the Pune Municipal Corporation lent its elephant to the processionists.

The procession carried the portraits of Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule and Gandhi along with that of Golwalkar and a copy of the *Manusmriti*. Bhai Vaidya questioned how Golwalkar and the *Manusmriti* could be bracketed with Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule. Ambedkar had burnt the copy of the *Manusmriti*. He had said that he was born as Hindu but he would not die as Hindu, and he fulfilled his vow. A portrait of Guru Nanak was also carried to symbolise Hindu-Sikh unity. But the RSS is the sworn enemy of Sikhs in Punjab. The animosity of the processionists towards Muslims *per se* was evident from the fact that when it wended its way through Azad Square, it pulled down the name plate bearing Maulana Azad's name. Bhai Vaidya said that it showed the deep hatred the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has towards Muslims. Its volunteers would not otherwise have attacked and pulled out the name plate of Maulana Azad, a staunch nationalist.

Baba Adhav said that the processionists were shouting extremely filthy slogans to provoke Muslims. However the Muslims refused to be provoked. Many of them had fled in terror earlier. An old Muslim lady told him that the women were afraid the police or the goondas would enter their houses and rape them. Such a thing had never used to happen before. Even the leaders of Hindu Ekta Andolan conceded that VHP was involved in violent attacks. According to a report in the *Maharashtra Herald*, "The Hindu Ekata Andolan has decided to go alone henceforth with its declared programme as the Sunday incidents made them lose their credibility because of associating with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's *Jan Jagran Andolan* . . . the Hindu Ekata leaders Vilas Tupe and Dhananjay Jagtap, said that there were specific groups in the procession who had resorted to stone-throwing. They also condemned the statement of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad disowning responsibility and blaming it on some *goondas*." Referring to the slogans shouted in the procession, HEA leaders said that "such slogan-shouting would only instil divisive feelings." According to HEA leaders some Muslim youth had even come to welcome the procession.

The procession changed its route and entered a Muslim locality. Then passing through Deccan Gymkhana, the rowdies in the procession attacked two Muslim (Irani) hotels. These hotels were completely burnt. Many Muslim shops were stoned and damaged. On the night of 17 February a shop belonging to a Bohra Muslim was completely burnt down during curfew hours. According to the owner of the shop he suffered a loss of about 4 lakhs. The situation was under control when I visited the city on 16 February but the peace was more illusory than real. Tension still prevailed. The Muslims felt nervous. The administration quickly brought the situation under control, but before the violence broke out the Government machinery had not moved despite clear signs of danger. The procession should not have been allowed in any case. Tact and firmness is required to hand the still delicate situation.

The story in Solapur is no different. Late Anna Patil, an MLA (Independent) made a provocative speech against Muslims in a public meeting held on 9 February. The Muslims, he said,

marry four wives and refuse to practise family planning, and as such are multiplying fast. "They were 3 crores at the time of partition and are now 13 crores (a deliberately exaggerated figure, as the actual Muslim population is not more than 9 crores). Soon they will be in a majority in our own country." This was followed by an intensification of *Jan Jagran Abhiyan* by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. According to some political workers in Solapur two meetings were held in Ram Mandir and a third at the house of a VHP activist. The conspiracy of communal violence was apparently hatched at these meetings.

Solapur is also a working class town. There are cloth mills, bidi manufacturing units and powerlooms. The Muslim population in Solapur is around 60,000 out of the total population of 5 lakhs but they are not in a happy economic position. Most of them are employed in the mills or bidi manufacturing units. A few Muslim families own bidi manufacturing works.

The last major riot occurred in 1967, in which 12 persons were killed. Things had been peaceful since then. The immediate cause of this riot was not any economic rivalry between the two communities. However, the Muslims here were not as passive as those of Pune. Here they retaliated and burned down a couple of Hindu shops in the recent riots.

The trouble started on 15 February 1982, when the procession taken out by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad was coming to an end at about 8 P.M. The collector initially reluctant to allow the procession relented and allowed it on the solemn assurance that it would be a peaceful march. In the beginning it remained peaceful but, according to eye witnesses when it came near the Punjab Talim Mosque—a usual trouble spot during the Ganesh festival—some miscreants from the procession started shouting provocative slogans such as "*Ek dhakka aur do, Pakistan tor do*" (give one push more and break Pakistan), "*Jalado Jalado Pakistan Jalado*" (Burn, Burn Pakistan), "*Vande Matram Gana Hoga nahin to Hindustan Chhodana hoga* (sing *Vande Matram* otherwise leave India)", and "*Yeh Desh Hinduon ka, nahin kisi ke bap ka*" (this country belongs to Hindus, not to somebody's father.) Then in Tilak Chowk at about 8 P.M. a hand-cart, a cold-drink shop and a pawn shop all belonging to Muslims were burnt down. Soon the news spread and the Muslims retaliated

in Shukrawar Peth and Guruwar Peth by burning three shops. The Hindu shops were big and well stocked and so they suffered heavier economic losses. According to the collector Mohan Singh Patil there were four cases of stabbing resulting in injury. The police fired twice, in all eleven rounds, resulting in leg and hand injuries to four persons. It must be said that through prompt administrative action the situation was brought under control. There was night curfew in Solapur when we visited it on 18 February. But, according to the collector, it was more by way of precaution than apprehension.

It would be seen from the narration of events that both in Pune and Solapur the riots were not results of any political or economic rivalry or competition. Unlike many other riots, both these riots were not precipitated by local factors. The Meenakshipuram conversions were too remote from Pune and Solapur to have an effect on the Hindus of these towns. Moreover, the conversions had taken place quite sometime ago. The riots were the result of a sustained and calculated campaign by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad backed by the RSS. The Brahmins associated with the RSS do not desire the real integration of Dalits with upper caste Hindus. The farce of Hindu unity does not carry an iota of conviction with the Dalits. They have experienced the fury of upper caste Hindus recently in Maharashtra (Marathwada incidents) and Gujarat. They cannot forget the carnage at Deoli in Bihar either. This campaign of Hindu unity is only a weapon actually directed against the Muslims.

The perpetrators of the *status quo*, whether they be Muslim fundamentalists of Iran and Pakistan or Hindu fundamentalists of India, need the spectre of an external enemy to beat into submission the havenots within. The Pakistani fundamentalists now headed by Zia keep the image of the Hindu aggressor alive and vibrant to stifle the protest within. The RSS, on the other hand, has mastered the game of using the image of 'fast breeding aggressive Muslims to suppress the internal contradictions of Hindu society and keep the Dalits in perpetual bondage. Religion in India performs more than an opiating function: it provides solace to the exploited and the oppressed of one community and challenges or silences into submission those of the other community.

In Indian conditions religion is not only an opium for the masses, it can also be made to act as a deadly poison. Only a strong mass movement can counteract this poison. But the tragedy is that even the left-wing in this country has not taken this danger seriously enough.

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE MEERUT RIOT

Asghar Ali Engineer

Meerut, about seventy kilometres from Delhi, has historical importance in that the first rumblings of the 1857 mutiny began here when the Hindu and Muslim soldiers resolved to fight together against the British rulers, unitedly declared war against their British masters and marched towards Delhi. Meerut has had the long tradition of communal harmony and till today the festival of Nauchandi is celebrated with great fanfare by Hindus and Muslims together. Although common Hindus and Muslims have lived and pursued their avocations together, the vested interests in both the communities have often tried to disrupt the harmony. The present riot has not changed the situation. During my extensive tour of the riot-affected areas I did not find bitterness in any one community against the other; on the contrary the sufferers and their sympathisers, bitterly complained against the PAC, the city police and district officials in league with some communal elements.

In Meerut, which has a population of more than five lakhs, the municipality has recently been converted into a municipal corporation. The ratio of Hindus to Muslims in Meerut is 51:49, according to some district authorities. One sees locality after locality exclusively inhabited by Muslims. There are also several localities where the Hindus and Muslims live together in harmony and peace. The corporation elections which people then believed would soon be held also cast an ugly shadow over communal peace in the town.

Most of the Muslims are engaged in handloom work. They are generally weavers and some of them even own looms. The

cloth produced by them is generally sold to the Hindu traders—Baniyas who, interestingly in Meerut, as elsewhere, are the bed-rock of the RSS. These conservative traders finance the local RSS and now also the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). A large section of Muslims are also engaged in producing scissors and brass bands, the latter being the exclusive monopoly of the Muslims. Many Muslims who own brass-band manufacturing units are quite prosperous. While the majority of Muslims are quite poor, one can see a section of well-to-do Muslims in Meerut, unlike in other places.

Recently a number of field studies of communal riots have suggested certain common characteristic features which are as follow:

1. Communal riots generally take place in middle-sized towns.
2. The proportion of Muslims in such towns happens to be high, usually more than 30%.
3. A section of Muslims in such towns is generally well-to-do and tends to be a potential competitor for the Hindu traders.
4. The riots now tend to be well planned and last for several days or weeks; they are no longer spontaneous outbursts they used to be earlier.
5. The core issues, more often than not, happen to be of either an economic or political nature whereas the spark is provided by some trivial incident.

In the Meerut riot all these features are more or less present. It is a middle-sized town with a very high proportion of Muslim population (around 49%). A section of Muslims is quite prosperous and has political ambitions of its own. In 1982 both the MP as well as MLA are Muslims (Mohsina Qidwai and Manzoor Ahmad, both from Congress (I)). Here too, as will be shortly evident, the riots were well planned and lasted for more than four weeks. The pattern of setting fire to houses and stabbing showed special training in both the acts. Another feature of these riots is the large role played by the anti-social elements who are seeking political legitimization and respectability through participation in such riots. They emerge as the saviours of their respective

communities. The increasing use of illegal weapons and other incendiary materials in a systematic way is also a pointer in this direction. According to R. D. Tripathi, the city S.P., until 7 October, the police had seized 31 knives, 1599 sharp weapons, 10 country-made revolvers, 28 bombs, 27 litres of acid, 16 kg of potash and 150 kg of other bomb-making material. What has not yet been seized must be much more than this. All this clearly shows the planned nature of the riots and the systematic participation of anti-social elements in them.

There is another important dimension of the Meerut riot which is worth noting. A conscious attempt was made to incite the Dalits to fight against the Muslims. There are several reasons for this. Some of them are as follows:

- (a) After the conversion of some Harijans to Islam at Meenakshipuram, the VHP, which derives its cadre mainly from the RSS, is trying its best to woo the Harijans. In this respect it pays off a great deal to carry on aggressive anti-Muslim propaganda among the Dalits. In northern India in general, and in Uttar Pradesh, in particular, such propaganda pays rich dividends and keeps tension between the Muslims and Dalits alive. Before the Meerut riots, clashes occurred near Turkman Gate in Delhi in July, 82 between the Muslims and Dalits had occurred. That too was by deliberate design as the field inquiry shows. Such tactics keep Harijans away from the Muslims and wreck efforts at unity between the two.
- (b) The RSS, by using Harijans thus in the forefront to fight against Muslims, can preserve their cloak of neutrality and even pretend innocence in the communal conflict. This has become necessary in a way, as its political arm (the BJP) has politically adopted the secular posture and even pretends to pledge itself by to Gandhian socialism.
- (c) Such a strategy, while promoting the myth of religious solidarity, helps bring about division among the have-nots of society.

In Meerut, it was alleged by Mrs. Harpal Singh, a teacher in the Department of Education, of Nanak Chand College, Meerut,

the caste Hindus used the members of the Valmiki community (i.e., Bhangis—sweepers), who are extremely poor, to fight the Muslims by proxy. It is rumoured, she said, that the Valmikis were given Rs. 200/- and a bottle of liquor for killing one Muslim. Even if it is not wholly true it at least shows the emerging new trend among the upper caste Hindus. Mrs. Singh stated that Mr. Mohanlal Kapoor, ex-MLA belonging to the BJP, now comes from a distance to perform puja along with the Harijans. This new-found love for Harijans is being displayed with a calculated motive: it could bring about split in the Harijan votes which are normally exercised in favour of the Congress I. It is also interesting to note that only the poor and illiterate Valmikis have fallen into the RSS trap. The Chamars who are more educated and conscious are nowhere on the scene.

A look at the genesis of the riot shows it to be political rather than economic. There is no apparent economic rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims. However, the political cause is quite apparent. The high percentage of their population (49%) makes Muslims politically very important. Their support to any political party becomes crucial, along with the Harijan votes. Hence a conscious attempt to woo the Harijans is being made by the BJP. At present, as pointed out earlier, both the seats, i.e., that of MP and MLA are held by the Cong. (I) in the city. Even at the height of anti-Congress feelings immediately after the emergency, Mr. Manzoor Ahmad of the Indira Congress had won the assembly seat, wresting it from Mr. Mohanlal Kapoor of the then Jansangh. Since then the Jansangh (now BJP) has been trying to increase its political clout.

To understand the genesis of this riot it is necessary to know what happened immediately before in Meerut. Balasaheb Deoras, the RSS chief, visited Meerut in January 1982. Surprisingly a rally was held in his honour on the Government Inter College Compound. More surprising was the fact that the Superintendent of Police Mr. Pyarelal (S. P. City) and additional District Magistrate Mr. Rajkishor Mishra saluted Balasaheb publicly. Both these officers, it is interesting to note, are notorious for their anti-Muslim bias and it is these officers who ordered firing on Mus-

lings on 29 and 30 September and 1 October 1982 which resulted in 29 deaths. The tension began to mount after Balasaheb's visit to the city. The Mazar-Temple controversy which we will shortly describe began to assume serious proportions from the month of April 1982. Also throughout the months of August and September the activities of BJP and VHP were quite prejudicial to the cause of communal peace in the town.

From 19 to 21 September 1982 the VHP held a meeting of its national committee at Varanasi, and on 20 September it passed a resolution that if the disputed temple was not unlocked (the administration had sealed the place as we shall see later) the VHP would start state-wide agitation. Similarly on 2 and 3 October the RSS-dominated BJP Youth organisation held its convention at Allahabad and passed a resolution that the people should be alert against anti-national elements who want to destroy the Indian cultural, social and political fibre—thereby hinting at the Muslims. All this was reported prominently in the local Hindi press which naturally aggravated the situation.

Another interesting fact to note is that in the elections to the newly formed Municipal Corporation, that people believed would soon take place each party had an interest. The BJP was making a serious bid to capture the corporation. The Congress (I) had its own factional politics which is no less interesting. Due to the high proportion of Muslims in the population, the tickets for MLA and MP's seats are generally given to Muslim candidates, which allegedly causes heartburning to the non-Muslim candidates. A source close to the Congress (I) told me that the city Congress (I) president Mr. Dharam Devakar and the DCC president Mr. Shanti Tyagi both have, of late, developed pro-RSS sympathies. Mr. Dharam Devakar, according to this source, wants to become mayor of the city with the help of BJP. When I checked with other sources it emerged that Mr. Devakar certainly played a partisan role which encouraged the administration to take an anti-Muslim posture.

In this series of background events one more event warrants our notice. In July 1982 the VHP held a camp at Hardwar to train people for carrying on its Jana Jagaran campaign. These trained volunteers came to Meerut and poisoned the atmosphere. It was alleged by Mr. Brij Rajkishore, a leading advocate of

Meerut and secretary of the CPI (Meerut city) that it was one of these volunteers of the VHP who killed the Pesh Imam Mazhar Ahmad in July.

We will now proceed to narrate, in proper sequence, the events connected with the Mazar-Temple controversy and how vested interests from both the communities took advantage of this controversy to advance their own interests. These events would show how a small dispute, due to powerful vested interests, can assume the proportions it did in Meerut.

In Shahghasa, a busy commercial locality of Meerut, are mainly cloth shops owned by Hindu traders who buy their cloth from Muslim-weavers. It is a narrow street. Near one end of this street there is a *peepal* tree squeezed between a pan shop and a *piao* (a water hut). Near the *peepal* tree and behind this *piao* is an old well, during the partition riots, a few dead bodies were discovered, and hence under the instructions of Sardar Patel, the then Home Minister, the well was enclosed by high walls.

Adjacent to this well, in an extremely narrow by-lane is a house belonging to a Muslim advocate, Qazi Zaheeruddin. Opposite the well, there is some Municipal land which he is alleged to have usurped. There are also three shops adjoining the well. These shops and the well are the property of a trust (although there is no written record thereof) for a *piao*. But advocate Zaheeruddin, it is alleged, had an eye on the shops and the well. Urban land is becoming very valuable in Meerut too. There are many Muslims in that area but, according to advocate Brij Rajkishore, they insisted on having a Hindu in charge of the *piao* so that Hindus could also drink water.

The dispute, therefore, was between the trust and Zaheeruddin and no community was involved. But soon, some Hindu communalists gave it a twist and began to claim that there was a temple there. Different sources testify to the fact that there never was any temple there. However, advantage was taken of the *peepal* tree to support this claim. The then SP., Mr. Rawat, personally intervened, and in March 1982 a *ghanta* (bell) was installed and evening *aarti* (worship) started. No such *aarti* had been performed before. Now it became a regular practice. To add to this bizarre drama advocate Zaheeruddin employed the

equally bizarre tactic of claiming that a *Mazar* (tomb of a saint) existed there, which again was false. Actually where the *Mazar* was claimed to exist, Zaheeruddin had earlier constructed a lavatory.

As tension began to mount due to these claims and counter-claims, it was decided in April 1982 to hold an inquiry into the whole affair and the representatives of both the communities decided not to do anything until the result of the inquiry was made known. The inquiry was completed on 20 August 1982. On 13 August, in violation of the above agreement, and ignoring section 144 which had been imposed on the area, Mr. Mohanlal Kapoor and Brahmopal Singh, president of the city BJP, performed *puja* at the spot along with their followers. The police rushed to the spot and arrested some twenty-three persons. But at this stage the president of the local Congress (I) intervened and those arrested were released. This gave further encouragement to the Hindu communalists. Some Muslim communalists, on the other hand, were playing up the *Mazar* issue.

The Magistrate who was to deliver his judgement on the issue on 20 August was prevented from doing so by pressure. Here too the Congress (I) president is reported to have played an active role. The same evening a meeting of some prominent citizens of Meerut was held and an agreement was signed by two Muslims and two Hindus that the *ghanta* (bell) would not be used neither would the claim for the *Mazar* be pressed. However, some Muslim leaders who were not included in the signing of the agreement felt insulted. Hakim Saifuddin declared that he would offer *chadar* (a sheet of cloth) on the *Mazar* and began collecting money for the purpose. His sole motive was to defeat the purpose of the agreement.

On 12 September, the authorities sealed the place under section 146 of Cr. P.C. so that no one could enter there either for *puja* or prayer on the *Mazar*. The Hindu communalists took this as a challenge and an affront to Hindu sentiments and gave a call for *hartal* which went on for three days. The bar association then filed a revision petition against the attachment order in the court of district judge. The revision was allowed and attachment held illegal. Thus on 22 September the seal was removed in compliance with the court order. The next day, Mohanlal Kapoor

led a victory procession and was hailed as a Hindu hero. He was profusely garlanded.

Baqr Id happened to be on 28 September. The Shahar Qazi Zainul Abidin declared that the Id prayers would not be held at Iddgah but would be held in mosques in different *mohallahs* and that Muslims would wear black badges in protest against the removal of the seal. Black flags were also hoisted on some Muslim houses. Communal tension which had diffused began mounting again. Hindus now started the campaign to hoist saffron coloured flags in a big way. Soon the situation went out of control and hell was let loose from 30 September to 2 October. Before this, there had been sporadic killings. The Pesh Imam (prayer leader) of a mosque was killed in the last week of August. In retaliation Rambhole (a priest) was killed on 6 September. A Muslim home guard Shabbir was stabbed to death two days later while going on duty. Seventy-year-old Pesh Imam Shahabuddin who led prayers in the Choti Masjid of Kishanpadd was also killed the same day.

But from 30 September to 2 October, it was genocide by the PAC. Mr. Brij Rajkishore, the CPI Secretary alleged that the PAC were in league with the Hindu communalists. The communalists used to fire from house tops and the PAC jawans would then enter the Muslim houses alleging that the Muslims attacked. Many survivors of the PAC massacre told this writer that their menfolk were dragged out of the houses and shot. The houses were also not spared. The meagre belongings of the poor residents were looted. Mr. Zafar Ali, a Junior Engineer who resided in house No. 304C in Hori Nagar was dragged out and shot by the PAC. His house was also partially burnt. The widow of Sherdin told me with tears in her eyes that though she tried to hide her husband behind an old trunk, the PAC jawans spotted him and shot him dead. The widow Raisa Banu has seven small children. Most of the houses in this locality had bullet holes.

The worst affected was Feroze building where live many poor Muslims. It is nothing but a series of semi-pucca dwellings of poor Muslims. Not a single house in this building situated at Bhumian Ka Pul escaped the wrath of PAC. The most pathetic case was that of 21-year-old Iqbal who was the only son of

Shabbir Husain, a doctor. The father pleaded with the PAC to spare his son's life and kill him instead. The PAC jawans shot Iqbal along with his cousin and ordered Dr. Shabbir to load their dead bodies on a truck and wipe the blood clean. On top of it Dr. Shabbir was arrested and put in jail. In Goli Saniwali Shabana, a 8-year-old girl stabbed several times by the miscreants fortunately survived. There were eleven others from this building who were killed. Also the house of Abdul Aziz Nawaz Khan, a well-to-do Muslim whose two sisters were to marry within a couple of days of this incident, was looted. The losses are estimated at 7 lakhs.

I was told that no less than 42 persons were killed on 1 and 2 October, by the bullets of the PAC, and all of them were innocent. One of the tricks, Mr. Manzoor Ahmad (MLA) said, was to explode a bomb, and when people came out to see what had happened they were shot, alleging that they were miscreants. A delegation of some prominent citizens comprising K. D. Sharma of the Department of History, Meerut College; Dr. Harpal Singh, Head of the Department of Political Science, Nanak Chand College, Meerut; Mr. Mansur Ahmad, General Secretary, Scientific Works Association; and Mr. Mahabir Singh, advocate, went round the affected areas of the city and strongly condemned the riots. They said that the RSS and other communal elements in collusion with the district administration let loose the reign of terror on the poor and unprotected workers and toilers of the minority community. The delegation said that there are many minority houses in Meerut today wherein not a single adult has been left alive. Many women have become widows and children rendered orphans. All this has happened to the minority community only. The delegation, after careful inspection, came to the conclusion that all this had been done with careful planning and with the full participation of the PAC and the district administration. The delegation estimated that on 2 October, about 42 persons were killed by PAC bullets. The delegation also alleged that the officials of the district administration had ordered the PAC jawans to aim at the chests of the victims. (This statement of the delegation was published in an Urdu Daily from Delhi the *Al-Jami'at* dated 24 October and was verified for me by one of the members of the delegation, Mr. Harpal Singh.)

For want of space, there are several other details of the victims of the riot collected on the spot by me which are not included here. The Meerut riots make a horrible story and are a great blot on the fair name of India. What appeared in the press is hardly a tip of the proverbial iceberg. The national press has given very sketchy reports, revealing the attitude of the big press towards caste and communal riots. The local Hindi press acting as the mouthpiece of the RSS, of course, played havoc by publishing inflammatory material against minorities. Some of these papers are *Mayrashtra*, *Prabhat*, *Meerut Samachar* and *Hamara Yug*, and going through these papers one can estimate the damage that could have been done. And about the role of the PAC, the less said the better. After every major riot the Government gives its assurance that the PAC will not be employed again, but the same story repeats itself. It is a matter of great shame that the Government cannot even do as little as to refrain from employing the PAC in such delicate situations. Some police officers like the SP (City) Mr. Pyarelal and ADM Rajkishore Mishra were openly and blatantly against Muslims, and what is shocking is that they were not transferred despite the orders given by the Prime Minister herself. They still continue to be in Meerut and on active duty.

What happened at Meerut is a very sad commentary on the deplorable behaviour of petty-minded politicians who do not let go any opportunity to increase their influence and to gain easy access to power. They have literally no compunction in walking over the dead bodies of innocent citizens to occupy the coveted chair of power. A minor dispute between an individual and a trust was most unscrupulously exploited by them for their own selfish ends and ultimately caused disaster to hundreds of innocent families. In this crafty game of unconscientious politicians at least a hundred lives were lost (ninety Muslims and ten Hindus as if life is divisible between Hindus and Muslims) but that is how the figures are given and properties and business worth more than 100 crores destroyed. What a game for the communal politicians to play!

NOW VADODARA GOES UP IN COMMUNAL FLAMES

Asghar Ali Engineer

The nation had still not overcome the shock of the Meerut communal riot and the newspapers began reporting serious outbreak of communal violence in Vadodara, the second most important city in Gujarat. Gujarat by now has the dubious distinction of being one of the most communal-riot-prone states, and Vadodara is one district which has now has a well-grounded history of communal riots. Vadodara had gone up in flames in the wake of the most cataclysmic riots in Ahmedabad in 1969 and it was here again in September 1981 that communal riots erupted taking a toll of 9 lives according to the Government figures at that time.

Let us note, to begin with, some essential features of Vadodara city. Vadodara has a population of 7.5 lakhs (1981 census). According to the 1971 census Muslims, 85,000 in number, accounted for about 12% of the total population. (The community-wise break-up for 1981 census is not yet released by the authorities.) The Muslims are divided into six sub-communities, i.e., Dawoodi Bohras (1200), Alavi Bohras (6 to 7 thousand), Suleimani Bohras (2000), Dudhwala Jamat, Memons and other Muslims (for these three remaining groups population figures are not available). They are extremely poor, except for the Alavi Bohras and those belonging to the Dudhwala Jamat who have made very good progress. While the Alavi Bohras are known as the Sindhis of the Bohra Community, the Dudhwala Jamat has the monopoly of transport business. Suleimani Bohras and Memons are trying to come up, but the rest constituting the bulk of the Muslim population in Vadodara are extremely poor and it can be safely said that more

than 85% Muslims are below the poverty line in this otherwise prosperous city.

Is business competition behind these riots of October 1982 or behind those in September 1981? It does not seem to be so. But there is another important factor which has created a clash of interests between Muslims and a section of Hindus. The riots in September 1981 and the ones which took place in the last week of October 1982 during Moharram were between Muslims and Hindus, or to be more precise, between Muslims and Kahars (or Bhois) a scheduled caste community. What is the cause of the animosity between the two? In Meerut the Valmikis were incited to kill Muslims, it is alleged, by followers of the RSS and BJP. But, it is interesting to note, these organisations have not played any such role in the Vadodara riots. At least no one has made any such allegation.

What then is the cause of the clash between Kahars and Muslims? The inquiry into this reveals the role anti-social elements have come to play in the political life of the country and how the political patronage being extended to them by certain unscrupulous politicians is causing havoc for the innocent and law-abiding citizens.

Until 1977 some Muslims had the monopoly of illicit liquor business. It has now been taken over by the Kahars, and one Shiva Kahar is now said to be in absolute command of the business. The business is flourishing. It was alleged by some social workers in one of the seminars held recently that in Vadodara city liquor worth one lakh rupees is sold every day and 'hafta' totalling Rs. 60 lakhs per year is paid to the police officials and political bosses. This is a tremendous amount by any account. It is for this reason that Shiva Kahar is said to have very close relations with police officials and some important political bosses of the ruling party, enjoying their patronage. Due to Shiva Kahar, many other members of the Kahar community are having a field day.

Generally the festival of Dashera is celebrated with great fanfare among the middle and upper middle classes and upper castes like Patels, Desais, etc. However, Mr. Hemant Kahar, a CPI worker, told us that this year the Kahars celebrated Dasehra very lavishly. Everywhere in the Kahar locality photographs of Shivaji were hung

and real swords and spears kept near the photographs on the occasion of this festival. The celebration of this festival showed how much easy money was flowing into certain sections of Kahars involved in liquor business.

Shiva Kahar was arrested in May 1981 in connection with some group clashes. However, he was provided with all the comforts in jail. Even liquor was being freely supplied to him through the connivance of the police, it was alleged by some social workers. One Alam Shah Diwan, a social worker, lodged a protest with the city police chief in this regard and the then DSP stopped these facilities to Shiva Kahar. This roused the ire of Shiva who swore to take revenge. He was only waiting for an opportunity.

It is important to note certain other facts here. The Marathas constitute 5% of population in Vadodara, as it was once a Maratha state. Marathas who are economically approximately on par with the Muslims (both are quite poor in general) have been traditionally the rivals of Muslims. Bhois or Kahars who are concentrated in Navapura and Panidarwaza (the trouble-prone areas), as pointed out earlier, have rivalry with Muslims in liquor business and gambling rackets.

The 410 days, from 13 September, 1981 when the previous riots broke out, to the latest phase of violence were not in fact free of communal tension. The latest phase of riot began, according to Sayyed Nisar Bapu, the deputy Mayor of Vadodara, from on 22 October, 1982, when a person in Navapura locality was fatally stabbed. It was followed by some sporadic clashes and curfew was clamped. The Muslims, therefore, decided not to instal 'Tazias' (imitations of 'Imam Husain's tomb in Kerbala, Iraq) in view of the communal tension. However, Mr. Prabodh Rawal, the Home Minister of Gujarat, persuaded the Muslims to go ahead with the installations of 'Tazias' and he assured them that no harm would come to them.

The Muslims, on this assurance, installed *Tazias* the following day and strangely enough the police, Mr. Bapu said, fell upon them on the pretext that they were breaking the curfew. Either the police did not obey the Home Minister or the Home Minister never instructed the police to allow the Muslims to instal *Tazias*. This contentious matter can be resolved only through an inquiry.

About 22 persons were injured in the police firing. Also the police arrested 70 persons of whom 9 were Hindus and the rest Muslims. The Hindus were released after being taken to the police station while 56 Muslims were charged under Section 360.

The tension continued and sporadic incidents of stabbing, stone-throwing, etc., continued to occur between 22 and 27 October when major violence broke out. As the *Tuzia* procession taken out by Muslims on 27 October passed through Lal Akhara, the dead bodies of two Muslims were discovered there. Tension gripped the city. A fresh bout of violence began from 29 October. The authorities decided to call out army, the reason being the shortage of police. However, the army did not play any active role but in fact remained a silent spectator. Even orders for firing were being given by magistrates.

Shiva Kahar was waiting for an opportunity to seek revenge from Muslims (specially those who were his rivals), and in the Bahucharwada (Panigate area) which is his stronghold, he destroyed every Muslim hut. As pointed out earlier, he pays regular '*hafta*' to the police who were, therefore, on his side. In fact, when some high-caste Hindu Patels, etc. tried to help Muslims by phoning the police, they were asked to remain silent. Then, it is alleged, their telephone lines went dead. After the operation for demolishing the Muslim huts began, the lights in the locality also went off, which, it is alleged, was done deliberately.

When the Muslims went to lodge complaints they were detained, something which usually happens in all riots. On 29 October in Nalbandwada in the Mughalwada locality a Hindu was stabbed fatally. The police now entered the Muslim areas and began to terrorise them systematically. Some Muslim leaders allege that earlier when five Muslims were stabbed the police did not arrest anyone. Now it went on the offensive, gategashed into Muslim houses, dragged them out and severely beat them up. The SRP played the same role here as the PAC played in Moradabad and Meerut.

The Muslims said that generally young males were the targets of attack. Many of them drive rickshaws, and their knees and elbows were broken rendering them crippled. Some other victims have a strange story to tell. Some Muslims were called out of their houses and told to demonstrate the position they took while

praying. As each Muslim performed 'sajda' (prostrated himself), one police *jawan* would trample a hand under his boot, another would put his boot on the neck and yet another one would rain lathi blows on the back. All this, the Muslims allege, to revenge the murder of a Hindu.

Unlike in 1969, it must be noted, the high-caste Hindus like Patels, Desais, etc., were, by and large, sympathetic to the Muslims. It was mainly the Kahars who were, on account of rivalry in illicit liquor business, highly hostile towards the Muslims. They were assisted by other low-caste Hindus. The role of the police, of course, as pointed out, was most deplorable. Corruption has made very serious inroads into the police force and innocent citizens suffer on this account in various ways. All the Muslims we met alleged unanimously, that Police Inspector Bramba-Bhatt has played a most notoriously anti-Muslim role. He is said to be very close to the illicit liquor king and lives a very posh life much beyond his means.

One university teacher commented that the rot has gone very deep. Even the politicians of the ruling party are taking a cut on the *haftas* given by the bootleggers. Earlier they used to barter only for election funds but now they haggle for regular *haftas*. The group rivalry between the ruling party politicians, Mr. Ashok Bhogilal Patel (who is very close to Mr. Madhavlal Solanki, Chief Minister of Gujarat) and Mr. Sanat Mehta has become proverbial. They even wash their dirty linen in public. One Mr. Kisan Thakar, who was earlier jailed under section 151 for storming *Tazias*, serves with Ashok B. Patel and it is alleged, is very close to the illicit liquor gang and is said to be fixing *haftas* for the politicians, the teacher told us.

The police and the politicians of the ruling party having thus been hand in glove with anti-social elements one can well imagine what can happen to innocent citizens. The Vadodara riot can hardly be called a communal riot in the traditional sense. Everyone we talked to maintained that the well-known communal parties and organisations had no role to play in this conflict. They were nowhere on the scene. Neither there was any political or religious issue involved. There was no dispute even about the procession of *Tazias* or its route. Unlike some other riot-prone towns, Mus-

lims in Vadodara do not have political ambitions either. According to Mr. Ghulam Dawood Memon, Secretary, Congress I, Vadodara city, there are no Muslim MLAs or MPs from there. Out of sixty councillors in the Municipal Corporation, only seven are Muslims, six from the Congress (I) party and one independent. Only the deputy Mayor Syed Nisar Bapur is Muslim. Of the seven Muslim councillors, five have submitted their resignation in protest against the police excesses against Muslims. The two who have not resigned are from those localities which have not been affected. Now pressure is being brought on these councillors to withdraw their resignations and they are being assured that the police officials guilty of excesses against Muslims will be transferred. The Muslim councillors are likely to oblige.

When the communal riots were at their height the two factions of the Congress (I) were busy in mutual recriminations. Ashok Bhogilal Patel being close to the illicit liquor king through his contact man and also being close to the Chief Minister, encouraged police officials to pursue their line freely. A high-level delegation of Muslim MPs and others led by the Indian Union Muslim League met Mrs. Indira Gandhi on 3 November, and apprised her of the happenings at Vadodara. It was then that the Chief Minister visited Vadodara.

The Home Minister Mr. Prabodh Rawal always spoke of dealing sternly with the situation but hardly did anything of the sort. When many delegations met him at the circuit house to tell him the tale of atrocities on 3 November, Mr. Rawal dismissed them summarily, remarking that he would inquire into the incidents. The victims were bitter that they did not even get a proper hearing. When the minority cell of the Janafa Party made a representation to the Home Minister at Gandhinagar through a memorandum, the Home Minister, instead of receiving the delegation, sent for the armed police and had 51 persons arrested. This is how the Home Minister handled the situation 'sternly'.

The riots at Vadodara resulted in the loss of seven lives (six by stabbing and one by a police bullet), 55 persons being injured, and 622 being arrested (of which 540 are said to be Muslims) and 31 properties being set on fire. All this was the result neither of communal politics nor of any communal conflict but of political corruption, pure and simple. The extension of political patro-

rage to anti-social elements and acceptance of a share in the spoils was at the root of the trouble, in addition to the factional fight in the ruling party.

Corruption tends to become a way of life in a country with scarce resources. In such a country—with an inequitable socio-economic structure—with the process of development corruption spreads like cancer and affects all walks of life, that of politics much more, as it is one of the ways of perpetuating class rule. Money power and muscle power both are essential and the goondas nowadays have both.

What happened at Vadodara should not then be surprising.

HYDERABAD RIOTS — AN ANALYTICAL REPORT

Asghar Ali Engineer

In terms of intensity, duration and number of casualties, the Hyderabad riots deserve serious notice. At the time of writing,¹ according to official figures more than 45 persons have died and some 150 have been injured in the riot of September 1983. Unofficial figures put the number of dead at over 70 and those injured at over 200. The riot started on 7 September 1983 and still continues at the time of writing.

Hyderabad has all the characteristic features of a city in which communal conflicts tend to develop. It is a middle class city with a population of 26 lakhs according to the 1981 census; the component of Muslim population is quite high (40 per cent) and it also has a history of communal conflict. Recent field studies show that middle-sized towns with a high per centage of Muslim population—say 20 to 50 per cent and with a past history of communal conflict are more likely than not to have frequent communal eruptions. Before we deal with the current situation it would be quite interesting to understand the background as it would give us better insight into the present developments and would enable us to clearly understand the role of various political parties and groups.

Hyderabad, until the Police Action in 1948, was ruled by the Nizam. The period immediately before and after partition was one of communal turmoil in Hyderabad. In fact, it was the only major centre of communal conflict in the South which was, unlike the Hindi-speaking belt in North India, by and large free of communal tension. The Nizam was unwilling to integrate his

¹ This was in the first week of October 1983.

state with India and the Razakars were actively supporting him in this matter. The Razakar struggle gave rise to bitter communal conflict and Police Action further embittered it and intensified the conflict. Whereas the Razakar action had embittered Hindus, the Police Action embittered the Muslims. Muslims were very badly affected by the Police Action. Hundreds were killed and thousands lost all they had.

The Muslim ruling class was feudal in nature and was totally ruined after the abolition of Nizam's rule. Along with it, all those Muslims who were dependent on the feudal system were also ruined. Thus Police Action was, for the Muslims, a calamity of truly disastrous proportions. Those who could, fled to Pakistan. Those left behind were utter destitutes. The old city of Hyderabad was full of such Muslims, and ever since it has been a hot-bed of communal conflicts. The Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimin, which succeeded the Razakars, has its base among these poor and illiterate Muslims of the old city.

The bitter memories persist even today, among both Hindus and Muslims. During our investigations of the present riot, a young trader Anil Jain told us that during the Nizam's rule there were poor among the Hindus as well as the Muslims. While the Muslim poor took solace, perhaps pride, in the fact that their co-religionists were ruling, the Hindu poor cursed the Muslim rulers for their fate. Such feelings are quite widespread among the petty bourgeois Hindus in Hyderabad today. The communal organisations play on these feelings whenever it suits them. The Hindu BJP, Arya Samaj and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and the Muslim Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimin mainly appeal to communal sentiments and bring communal tensions to the threshold of communal violence on the eve of elections or religious festivals. They do this with the calculated aim of consolidating their positions in the respective communities. The main centre of communal conflict is the old city, precisely because there live the poor and illiterate Muslims; and there, side by side, live the lower middle-class and petty trading Hindu communities. Most of the properties vacated by the Muslims during Police Action were bought or occupied by Hindus of the above categories. These section of society are much more susceptible to communal propaganda.

It is to be noted that communalism appeals to both, those facing economic decline and those rising, although for different reasons. In the case of a declining society, as that of the Muslims after Police Action, traditional religion is considered an integral part of the social structure and its preservation is associated with the preservation of this social structure. The more such a structure declines, the greater is the tenacity with which people belonging to it cling to traditional religion. The communalists can easily exploit such a situation.

The rising classes, as were the Hindus after the abolition of Nizam's rule in Hyderabad, also find the appeal of religion irresistible. As for the petty bourgeois i.e. nurtured in a traditional society, religion helps mobilise their co-religionists easily for their economic demands. The communalism of the latter category tends to be aggressive, associated as it is with the rising aspirations of a class, while that of former category tends to be defensive as it tries to preserve and protect what is left for them.

We must try to understand the situation in Hyderabad and the communal imbroglio there in the light of the above background. It is a well known fact that Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimin has its following mainly among the poor and illiterate Muslims of the old city, and the BJP and the RSS among the petty bourgeois sections of the Hindus in the same area.

The present economic condition of the Muslims is not a very happy one. There is some degree of prosperity among three of the Muslim communities, viz., the Khojas, Bohras and Memons, all of them being engaged in trade. But the Muslims in general have not improved their lot as yet. However, a large number of Muslims who have gone to the Middle-East send remittances to their families in India. But, in view of strong feudal traditions still prevailing among the Muslims of this area, most of these remittances are spent on conspicuous consumption and are not invested in a profitable way. Thus the economic base of the Muslims still remains fragile. In Hyderabad the Muslims have not emerged as competitors to the Hindus in trade or industry and thus the economic factor is not responsible for the communal tension as in other cities like Moradabad, Meerut, Biharsharif, Varanasi, Aligarh, etc. Here the primary factor appears to be political in nature.

In the old city of Hyderabad, as pointed out earlier, there is a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims. Thus, in any election, there is tough competition between the BJP and Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimin. The riots also erupted during the Assembly elections in early 1983. Then, as now, the main parties responsible for the riots were the BJP and the Majlis. Both parties contend for seats in the constituencies of the old city. Presently there are seven Muslim MLAs in Andhra Pradesh, five of whom belong to the Majlis and two to the Telugu Desam. All the five Majlis MLAs have been elected from the old city, whereas the two Telugu Desam Muslim MLAs won in the suburban constituencies of Hyderabad. One can very well understand the consequences of the keen contest for seats in the old city.

In a ballot-box oriented democracy communal conflict is aggravated due to aggressive political campaigns appealing for votes on the basis of caste and communal ties. This was also witnessed during the Kashmir election in June 1983 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah most aggressively appealed to the Hindu and Muslim sentiments to capture seats in the valley and in Jammu. The BJP and Majlis raise the level of communal conflict to dangerous heights. They feed their voters with the most poisonous communal propaganda in order to retain their support.

The BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad—the latter is a new entrant into the dangerous field of communalism but very aggressive nevertheless—took advantage of the Ganeshotsava to launch aggressive communal propaganda. Big cloth banners were put up at a number of places on which the following slogan was inscribed:

“Implement Nagarcoil Resolution. Declare India a Hindu Republic”

Hindus of Bhagya Nagar

The Ganeshotsava was also celebrated with great fanfare, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad was very conspicuous in the celebrations. Its President, the Maharana of Udaipur, came all the way to participate in this festival this year. We will say more of this little later.

It was in this highly charged atmosphere that certain incidents occurred. A Muslim belonging to the Charminar area threw a

stone at a temple near one of the Minars while coming out of a mosque on 7 September. This temple had been constructed comparatively recently. In 1965 one of the stones near the Minar was daubed a saffron colour and an old woman was put in charge of it. In 1970, a *pucca* temple was constructed here after an RTC bus collided with and damaged the stone. The driver was dismissed from service as he happened to be a Muslim. The incident of stone throwing at the temple created tension in the area. There are a number of Hindu shops in the vicinity. The man was arrested immediately and is still under detention.

The revenge for this desecration was sought to be taken by desecrating a mosque elsewhere. The Allwyn factory was earlier owned by a Muslim and it still employs a large number of Muslim workers. In the compound of the factory there was a grave around which a mosque was constructed. A dispute was raised in respect of the mosque and the case went upto the Supreme Court. The verdict was in favour of the mosque and the court threw it open for public prayer.

Previously the union in the factory was in the control of the CPI. However, slowly it was captured by the BJP and one Pandit Narendra became its leader. Pandit Narendra had earlier contested the assembly election from the old city area and lost to a Majlis candidate, but he was elected later in a bye-election.

On 8 September, the mosque in the compound of the factory was desecrated allegedly by Pandit Narendra and his men. An idol was installed inside and pictures of Hindu gods were put up. The fans were damaged and the copies of the *Koran* were thrown into an ablution tank.

Soon the news spread and the Majlis Ittihadul Muslimin gave a call for bandh. When the Chief Minister Mr. N. T. Rama Rao came to know about the bandh call he called a meeting of the Majlis leaders and requested them to withdraw the call. The Chief Minister assured them that he would personally repair the damage done to the mosque and restore it to the Muslims. On this assurance the Majlis leaders agreed to withdraw the call.

However, party politics again played its role in aggravating the matter. It is said that the Congress-I again persuaded the Majlis leaders to go ahead with the bandh. It should be recalled here

that in the last assembly election the Muslims had voted *en masse* for the Telugu Desam. The Congress-I is looking for opportunities to rehabilitate itself with the Muslims and this was one such opportunity. What did it matter if a few lives were lost!

The Majlis leaders went ahead with their bandh programme on 9th September. Upto 11 a.m. the bandh appeared to be a peaceful one, but it took a violent turn thereafter as the Majlis volunteers started forcing shops to down their shutters. On that day a police officer killed two Muslim boys Shakil and Naeem who were returning from college. Shakil, a football player, was aged 20 and Naeem was 16 years of age. The police officer fired from a jeep and sped away. His identity has still not been established. After this incident there were cases of stabbing.

The BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad were fully exploiting the festival of Lord Ganesh for their own ends. They tried to create tension between Muslims and Harijans. Some BJP men damaged the idol of Lord Ganesha installed by the Lodha and Takore (low caste Hindus) communities in Maddanapeth and Sanga Reddy areas with the intention of blaming the Muslims for this. But the BJP men were caught and the situation saved. The low caste Hindus also ignored the BJP request to join it in a common immersion procession, and organised their own immersion separately.

The stray stabbing incidents continued until 21 September (the day of immersion) when again the matter took a turn for the worse. In Moazzamjahi, now renamed Vinayak Chowk, a huge pandal was erected for the Ganesh function.²

There was a huge gathering in the pandal. The function was presided over by the Maharana of Udaipur. Everyone wore saf-

² In fact before 1978 no such function had been held in Hyderabad. It was in 1977-78 when Dr. Chenna Reddy of Congress-I was the Chief Minister that the Ganesh festival began to be celebrated on such a scale. The Chief Minister himself participated in the procession and immersion ceremony. Since then every Chief Minister has participated in the function. One can very clearly see how the ruling classes in India cleverly use religion for political ends but at the same time are never tired of paying lip service to secularism. In order to distract attention from the deepening economic crises the ruling class encourages religious conservatism.

iron cap and on all Hindu houses nearby and on the route of the procession were saffron flags. This was said to have been done with a view to identify the Hindu houses while attacking the Muslim houses.

Very provocative speeches were made in the pandal. On the stage was hung the huge banner with the same inscription: 'Implement the Nagarcotil Resolution and declare India a Hindu Republic'. The Chief Minister Mr. N. T. Rama Rao attended the function as per the tradition now well established. He laid stress on Hindu-Muslim Unity and when he talked of Hindu and Muslim being brothers ("*Hindu-Muslim bhai bhai*") there went up a slogan from the audience, "*Hindu-Hindu bhai bhai*". The Chief Minister was presented with the saffron cap which he first declined. But when the Maharana insisted he wore it for some time and then laid it aside. The tenor of all other speeches was to protect Hinduism and establish a Hindu Raj in India.

The immersion procession was accompanied by 32 trucks; many of them, it is alleged, contained lathis and other weapons. They were hidden under saffron cloth. The procession followed the prescribed route, but after immersion it left this route and went through Muslim inhabited areas attacking Muslim houses on the way. The police officers did not stop the processionists from violating the prescribed route. In these attacks no lives were lost but property was damaged. But what is most disturbing is that after this the number of stabbing incidents shot up rapidly and more people were killed. The narrow winding lanes of old Hyderabad city are quite suitable for such attacks as the attacker can immediately disappear down a lane. The attacks are on both the sides and a number of persons have died. Some sources indicate that more Hindus have died in stabbing incidents. However, most of the victims, it must be noted, are poor and innocent people, whether Hindu or Muslim. It is also said that the knives are dipped in some poisonous acid.

Apart from these grim details, what is important to note is that the communal forces on both sides are having a field day while poor people are dying. Communal and religious identities are being exploited for political ends. Extreme conservatism is being encouraged on both sides. The Majlis is also now organising a *Pankha Julus* procession which was unknown earlier.

Marx aptly made a distinction between 'religious attitude towards politics' and 'political attitude towards religion'. It is the latter which has become the bane of our political life today. Communal politics holds ascendancy in India and this is to be expected. It is the easiest way for the ruling classes to maintain power while ignoring the crisis of underdevelopment.

THE PROBLEM OF ASSAM — COMMUNAL OR REGIONAL AND LINGUISTIC?

Asghar Ali Engineer

After the massacre at Neili was widely reported in the press it appeared, at least to the Muslims outside Assam, that the agitation by All Assam Students Union (AASU) had certainly taken a decisive communal turn. The Neili massacre sent shock waves throughout the country. In view of the gravity of the problem, I, as a student of Muslim politics, decided to visit Assam to investigate the whole issue from the point of view of the Muslims — Assamese as well as non-Assamese. This investigation, as objective as a social scientist can make it, reveals many interesting aspects generally not known outside Assam.

One has to visit Assam if one is to understand how explosive and complex the situation there today is. It would be no exaggeration to say that this unfortunate state is the worst model of national disintegration today. It seems that every section of population there is against the other; tribals against non-tribals, Assamese against Bangladeshis (the so-called disputed foreigners) some tribals against other tribals, Nepalese against Assamese and also in a qualified sense Muslims against Hindus. In the case of Muslims I have used the word 'qualified' and its implication would be clear from what follows.

I would like to assert in the beginning that in spirit the problem in Assam is *not* communal though it appears so to an observer after the Neili massacre. For that matter not less than 300 Muslims from Bangladesh were killed at Chalkowa in Nowgong district, but this did not receive much attention from the press as the Neili incidents overshadowed it. How then, despite

these massacres of Bangladeshi Muslims, is the problem non-communal? This is a crux of the matter and has to be understood in the proper perspective. In order to understand this dimension of the problem it would be necessary to throw some light on the history of the communal problem in Assam.

The religio-racial structure of the Assamese population and its pattern of social geography is much more complex than in any other region in India. I quote from an article 'The Pride of Being an Assamese' by Dr. Mohammed Taher, a social geographer from Assam, to show the complex composition of the Assamese population. "The Northeast India", says Dr. Taher, "which skirts the Lohit Knot, thus had been the meeting place of people having diverse racial, linguistic and social affinities. Thus the history of human distribution and redistribution gave this region a population mosaic the like of which is rare in any part of the world."

The dynamics of the community formation however, continued still further. According to Dr. Taher, "The Kings and the feudal lords continued to encourage migration of Brahmins, *Grahapipras* (astrologers), Kayasthas and others from *Aryavarta* (sic) not for religious education and social guidance alone but for economic reasons as well. Migration from the east and the northeast also continued. . . . In the early thirteenth century came the Ahoms from the Shan State across the Patkoi range and established their sway over Upper Assam. While gradually extending their suzerainty, the Ahoms at the same time started adapting themselves to the local socio-cultural milieu and finally got assimilated. . . . during the medieval period small groups of Muslims, who accompanied the Moghul and Pathan invading forces either as soldiers and craftsmen and were taken prisoners of war, also started settling permanently. The first such group of settlers came with Turbak (1535) and it was followed by similar sporadic waves in the later years till the Moghul incursions during Aurangzeb's reign in Delhi."

The extracts cited above bring out the dynamics of community formation in the Northeast region, particularly in Assam. We do not propose to go into the details of various aspects of the

assimilation process. It will suffice it to say that over a period of time there developed what subsequently came to be known as the Assamese culture and language of which every Assamese, irrespective of his/her caste and creed is justly proud.

Assam being the melting-pot of religio-racial identities, harmonious co-existence became the felt need. It had to be expressed and articulated through ideological imperatives. In this connection Shankar Deb's and Azan Fakir's movements are of great significance in the history of Assam. Both the movements imparted the message of mutual amity and friendship. Shankar Deb's was essentially a *Bhakti* movement which was very close to Azan Fakir's Sufism. Shankar Deb, it is interesting to note, was not enthusiastic about idol worship and laid more emphasis on unity of God, a concept closer to Islam. The foundation of the first Nomghar (house of worship where devotional songs are recited) was laid by a Muslim. Shankar Deb also emphasised the dignity of all human beings irrespective of caste and creed and members of lower castes could also enter these Nomghars without any restraint. There has never been untouchability in Assam as there has been in other parts of India.

After Shankar Deb, Azan Fakir emerged on the scene. Originally, Shah Miran, he came from Baghdad in the 17th Century. On account of his emphasis on the unity of all sections of society he came to be popularly known as Shah Milan (*Milan* meaning unity or getting together).

He was also known as Azan Fakir as he made *azan* (call for Muslim prayer) popular throughout Assam. He composed *Zikkir-Jari* (devotional verses) in Assamese which were sung by all Assamese and which became as much an integral part of the Assamese religio-cultural scene as those composed by Shankar Deb before him. There is Muslim shrine called Pua-o-Mecca opposite which there is Namghar. When *azan* is called out of the shrine, bell is rung in the Namghar as mark of respect.

It is very important to bear this background of traditional Hindu-Muslim unity in mind to see the present problem of Assam in proper perspective. Any Assamese Hindu or Muslim you talk to, he or she mentions these facts very proudly. The sense of belonging to the Assamese religio-cultural tradition is very strong

and evokes a powerful ethos, both among Hindus and Muslims. I would also like to make a few observations about the Assamese Muslims here, on the basis of interviews with a cross section of the community, both urban as well as rural.

Assamese Muslims are intensely religious but not communal in the usual sense of the word. They are proud of the Assamese language and their indigenous culture. In their traditional dress and food habits (except beef-eating) it is very difficult to distinguish between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. In fact, some of my Hindu respondents made an interesting observation that the Assamese Muslims are clinging to Assamese traditions in many respects more steadfastly than the Hindus especially in the rural areas. The reason is obvious: the Hindus being more prosperous are taking to modern ways of life defying the old traditions. Most of the Muslim learn to recite the holy *Koran* in Arabic (there are a large number of *madarasas*) but understand it only through Assamese translations.

The Assamese Muslims are strictly monogamous by tradition (of course the religion permits polygamy) and divorce is also very rare. As against this the practice of polygamy and divorce is more common among the so-called Bangladeshi Muslims locally known as *Mians*. More or less *Mians* is used as a derogatory term, by the Assamese, including the Assamese Muslims. These are some important points to be noted in connection with the Assam movement in order to study it in the right perspective. Again, it should not be inferred from what has been said above that there does not exist any communal problem in Assam today. Certain forces, especially those from outside Assam, are trying to give it a communal twist which has assumed alarming proportions. The Neili and Chawlkowa massacres were no mere freaks or accidental happenings. Apart from other factors which we propose to examine, there is also a communal factor which cannot be ignored.

Before we explore some of these dimensions let us examine the nature and role of the (ASSU) which is leading this movement. Can the ASSU be termed as communal or in league with the communal forces? The answer to the first part of the ques-

tion is a categorical no; but to that of the later part one has to be cautious rather than categorical. Circumstantial evidence shows that a section of AASU, specially at the district level, has not been free of blemish, to say the least, and has been in league with some communal and fascist elements, to say the worst.

The AASU, as far as its official policy is concerned, is quite secular without any doubt. For this I am not relying merely on its official statement; I am also taking into account the fact that many prominent Muslims of Assamese origin whole-heartedly support the agitation being led by AASU. I had a lengthy discussion with Prof. Ashraf Ali, ex-principal of the most prestigious Cotton College, Gauhati, and a retired Director of Public Instruction, Government of Assam. He fully supported the agitation. He is also one of the signatories to the statement in support of the Assamese agitation. In an interview with me he maintained, as a teacher of political science, that the recent elections in Assam were unconstitutional as non-eligible voters were enfranchised. He also maintained that the Assamese Muslims are very proud of the fact that unlike in North India there have been no Moradabads or Aligarhs or Meeruts here. "We are a well integrated society and we are quite proud of our Assamese language and culture."

Ahmada Rasul, Principal, Handique Girls High School, and a highly cultured lady, told me that the Assamese Muslims and Hindus feel threatened and they are fighting together to preserve their identity. She also made the point that the Assamese Hindus very much need the support of Assamese Muslims. Without them they will be reduced to a minority vis-a-vis the tribals in Assam. She asserted that the Assamese Muslims, proud of their language and culture, are whole-heartedly involved in the agitation. However, she felt, the RSS is trying hard to drive a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims. There are indications that it played a role in the Neili and Chawlkowa massacres. The RSS, she maintained, has 24000 volunteers as indicated by a paper called the *Kalakhar* supporting the BJP line. According to her the BJP published a leaflet in the first week of March 1983 saying that the relief fund contributed by the Hindus should go only to the Hindu refugees. When the AASU protested against the

leaflet, the RSS thereupon threatened that it had 20,000 volunteers. One can understand the implications. However, this lady maintained, despite this the Assamese Muslims would continue to lend their full support to the movement. She also gave me a copy of the leaflet issued by the prominent Muslims of Gauhati supporting the AASU agitation.

Mirel Quddus, a young Muslim businessman and also a drama and cine-artist, is actively involved in the AASU agitation. He asserted that the Muslims are as much attached to the Assamese language and culture as to their religion. He said that the AASU agitation is not directed against any religious group. The AASU is fighting against those who do not accept the Assamese language and culture, and who threaten the Assamese identity. The earlier Muslim immigrants from East Bengal accepted Assamese language and culture. They even supported the AASU agitation for Assamese language in 1960 and 1972. These Muslims, Mr. Quddus maintained, are even prepared to support the present agitation if the problem of immigrants between 1961 and 1971 is constitutionally solved. On being asked why, then they were massacred in Neili and Chawlkowa, he asserted that this was due to outside political elements. I insisted that he should be more specific. Then he stated that the RSS incited the Hindus, and the Congress-I the Bangladeshi Muslims, through their election campaigns. Moreover the AASU does not have tight grip over its district organisations. This was taken advantage of by the mischievous elements, Mr. Quddus maintained.

The Assamese Muslims in rural areas feel equally strongly about the AASU movement. There is an interesting incident worth narrating here which brings out the sense of solidarity between the Assamese Hindus and Muslims on one hand, and the Bangladeshi Muslims and Hindus, on the other. In a village called Chamoria in the Kamrup district, on February 12, I was told by some persons in Chamoria, the Bangladeshi Muslims attacked them and set their houses on fire. On hearing of it the Assamese Muslims from nearby Alekjharia village rushed to their rescue. However, the Bangladeshi Hindus — Nomshudras — prevented them from helping the Assamese Hindus. I decided to further investigate this interesting incident

I visited Alekjharia which is on the opposite bank of the Chamoria river. The village consists of 1500 Assamese Muslims. I talked to Bahar Ali and Mohammad Aftab Husain. They confirmed that the Muslims from Alekjharia had gone to the rescue of Hindus in Chamoria who were attacked by Bangladeshi Muslims. When asked if the Bangladeshi Muslims were not their co-religionists against whom they intended to fight for rescuing the Hindus of Chamoria, they replied that their fight was not for religion. "We are Assamese and support the Assamese movement. We must have unity as Assamese. If we go by religious feelings we will be destroyed by the Bangladeshis. Our very existence is threatened. For this reason we also boycotted the election, they said. "Only 4 votes were cast from our village." On my questioning them on the Neili massacre they were rather embarrassed and could not say anything definite on the matter. The Hindus of Chamoria also maintained equally vehemently that they are fighting as Assamese and Bangalis, not as Hindus and Muslims. "The Bangladeshi Muslims attacked us not because we are Hindus but because we are Assamese and we are against the elections. The election was the root cause of the attack."

Maulavi Hafeezur Rahman, a Bengali Muslim and the Pesh Imam of one of the affected villages near Neili told me that they had been living there from the days of his grandfather. They hold land on lease from the government. They had very cordial relations with the Assamese. To put the story in his words, "Even the day before the attack, we had met in the weekly market and exchanged pleasantries as well as goods. We speak Assamese and bear no grudge against it. I do not know why they attacked and massacred us. In a cluster of villages around here we counted 2353 dead bodies, most of them women, children and aged men. We ran fast and saved ourselves. They attacked our mosques and also tore up the copies of the *Koran*." The maulana did not feel it was religious animosity. They all lived in amity. He named the attackers as Lallungs (upper-cast Hindus), Kolitas (a caste just below the Brahmins), Hiras (scheduled caste), and Kus (OBC).

What surprised me most was that Hafeezur Rahman and others who talked to me were not bitter. They were resigned to their fate, perhaps. Well, they wanted to vote in the election but they could not. So it was not punishment for voting either. They also denied having attacked the Lallungs before.

But the magistrate in charge of the relief measures told me that the Bangladeshis had earlier attacked Lallungs and some caste Hindus and raped one woman. This story can be heard in different versions from different people. It is difficult to establish the veracity of the conflicting claims either way. What surprises one here, unlike Chamoria village, Hindu Bangladeshi houses were spared. This suggests that in Neili at least the opponents were not merely Assamese and Bangladeshis.

On the other side in a village called Boraboki, deep inside the forest according to Abubakar Siddique, a Bangladeshi Muslim, more than 585 persons were killed. He felt the real cause was the election. The Assamese did not want the Bangladeshis to vote. Mr Siddique told us that the members of AASU and the Gana Sangram Parishad came and threatened them that if they voted they would be killed. They complained to the Morigaon *thana* to give them protection but as the election was on, the CRPE was not available. The Assam police also participated in the killing, alleged Abubakar Siddique. According to him 19 Bangladeshi Hindu families were also affected.

Here the land factor also seems to have played an important role. Most of the affected Bangladeshi Muslim families held 50 to 60 *higha* land bought from the Assamese from 1958 onwards. In most of the cases there Bangladeshi Muslims hold 15 to 20 *higha*. The first thing they did on the day of massacre was to set fire to the mortgage papers. This is a significant fact which comes out after very probing questions. It was in a way a class war also though in a distorted form. Of course the Bangladeshi Muslims affected in this carnage are not a rich class. But by sheer hard work they have managed to accumulate some surplus to buy, or keep on mortgage, land from the needy tribals and other Assamese.

It is also important to note that most of the killings have taken place in rural areas. The land factor has been of primary significance in the whole fight. The urban intelligentsia, belonging to the professional or business families, make the issues of identity, culture and language of primary importance and articulate their grievances through these psycho-cultural categories. Though they also talk of encroachment of land and the shrinking land-man ratio, they are more concerned with the problem of identity and culture. This is not surprising. The perception of reality is, after all, a psychological category and is determined by one's sense of security and interest.

Thus it could be seen that the problem of Assam is extremely complex. It is neither purely cultural nor linguistic nor that of emerging nationality, nor can it be reduced to the communal category. Land, on the other hand, is the real bone of contention in the rural areas. All these factors together constitute a complex whole which would not yield an easy solution whatever the political shibboleths of this or that party. Assam is burning and bleeding and it would require great wisdom and courage to find some workable solution. The political partisanship had done enough damage. There are clear signs of communal mischief being played by external forces and the AASU leadership is too immature and inexperienced to counter such mischief by very well-organised and powerful forces. It is already late but not too late to wake up to the realities and find a reasonable solution to the problem.

THE HINDU-MUSLIM RIOT IN VARANASI AND THE ROLE OF THE POLICE

Rafiq Khan
Satyaprakash Mittal

Introduction

No riot takes place all of a sudden. As noted elsewhere, it is the culmination of a brewing situation generated as a result of an atmosphere of fear, suspicion, retaliation, a sense of injured honour or even petty violence. This product of tension, is usually preceded by a certain amount of preparation, planning and organisation.

Though people of one community may develop a sense of distrust and hatred towards those of the other, one notices very few actual participants even at the zenith of the riot, in looting, burning and stabbing.

In fact, in many cases the situation would have defused itself and tensions disappeared but for the rumour-mongers and panic-creators, who aggravate the situation.

The police force is an important element which contributes to the aggravation of the tension. In the beginning in many cases, the police are passive towards rumours and in some cases are even actively engaged in fanning them. Later on, at the time of actual riots they may begin shooting at the group which belongs to a caste or religious community other than their own or openly encourage the group of their community to become aggressive. The police record of loudly calling the people to loot and burn or actually taking part in looting, burning and shooting down in-

nocent men, women and children, is quite well known in areas where riots have taken place.

The Varanasi riot

On 1 October 1977 a few students of the local Anglo-Bengali College and a few young men from the adjoining locality of Muslim weavers clashed over the question of whether the spreading of yarn by weaver boys on a part of the playground was restricting the freedom of the students to play. The wall of the college playground is broken on the side of the residential area of the Muslim weavers. This provides to many students a short-cut access to the class rooms, and to the weavers, a facility to spread their yarn in a corner of the ground when the field is free of players. This situation has existed for many years. Neither the college authorities nor the students had ever objected to this informal use of the part of the field by the weavers.

The clash on the fateful day began with some of the weavers being beaten up by the students and driven off the field. The weavers, receiving reinforcements from their locality, later beat up some of the students and drove them to their class rooms.

The police station of the locality lies within a stone's throw of the college and having learnt about the event a sub-inspector accompanied by a few constables came to the residential area of the weavers. Altercations took place between the policemen and the youths of the weaver community. The number of youths having swelled by now and having acquired the character of a mob, succeeded in fighting back the police. The sub-inspector was beaten up and according to the police version his revolver was snatched by the mob. Late in the afternoon on the same day the police came again, this time in a sufficiently big number and fully armed. Instead of proceeding according to the law, the police behaved in the manner of a frenzied mob. They looted a large number of houses, burnt down many of them and beat up whoever was available, including old men and women. The senior men of the locality approached the district administration on this indiscriminate act of vengeance on the part of the police.

Tension builds up

Despite the fact that the district administration was apprised of the event no effective steps were taken to ensure that all the three parties involved in the situation — the Hindu students of the Bengali College, the Muslim youth of the weaver community, and the police — could advance towards forgiving and forgetting and restoring a normal pattern of relationships. Instead, the tension was given free rein to build up with increasing bitterness.

In fact, both the students and the police, who felt they were on the same side, nourished a desire for revenge against the weavers.

Contiguous with the Muslim residential area in which the trouble had started there lies another Muslim area — the most prosperous among the Muslims of Varanasi called Madanpura. Behind Madanpura lies a locality thickly populated by Hindus — mainly Bengalis and Ahirs — most of them belonging to poor and lower middle classes. The tension that had started on 1 October had mainly affected this Bengali area. Some young men from this area, it seems, were not satisfied with what the police had done to the Muslim on 1 October and wanted to teach them a further lesson. The opportunity came on the occasion of the immersion ceremony of the idol of the goddess Durga.

The usual ceremony took place 22 October 1977. A procession was taken out from the Hindu area behind Madanpura and led through the old route passing through a lane coming out on the main road. Everything passed off well and peacefully. But the boys who wanted to create mischief installed another idol of Durga in the night of 22 October and in the early morning of the 23rd made it widely known that they intended to take the procession of the idol through a new lane that passed through Muslim areas. They had formed a club for this purpose and named it Golden Club. According to our informants most of the young men are known bad characters. Later in the day the Muslims and the district administration opposed this plan and finally this second Durga idol was also taken by the old route. But a great deal of acrimonious dialogue between the leaders of the club and the Muslims had preceded this second procession.

23 October 1977

Our informants say that when the procession of the second Durga idol reached the main road the trouble started. They say that the police at the time were conspicuous by their absence and had stayed quite away from the scene. It is also reported un-animously that some hoodlums disconnected the electric lines with bamboo sticks and the whole area was plunged into darkness. In this darkness some brickbats were hurled on the idol and it broke. The police version is that the stones came from a nearby Muslim house, although according to our informants they were hurled by some members of the club from a short distance on the road in front of the idol. Confusion prevailed immediately afterwards and the looting and burning of Muslim houses and property started. A car owned by a Muslim doctor was pushed out from his courtyard and burnt. After quite a long time the police moved from the point where they were stationed and resorted to shooting. But the shooting here was not directed towards those who were looting and burning but against the Muslims who were the victims of the mob. One young man was shot dead while standing in front of his house watching the mob from the distance. This was the scene on the main road. A few hundred metres away a number of young men rushed into a cinema hall and dragged out a few Muslims and stabbed them to death. Reports about the number of the Muslims killed in the cinema hall premises differ, but most informants put it at five.

24 October 1977*Looting by the police*

On 24 October in broad daylight despite a 24-hour curfew, a mob indulged in burning and looting the interior part of the Muslim locality behind which the Bengalis and Ahirs lived in broad daylight. Police took open part not only in looting and burning but also in demolishing mosques and tombs. Two grave-domes were completely erased and three mosques were so totally demolished that it is difficult to imagine that even a mob of a few hundred could have done such a thorough job within a few

hours. The mob is widely believed to have been encouraged by the police to carry on the destruction for as many hours as they wished. One of our informants says that when he approached the nearby police post to inform that the house of his Muslim neighbour was being ransacked by a mob, the policemen rebuked him for his concern for a Muslim and asked him to mind his own business. The informant says that he could see ceiling fan of his neighbour lying at the police post.

Police looting at Nai Sarak

Later in the night a great noise broke out when a large crowd of members of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) raided the Muslim areas of Nai Sarak about a kilometre from Madan-pura on the false charge that Muslims had assembled in some houses and that a large quantity of arms and ammunition was hidden in some of these houses. Hundreds of people including several old men and women were beaten indiscriminately. This was exclusively an attack by the police and no incendiary element from the Hindu community was involved.

Police looting and arrests at Jaitpura

A few days later the police enacted the same drama of raiding and looting in Jaitpura locality at the other end of the town. They first entered the house of a respectable and prosperous sarree dealer and looted it. A number of other houses were raided and looted and scores of men (including old men) were arrested and brought to the Jaitpura police station for interrogation. People were kept there under severe hardships, some of them had bleeding wounds and some had their hands or legs broken. When some highly placed Muslim leaders of the State Government wanted to examine the arrested people the police tried to hide them and came out with all kinds of irrelevant arguments.

There were also a number of scattered attacks on Muslim graves and mosques in different parts of the town, but no one was killed.

The role of the local press and of even most of the national dailies is disastrous. In the Varanasi riot the role of all the Hindi dailies and of an English daily published from Allahabad was no better than the role of the rumour-mongers or the police against the Muslims.

The role of the Hindu elite

All our informants are Hindus coming from the comparatively well-placed and educated classes. We interviewed even some of those elements who have been named as active participants in this riot and the one earlier in 1972. Even those comparatively young men, unanimously described as elements associated with smuggling and other criminal activities, could not openly defend the police. As for other members of the Hindu elite of the locality, some of them took active part in approaching the police post for providing protection to the Muslims and some of them dissuaded the bad characters from indulging in rioting when they were approached by these people to take part in the riot and particularly in the looting. Indications are available from some respondents that money (a sum of Rs. 5000) came from some unknown sources to the members of the club on the night of 22 October to promote their efforts to organise the rioting on 23 October.

A rather widespread feeling among Muslim elite is that the district administration and some leading saree dealers who are facing the competition of the rising saree dealers from among the Muslims, were the main plotters of the riot. The administration wanted to teach the Muslims a lesson for what happened on 1 October 1977. The saree dealers, it is held, were keen to break the backbone of the rising Muslim businessmen who are mostly concentrated in the Madanpura area. Such a conclusion is unfortunately obvious as it is true of many other riots that have taken place of late in the country. Economic rivalry felt by a few of the leading business houses expresses itself in lending support to young men who for this or that reason happen to develop hostility towards a group of Muslims. It culminates, apart from the killing of innocents, in the large scale destruction

of shops and establishments and in the looting and destruction of the property of Muslims which indirectly helps these interested Hindu businessmen. The police force, like any other crowd of human beings, takes full advantage of the disturbed situation and the curfew order, and carries out a thorough job of looting both in the day and night. Alas, the businessmen fail to realise that the promotion of criminal activities and patronising of looting and destruction by goondas often boomerangs upon the patrons. For once violence has become a creed of certain groups of young men, they seldom make a distinction between their victims in terms of their caste, linguistic or religious affiliation. Their hands even reach out to the administration and political leaders.

Concluding remarks

The description of a Hindu-Muslim riot is a delicate undertaking. Most readers have a soft feeling for the community they belong to, and tend to have a conviction that members of their community are not the first in creating mischief and at any rate they cannot be justifiably accused of the brutalities and inhuman acts ascribed to them. People do believe these barbarous acts of their own community members when it is a case of intra-community killing or riot but have many reservations when such is the case between members of their own community and those of another.

It is for this reason that the naked truth about what some Hindus do to the Muslims in a riot these days or what some Muslims did in the past centuries to the Hindus, appears too bitter and distasteful a pill for the members of the accused community to swallow. This has been one major reason why the press, the radio and the government have usually played down the horrible acts.

The common Hindu is usually fed on a pet theory that the riots are initiated by the Muslims and the Hindus act only in self-defence. The press reports the number of men killed and houses and shrines destroyed, in such a manner that the impression carried by most Hindu readers is that the victims and their shrines and properties are Hindu. Even the All India Radio

is not free from this act of misrepresentation. The truth comes to light much later when a few bold journalists and leftist periodicals publish the details after investigation. But by that time the opinion of the broad mass of the Hindus is already formed and their notion that it is always the Muslims who start the trouble and that it is usually the Hindus who have to suffer, is confirmed.

TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK BOMBAY BHIWANDI : AN ANALYSIS OF EVENTS

Asghar Ali Engineer

The outburst of communal violence in the Bhiwandi-Thane-Bombay industrial belt, while confirming some theories of communal violence, blasted many others. These riots once again woke us to the reality, that the beautiful mosaic of races, cultures, languages and religions can easily turn into a volatile mix and explode at the hands of some mini-fascists or a cheap demagogue, causing untold misery to thousands of helpless people. The targets of attack in such cases are those people against whom it is easier to arouse emotions, for a variety of reasons. What follows is an attempt to analyse what happened in the industrial belt of Bhiwandi-Thane-Bombay.

Various explanations have been offered by journalists and politicians, many of which are quite valid although they do not quite come to grips with the complex events. An oversimplified or mechanical approach would not do. A social scientist has to grapple with this complex problem from various angles, at the micro as well as the macro level. As already pointed out, there have been myriads of partial explanations like builders' conspiracy to get slum-occupied plots vacated, fights between rival criminal gangs taking a communal turn, envy of the rural poor against the prosperity of urban areas like Bhiwandi assuming a communal form, etc.

These are micro causative factors no doubt, but do not by themselves offer a comprehensive explanation of the riots. The whole thing needs to be seen in a larger perspective. We can ignore neither ideological motives nor local reality. Ideological motives are as important as objective reality. After all, human

beings, whether they succeed or not, wish to mould this world of theirs according to their desires even if they have to reshape, change, or distort the objective reality. A mere empirical approach therefore would not be satisfactory for our purpose.

Before we come to grips with local realities, we would like to discuss the national situation as a whole. There is a dialectical relationship between the two. Ours is a dynamic society beset with serious problems of socio-economic growth. The significance of the fact that widespread communal violence has taken place in an important industrial belt of the country should not be lost on us. Seen rather mechanically, the working class in the most industrially advanced cities should be free from the virus of communalism. But something quite contrary to this happened and not for the first time. Both unionised workers and lumpen elements took part in these riots.

Due to the slow and distorted growth of capitalism, India's social formation has emerged full of contradictions, both social as well as economic, which are highlighted in times of economic crises. We have the most advanced technology coexisting with backward socio-religious consciousness; advanced urban areas in uncomfortable conjunction with the most backward and poor rural areas; tribals and Dalits still living the most primitive life, slogging as slaves and bonded labourers. We have the most advanced and modernised urban elite who have discarded all religious traditions on the one hand, and masses of people, illiterate, ignorant, drawing their spiritual sustenance from the most primordial traditions on the other. These contradictions are ironically getting more and more sharpened with slower and distorted growth of the Indian economy.

It should also be noted that socio-economic growth, even if slow and distorted, brings greater consciousness of their rights to the people belonging to backward sections and religious minorities. Again, this consciousness in a backward society gets expressed through an assertion of religious and communal identity because of its widespread emotional appeal. Assertion of neo-Buddhist identity and rise of Ambedkarism among the Dalits of Maharashtra, conversion of Harijans to Islam and Christianity in the South to acquire a new psychological identity, rise of Sikh and Muslim fundamentalism should all be seen in this perspective. This assertion of religious-cultural identity makes it clear that religion,

despite having an autonomy of its own, is not a causative but an instrumental factor as far as communal violence is concerned.

Many modernist elite often mistakenly hold religion as the main culprit and see renunciation of religion as the real solution to the tangled communal problem. This is far from true. Religion as a spiritual force cannot be eradicated from our society, whatever our subjective wish nor can its eradication lead to the solution of communal problems in spite of its instrumental role. Intra-religious and intra-communal conflicts can be equally dangerous as the cases of Pakistan and Iran-Iraq conflict prove. One instrument can be replaced by another of equal emotional potential, as long as the root cause persists.

When lower castes or minority communities assert their rights through emphasis on their religious or communal identity, a section of the majority community reacts with greater virulence as well as efficiency. The leaders of majority communal parties arouse a deep sense of fear and induce a siege mentality, and they succeed in their venture by convincing the members of the majority community to see the assertion on the part of minorities as a potential threat to their own privileges. The communalists thunder about the minorities getting more and more aggressive, multiplying very fast, striving to overtake them (Vishwa Hindu Parishad, during the *Ekatmata Yagna* organised by it, distributed pamphlets, saying about Muslims: "We five and our twenty-five". (i.e., one Muslim man with four wives and twenty-five children) and that they will create another Pakistan, with their loyalties elsewhere and not towards this country and so on and so forth.

Such propaganda, whatever its true value, has a powerful appeal, specially for the urban lower-middle classes. It should also be borne in mind that the greater the socio-economic crisis, the greater is the appeal of such propaganda. Such propaganda ultimately results in an outburst of communal frenzy (more often than not such an outburst is carefully planned) against minority communities, impelling them to become more community conscious, and causing them to use this communal consciousness to explain their aggressiveness, thus further perpetrating violence against them. This is what we have been witnessing for the last several decades.

We cannot get away from the fact that our religious-cultural

upbringing deeply influences our perceptions and our ethos, and that the acceptance or rejection of certain things pertaining to the opposite community depends not so much on their true value but on our ethos. To get out of this religious-cultural ethos is as difficult as getting out of the pull of gravity. Most of our stereotypes for the other community are fashioned by our ethos and not by objective reality. Most of the middle-class Hindus accept as a 'fact', without questioning, that Muslims marry four wives, beget hordes of children and can never be loyal to this country, whatever be the evidence to the contrary. The image of such stereotypes gets further strengthened by aggressive propaganda by communalists and is used for legitimising violence against Muslims. In the communal violence in Bombay and Bhiwandi, the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, made maximum use of these stereotypes. He launched his offensive against Muslims on 21st April at the Chowpatty meeting, describing them as *landiyas*—a derogatory term for circumcised Muslims—and as a fast spreading cancer. He urged the Hindus to perform an operation to wipe out this cancer. In the light of the foregoing discussion, one can very well see the mischief-making potential of such pronouncements. We did see this potential realised.

II

As discussed above, religion is an instrumental and not a causative factor in communal violence. Despite persistence of religious hostility among members of two communities, they do not fly at each other's throats until some political party or group decides to exploit these hostile feelings for achieving certain political goals. The causative factor is political. A deeper probe into any major communal riot would confirm this. In a backward, highly religion conscious country like India, even secular parties find it irresistible to make use of caste and religion based communities for their own political purposes. The ruling party has been playing this game quite cynically. The entire election arithmetic is worked out by it on this basis. The ruling party in the political scenario during the time of the riots was trying to cultivate upper caste Hindu votes and subtly encouraging Hindu communalism.

A careful study of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's election speeches during her last assembly elections would bear this out. Mrs. Gandhi, no longer so sure of Muslim and Harijan votes, concentrated on the upper caste Hindus.

'Secular' parties like the Congress-I, Congress (S), Janata, as well as several other regional parties do not hesitate to readily align themselves with communal and chauvinist groups and parties. What is worse, even established communist parties are no exception to this. Such opportunist alliances give respectability and credibility to these rank communalists. All this is done to win a few more seats in the elections. Thus, almost all parties have, at one time or the other, forged an alliance with the Shiv Sena in Bombay.

It is a known fact that the Shiv Sena was created and encouraged by the ruling Congress, with the active support of certain industrialists in the late sixties, to combat the influence of CPI on the trade union front, as it happened to be a period of recession and deep economic crisis. What could be more painful than the fact that even Mr. Dange, against whose party (i.e. CPI) the Shiv Sena had launched an offensive in the late sixties, should choose to speak from its platform, sitting side by side with Bal Thackeray. It would also not come as a big surprise to note that Mr. Banatwala and his Muslim League against whom Bal Thackeray hurled invectives, had entered into an alliance with him in 1979. After the alliance was struck, Bal Thackeray, in a meeting held on 24th February 1979, at Mastan Talab, had said, "Shiv Sena is not comprised of Hindus alone; there are Muslims, Parsis and Christians and people of other religions as well. Whatever we have done for our Muslim brothers, it has not been publicised in papers... We have helped in the construction of many Urdu schools and mosques. We invited all but no one heeded our call. Our sincerity was doubted... Whatever I do for you I would do on humanitarian consideration, I will do for you what Banatwala and Zaidi cannot do..."

"Today almost the entire Muslim population," he said, "lives in hutments. Who is responsible for this? Why have Urdu boards been put up only in Muslim localities? Why not in entire Bombay? I am not a political leader, I am a political cartoonist. I consider the political game as an abuse. Come with us with the same sincerity

with which we have come to you. Do not mix poison into this sincerity. . . I am very happy that today green and saffron flags are fluttering together."

One would hardly believe that this speech was given by Bal Thackeray. Such are the miracles of opportunist political alliances and their fallouts. Of course, an alliance between two communal parties is not as painful as that between secular and communal parties. The Shiv Sena or Muslim League would not have been as strong as they are today had they not been courted for favour by almost all secular parties. The Shiv Sena would not have been able to get away with all this mischief had the ruling party in Maharashtra not allied itself with it. It was very painful to see the city of Bombay slip under the control of the Shiv Sena while the government looked on helplessly. It appeared as if the Chief Minister had abdicated in favour of Bal Thackeray in those fateful ten days. The Chief Minister had no political will to control the situation. These riots brought into sharp relief the dangers of political alliance with communal and chauvinist groups. It is not that the ruling party or other secular parties for that matter, are not aware of this danger. They deliberately strike these alliances to make political use of religious chauvinism. Such are the compulsions of distorted capitalist growth for the ruling classes.

III

After considering the issue in the national perspective, we now consider it in the light of certain local developments. While discussing the dynamics of capitalist growth in backward countries, one must remember that it results in emergence of certain problems that are difficult to control. The emergence of a parallel black economy, migration of labour from rural to urban areas (i.e., in the pockets of industrial growth) and the consequent multiplication of shanty towns, increasing pace of unemployment and fast growth of lumpen elements prone to anti-social activities, are some of them.

All these factors have a multiplied effect on the growth of powerful crime gangs. Of late, the role of these crime gangs in communal riots has been increasing. There are several reasons

for this. These criminal gangs, in order to operate within socially safe limits, need both social legitimacy as well as political protection. For obtaining social legitimacy they identify themselves with their community and try to emerge as its protectors. They also throw in a lot of money on celebration of religious festivals which soon assume a political complexion. In the event of any communal trouble they throw themselves in and see therein an opportunity to be utilised. They also join one or the other political party or group to obtain political protection and respectability. Politicians are no less eager to oblige, in view of their money and muscle power. In fact the emergence of the Shiv Sena should be seen in this perspective. A number of underworld elements could seek political legitimacy through it. What happened in the Cheetah Camp during the disturbances is highly illustrative of this. A very powerful Muslim crime gang led by Lambu Alim had joined the Shiv Sena and constituted its local *shakha* (branch) with Lambu Alim as its *shakha pramukh* (head of the branch). After the outbreak of riots in Bhiwandi and the involvement of the Shiv Sena in these, it lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the local Muslim population. It immediately switched its loyalty away from the Shiv Sena and trouble ensued in which more than eight persons lost their lives.

The police also gets increasingly involved with the activities of these crime gangs. The police not only earns *hafta* (graft money) but also responds to political pressures. In the event of trouble like communal disturbances, it either finds itself paralysed or actively collaborates with the troublemakers. Communal ethos also plays a very significant role in this collaboration. It was an almost universal complaint of the victims of the Bhiwandi riots that the police actively sided with the mischief makers. No doubt communal ethos was a motivating factor, but the lack of a firm political directive to put down the riots played no mean role. The Vasant-dada Government was politically weak and could not afford to earn the wrath of the Shiv Sena chief.

The theorists of communalism have been postulating, and rightly so, that communal riots often take place in middle-sized towns which are more conservative and wherein lower middle-classes play the leadership role. Highly industrialised cities like Bombay have always been safe havens. Moreover, the city of Bombay had not seen communal violence with such virulence ever since 1947.

The Bombay and Bhiwandi riots perhaps exceeded even the riots at the time of Partition in their fury and extent. One needs to explain this. No doubt Bombay is industrially most advanced and has a large working class population, which ought to mitigate the onslaught of communalism. However, there are other factors to be reckoned with. Apart from the growth of anti-social elements, the city has to face a continuous influx of population from rural and semi-rural areas. All these people cannot be absorbed in industries and thus end up doing odd jobs and retaining their rural and small town conservatism. In fact each shanty town is a rural ghetto. Frustrations of life in Bombay and problems of a shanty town also rub them the wrong way. All this becomes a volatile mix, and it needs little effort in such a situation, to set communal passions afire. One must take note of the fact that most of the disturbances took place in hutment areas in Bombay and its suburbs. The other disturbed areas were those of central Bombay like Kamathipura, Kumbharwada, Mazgaon, Pydhone, Byculla, Parel and Lalbaug. Some of these areas like Kamathipura are not only highly congested but are also dens of criminals. In these areas mainly, stabbing incidents took place, unlike the slums, where burning of huts and looting were the order of the day.

It is very difficult to establish a uniform pattern in the violence that took place in Bombay city and suburbs. In some of the hutment areas like Baiganwadi in Govandi, Cheetah Camp in Trombay and Jawaharnagar in Santacruz East, local animosities and other factors were also operating, although communal motives were obvious. In central Bombay there was a tendency to settle old scores and even to kill one Hindu for every Muslim killed. One can say that the nature of communal violence in the city and suburbs was as complex as the character of Bombay city itself. It is also a fact that in suburbs where Muslims were scattered, or in a small minority, they were brutally attacked and their houses or huts razed to the ground and everything looted.

I saw this in eastern suburbs like Ghatkopar, Vikhroli, Bhandup, Mulund and Thane. In all these places Muslims live in scattered areas and even a hut at a far-off place was not spared. The mosques too were razed to the ground and in some places like Tagorenagar, Vikhroli East and Subhash Nagar, Bhandup West, even the aged *pesh* Imams (prayer leaders) were murdered in cold

blood. In most of these cases, our investigations showed that no animosity or any other disputes were involved. No other motive except communal hatred could be established. It is interesting to note that in all these attacks only Marathas or supporters of the Shiv Sena were involved. Other Hindus, whether Gujaratis or from the North or South, either remained neutral or in some cases actively helped Muslims fight against assailants who were mainly from outside. Though called Hindu-Muslim riots, the regional character of the riots cannot be lost on any observer. It is interesting to note that Dalits, by and large, did not take part in rioting against Muslims except where they happened to be supporters of the Shiv Sena or local animosity or gang rivalry happened to be the main cause. Almost all Muslims affected by riots, who were interviewed by us, testified to the fact that the attackers were Maharashtrian Hindus and that other Hindus remained neutral.

Another fact clearly established was the well-planned character of the attacks. They were well-timed and aimed at depriving Muslims of their means of livelihood. Bakeries, timber shops, mutton shops, auto-rickshaws, sewing machines, garages, tongas, etc., were special targets of attacks. In the houses that were plundered, nothing, not even a glass for drinking water, was left. Most of the inmates fled in terror simply in the clothes they were wearing. The mobs had come equipped with necessary instruments to demolish these *bastis*. After the operation it looked as if there had been an aerial bombardment in the area.

It has often been said that living together can mitigate prejudices and ensure better integration between various communities. These riots did not bear this out; on the contrary they negated this assumption. In Thane there are nearly twenty-two thousand Muslims in a total population of three and a half lakhs. Except in three localities where they are concentrated, they live scattered all over Thane. Muslims in their own *mohallahs* like Mahgiri and Rabori did not suffer much as they could beat back the invaders, but those who lived surrounded by Maharashtrians suffered the most. One unfortunate result of this riot was to strengthen the tendency of people to live in separate community-wise *bastis*. What was more unfortunate is that the members of the majority community did not try to instil a sense of confidence among the riot-affected Muslims nor persuaded them to come back. Muslims hesitated

to return for fear of fresh attacks and in many areas hoodlums went around intimidating them.

Nothing much was reported in the press about the havoc wrought against Muslims in Thane. At the Mamun Bhanja Durgah, on a hillock behind Wagle Estate, where a large number of Muslims from a nearby *jhopad patti* had taken refuge, around 40 persons were reported to have been killed. One of the survivors of the tragedy gave us this figure. Even if the figure is exaggerated, the gravity of the crime should shake our conscience. Bal Thackeray charged Muslims with being anti-national and urged the Hindus to wipe out this 'cancer'. One would like to ask him whether these poorest of the poor Muslims — who had hardly any time except for hard struggle for their livelihood — were anti-national. Did they even have any idea of national consciousness? They hardly knew anything beyond their struggle for bread. Who would anyway determine who is loyal and who is not? Hoodlums on the street? None of us would be safe in that case. Moreover, how many of us can truly boast of putting the nation above everything else? How many of us are above narrow linguistic, regional chauvinism and caste and communal loyalties? Why then kill these poorest of the poor and deprive them of the means of their livelihood, which are already very meagre anyway? Those who incite such passions are the real anti-national elements as they do the greatest harm by widening the gulf of suspicion and misunderstanding between various communities.

IV

Much was written in the press about the communal flare-up in Bhiwandi. I do not propose to repeat what has already been published about the main events. However, it would be worthwhile to analyse what happened during these disturbances. It is also worthwhile to compare the pattern of riots in Bhiwandi in 1970, with these riots. One striking difference is that in 1970 the main damage was caused within the town (burning of looms, stabbings and killings) and the town people fanned out to the villages to kill isolated families of Muslims. In terms of loss of life, much greater havoc was caused in these villages.

During the 1974 riots the pattern had reversed. People from villages came and wrought havoc on the outskirts of Bhiwandi. The Muslims in villages were reported to be safe. Why this change in pattern? A social scientist must seek adequate causes for the same and offer a satisfactory explanation. One explanation offered is that Hindus in Bhiwandi were outnumbered (the Muslim population in Bhiwandi is around 60-65%) by an ever increasing Muslim population, due to the influx of migrant U.P. workers. Increased prosperity and expanding powerloom industry necessitated this migration. There were predominantly Hindu villages around Bhiwandi and the Hindus from these villages were mobilised to compensate for the smaller population of Hindus in Bhiwandi town. This is partially true.

The BJP, which was not overtly involved in these riots, had been steadily expanding its base in these villages. Expansion of the BJP base is normally accompanied by the generation of communal ethos in one or the other form. Only in November 1983 the BJP had mobilised a large number of Hindus from the villages around Bhiwandi to oppose the construction of a slaughter house by a company known as Al-Kabir. This did generate a communal ethos. Dr. Vyas who was and still is the leader of the BJP in Bhiwandi, was quite active during the 1984 as well as the 1970 Bhiwandi riots. Apart from Dr. Vyas, other leaders like Vikram Savarkar reportedly addressed a number of meetings in these villages. All this was not unconnected with the mobilisation of these villagers for attacks on Bhiwandi.

Communal conflict has been rightly considered an urban phenomenon. Rural areas by and large have not been involved in such conflicts. However, in the Biharsharif riots too, villages on the periphery were drawn into the vortex of communal violence. There too, the RSS had been expanding its activities in the villages. Also, like Bhiwandi, in Biharsharif, Muslims had achieved a measure of prosperity.

To Bhiwandi, as pointed out above, were being attracted a large number of Muslims from U. P., who were expert weavers. These Muslims, or at least some of them, through enterprise and hard work, had purchased looms and started their own businesses. Usually they were financed by Marwaris or Gujaratis who were and still are the financial magnates. Maharashtrians, on the other

hand, hardly owned any looms out of the more than two lakh looms operating in the town. Such a situation does cause its own tension. This underlying tension was taken advantage of by rabid communalists for generating violence.

It is interesting to note that Marwaris, in 1970 as well as in 1984, were not involved in communal riots. A relationship of mutual dependence between them and Muslims had developed. The process of economic development, it must be remembered, while generating conflict between certain communities also brings about integration of others. It was pointed out to me by a very knowledgeable person in Bhiwandi, that in the 1970 riots, Marwari godowns were looted in Hindu localities whereas they remained safe in Muslim localities. The reason is obvious. Muslims were dependent on Marwaris for the running of their powerlooms. Marwaris, therefore, had shifted their godowns to Muslim localities after 1970. However, during the 1984 riots, it was pointed out by the same person, that Marwari godowns were looted in both Hindu as well as Muslim localities. With urbanisation in Bhiwandi, a large number of anti-social elements had also migrated to this town. In fact, Azimi Nagar, on the outskirts of Bhiwandi, was notorious for housing known hardened criminals from U.P. Involvement of such criminals in loot and plunder cannot be ruled out. Also, in some mixed localities like Ghunghatnagar, it was pointed out to us by the victims, that the godowns belonging to Marwaris were looted by Hindus as the former financed the Muslims, who were prospering.

Most of the Maharashtrians in Bhiwandi came from nearby villages and an integral relationship remained between them and these villages. These peripheral villages from where Maharashtrians were mostly drawn (belonging to a middle-class caste known as *Agri*) supplied the mobs who charged on hutment colonies inhabited by Muslims, on the outskirts of Bhiwandi. Thus it can be said that the villages on the periphery of a fast-developing urban centre are likely to be drawn into violent conflict, including that of a communal nature, specially when provoked in an organised manner.

These explanations of an economic, cultural or political nature are quite important in understanding periodic eruptions of communal violence. However, one cannot underrate the importance of a communal ethos, the existence of which is fundamental to communal

violence although various other factors aggravate and exacerbate it. Without the presence of this ethos it would not be possible to involve entire cross-sections of the population in such furious attacks and wide-scale destruction. Such ethos is very deep-rooted against Muslims whereas it is in the process of arising between Sikhs and Hindus and Hindus and Christians.

The role of the left parties also needs to be seriously examined in view of the persistence of communal violence. The left parties do not seem to be serious about facing this fascistic challenge. They content themselves by issuing statements after every major communal riot. They forget that each riot increases the degree of communal consciousness in both the communities, fast eroding class consciousness. The class consciousness of workers changes into communal consciousness overnight, on both the sides of the communal divide. There were various instances of Maharashtrian workers having attacked their fellow Muslim workers during these disturbances in the Bombay-Thane region. The working class solidarity was nowhere to be seen.

In a city like Bombay (with the largest number of workers in India), communal riots could have been effectively curbed if the working class had stood up firmly against them. Due to a serious lack of ideological education, workers are workers in a functional, not in an ideological sense. The communist left should take this challenge very seriously in its own interest. It is really unfortunate that there exists hardly any left movement in the largest industrial belt of Bombay-Thane-Bhiwandi. The city has not even witnessed any big morcha on any question pertaining to the common people. The left parties are too busy playing parliamentary games to think of mass agitations. Such agitations can certainly weld people into an impregnable unity. Moradabad, Bhiwandi, Malegaon and other similar working-class towns and cities are becoming endemic centres of communal violence. Soon it would be too late for the left even to repent. It is only the left, in particular the communist left, in my opinion, which can throw a serious challenge to communal forces in this country. The ruling party is not interested in solving the communal question; it exacerbates it in its own political interest, as we saw in the case of the Bombay-Bhiwandi riots. But if the left parties too neglect it, doomsday would not be far off.

The Role of the Police and the Military

It was the unanimous opinion of the riot victims of all the areas of Bhiwandi, Thane and Bombay, that the police sided openly with the rioters and miscreants. Not only did they aid and abet the miscreants, but also fired on the victims when they came out of their houses to protect or defend themselves. There were many instances pointed out by the victims, of looting of houses by the police and the SRP. We were told in Rasulabad in Bhiwandi and Shivaji Nagar, Govandi that the military people shot at SRP *jawans* who were looting houses, despite repeated warnings. But this could not be confirmed through other sources. The police and the SRP in many cases beat up innocent people, dragged them out of their houses and shot them dead. Cheetah Camp is the most glaring example of this.

Almost all the victims of the riots told us that they felt safe only after the military took over. The role of the military was totally impartial and inspired confidence among the people. The situation in Bhiwandi came under control only after the military took charge. They stopped the riots by plugging the routes through which the miscreants from certain villages were coming to Bhiwandi. The police could have done this too, but it was, on the contrary, actively helping these miscreants. Many riot-affected people pleaded with us in Bhiwandi and other areas, to impress upon the authorities not to withdraw the military for the month of Ramzan (i.e., during the month of June) as they could not be safe under police protection.

The police was issuing biased press statements. Further, whenever a Hindu was killed, he was allowed to be immediately identified by his community, whereas when a Muslim was killed, no such identification was allowed. Some journalists drew the attention of the Prime Minister to this.

The Government even shrank from deploying adequate SRP contingents for controlling the riots. During the mill strike earlier, it had deployed nineteen contingents of the SRP when, in fact, the disturbances were too minor to justify such a step, whereas during the riots it deployed only five contingents. This speaks volumes about the potential will of the government to control the riots.

The Role of the Government

It would not be incorrect or any exaggeration to say that during these communal disturbances in Bhiwandi, Bombay and Thane, it seemed as if the government had ceased to exist. The Chief Minister had no control over the situation. The Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, the chief instigator of these riots, not only continued to make provocative statements but also boasted in an interview carried by *India Today*, dated 15 June, 1984: "I know my strength, otherwise this would not have happened – what you see today." He was obviously referring to the riots, which he admits were his handiwork. But the government headed by Vasantdada Patil had no courage to take any action against the Shiv Sena chief. The police, it seemed, was not under Vasantdada's control either.

Strangely enough, the Chief Minister blamed the Urdu papers for instigating the trouble. At a press conference in Mantralaya, the Chief Minister said, "There are two or three Urdu papers which have misquoted Bal Thackeray. We are taking action against them." Asked how he knew that Thackeray had in fact been misquoted and not quoted correctly, he said that the Shiv Sena chief had made a statement to that effect. Thackeray, he said, had not piled invective upon Prophet Mohammed but had praised him as a great man.

When it was pointed out that Thackeray could be whitewashing his own earlier statements, Dada said that the Sena chief had promised him a tape-recording of his speech at Chowpatty. The tape, however, was yet to arrive. It was ridiculous that the Chief Minister of a state was depending on a person, who was in the dock, for the provocative speech the latter was alleged to have made. It clearly means that the intelligence department was not functioning at all. Even the police commissioner, Mr. J. F. Ribeiro, said in a press conference later that he did not know which intelligence officer had covered Thackeray's meeting on 21st April, at Chowpatty.

The Chief Minister also categorically refused to hold a judicial inquiry into these riots. Instead, the government ordered only a high-level departmental enquiry. A departmental enquiry can never inspire confidence among the people.

Not only did Vasantdada Patil's government appear very weak and infirm but his cabinet was also divided into rival factions. Besides this, the Chief Minister had his own political considerations for being lax towards miscreants and their leaders. For all these reasons it was quite clear that it was not the Vasantdada ministry but the Shiv Sena which was ruling Bombay during those awful ten days which shook Bombay, Bhiwandi and Thane.

After the outbreak of communal violence in Kherwadi, Bandra East, on 22 June 1984, the government showed some guts and arrested forty Shiv Sena *shakha pramukhs*, including the main leader from the area, Mr. Madhukar Sarpotdar. This action, instead of leading to greater disturbances sent Bal Thackeray rushing to the Chief Minister's house with an appeal to release his lieutenant. He assured the Chief Minister of his co-operation in maintaining peace in the city. He also appealed to all the *shakha pramukhs* to maintain peace and not to associate themselves with the anti-social elements.

This shows that Bal Thackeray is clearly not a force to be reckoned with even though he often brags about being one. It is only other politicians who have helped him to rise for their own selfish ends. Had strong action been taken earlier against his provocative statements, Bombay would not have been rocked with communal frenzy and hundreds of precious lives, and property worth several crores would not have been destroyed. But, for narrow selfish political ends neither the Chief Minister, Vasantdada Patil nor the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi wanted to touch Bal Thackeray. They preferred to see innocent human beings killed and properties destroyed rather than alienate upper caste Maratha votes. Bal Thackeray's inflated ego could not have found freer reign than in those ten days of communal madness in and around Bombay.

AURANGABAD RIOTS : AN ANALYTICAL VIEW

Asghar Ali Engineer

I

In order to understand communal violence in Poona, Aurangabad, etc., one has to understand the way in which the Shiv Sena is aggressively trying to penetrate the interior of Maharashtra and capture its municipalities, gram panchayats, etc. Mr. Bal Thackeray has been saying, "If there can be an AIDMK chief minister in Tamil Nadu and a Telugu Desam chief minister in Andhra Pradesh why not a Shiv Sena chief minister in Maharashtra? Maharashtra's regional identity too, must strongly and aggressively assert itself."

However, empirical reality does not easily fit into an ideological mode. Had it been so, Hitler and Bal Thackeray would have been ruling the world. So the Shiv Sena has to find other, more amenable means to capture power. Maharashtra, unlike the southern states, does not feel its identity threatened *vis-à-vis* the states of the north, at least not so strongly. Thus regional identity alone cannot help the Shiv Sena achieve its ambition of having a Shiv Sena chief minister in Maharashtra.

In fact the regional chauvinism against the south worked for a while in Bombay. Soon Mr. Thackeray discovered that his anti-south campaign in Bombay had lost its edge. In fact he sulked in isolation for quite some time during the mid-seventies. Some political commentators had even written him off as a spent force. Mr. Thackeray, however, was looking for an opportunity to assert his importance once again.

He got this opportunity when the Hindu revivalist movement began to emerge in the early eighties, after the episode of conver-

sion to Islam, of some Harijans in the Meenakshipuram district of Tamil Nadu. Mrs. Gandhi, who too had begun to cultivate Hindu votes in the post-emergency period, exploited this episode politically and lent subtle support to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Mrs. Gandhi, of course, was not a leader of a communal outfit but was only shrewdly exploiting Hindu sentiments for her ballot-box victory.

The Shiv Sena and its supremo have had a strong communal orientation right from the beginning. The Shiv Sena had played a significant role in the Kosa and Bhiwandi riots in the late sixties and early seventies. Only at times was its anti-Muslim tirade overshadowed by its anti-south tirade. Recently, of course, it has been unabashedly indulging in anti-Muslim propaganda. No more anti-south outbursts.

The Sena's communal rebirth took place around the mid-eighties, 1984 to be precise. After sulking in isolation for a long time it decided to 'champion the Hindu cause'. It tried to create a united Hindu front in a meeting at Chowpatty, in April 1984. This meeting was followed by country-shaking riots in May 1984, from Bombay to Bhiwandi, the highly industrialised belt of the country. It created absolute havoc for the minorities. Swords in hand, the Shiv *sainiks* were roaming the streets of Bombay, Thane and Bhiwandi, with of course, the police looking on helplessly.

The Sena adopted the same strategy for penetrating the interior of Maharashtra. Its ambitions soared high especially after it captured the Bombay Municipal Corporation in the 1985 elections. Wherever the Sena tried to gain entry, it did so by causing communal conflagration. Thus a series of riots took place in Panvel, Nasik, Amravati, Aurangabad, etc. Wherever it opened its branch, communal violence followed. The Sena presently has its sights on municipalities and gram panchayats. It is trying to win these elections by inciting communal passions. It tried to do this in the Aurangabad Municipal Corporation elections.

Here it is necessary to mention the demographic and other changes which have been taking place in Aurangabad, to understand the genesis of the riots. Marathwada was earlier a part of the old Nizam state. It was naturally ruled by the Muslim elite with a section of the Hindu elite playing a dominant part. The understanding between the two elite had helped maintain the

precarious communal balance which, of course, was upset by the *Razakar Tehrik* on the eve of Partition. The Hindu resentment of Muslim domination began to surface. The situation worsened as the initiation of development schemes in Aurangabad during the sixties started to bring about social and demographic changes. Its first manifestation came with the riots of 1968.

One must understand that with economic development, a power shift occurs in society and this shift causes, as is quite natural, a lot of friction, which often manifests itself in caste and communal form. Since the early sixties Aurangabad has been undergoing rapid transformation, bringing about a shift in the balance of power. The Muslim population has been reduced from 45% to about 30% in the district. Industrialisation has brought non-Muslim outsiders to the town. It is interesting to note that while in Bhiwandi, Malegaon, etc., the Muslim population has increased due to emigration of weavers from U. P. (which created communal problems), in the case of Aurangabad it is just the reverse. Here the Muslim population has gone down both in number as well as in significance, which is partly the cause of the communal problem.

During the Nizam state it was the Muslim feudal class which ruled. With industrialisation in Aurangabad, it is the Hindu businessmen and industrialists who enjoy power. Most of these industrialists and businessmen have come from outside. The Muslims have been reduced to penury for two reasons: firstly, they have not been able to economically adjust to a commercial and industrial economy; they remain grounded in a feudal economy. Secondly, they have been unable to secure proportionate employment in new business and industrial setups. Even the non-Muslim locals are not getting adequate employment in these new ventures. The share of the non-Muslim locals in new jobs is said to be around 4%, though according to Mr. Govind Shroff, a noted Gandhian leader, it is not more than 2%. The local Muslims are even worse off.

As a result of this, a section of Muslims has taken to anti-social activities which has created a stereotype in the minds of the Hindus. In the mind of an average Hindu, a Muslim in Aurangabad is equated with a *goonda*, an anti-social person. It is interesting to note that in a CIDCO constituency, a CPI candidate, who had, for years, worked for the workers, lost the election to an unknown Sena candidate. When some workers in the area were questioned

as to why they did not vote for Comrade Dr. Bhalchandra Kango who had served them so long, they reacted sharply and said, "Anyone can get us more wages and D.A. but only the Shiv Sena can save us from the Muslim *goondas*." Even the industrial workers have been made to think like that. What about the others? It must make us sit up and think seriously.

The Muslims in Aurangabad are on the periphery of the economy. Even the 11% *mahars* in the town are better off, educationally and employmentwise. Most of the Muslims are rickshaw drivers (90% of the rickshaws in the town are driven by Muslims), coolies, vendors, cycle and stove repairers and peons in the offices. There are hardly any Muslims in the higher posts, either in business or in industries. In contrast to this, their leaders are quite well off either due to some business or criminal activity. This contrast is very sharp and is felt by the poor Muslims. Some of the leaders are notorious criminals. They have political ties. Javed Hasan is alleged to be a *matka* 'king', and is a supporter of the Congress-I. He is the brother of the Muslim League leader, Mr. Taqui Hasan who was elected deputy mayor with the support of the Congress-I. Mr. Javed Hasan was denied a ticket and hence he contested independently and won with a handsome margin. He defeated the Congress-I candidate who was a Dalit. One must also take into account the fact that the population of Aurangabad has greatly increased. Today it is more than five lakhs. An increase in urbanisation has led to more crime (Muslims having a larger share in this sphere) and a greater nexus between crime and politics. Gang rivalries play their own part.

II

The Shiv Sena registered its entry into the town in 1985, in its characteristic style, by pushing up communal tension. During the Municipal Corporation elections, it was determined to increase its political influence, if not emerge completely victorious. Although its aim was limited, it was totally surprised by the results, which gave it a tremendous boost. It had fielded nonentities, mostly the youth. Many of them were *bhangis*, *matangs*, *kumbhars*, *malis* and *chamars* and others, among whom a large number were rickshaw

drivers, vegetable vendors, basket-makers, etc., who could hardly afford to spend on an election campaign. There were, among its candidates, three Marathas and two Brahmins. However, there were no *mahars*. *Mahars* fought separately under the leadership of Prakash Ambedkar.

It is important to note here that the unemployed youth are greatly attracted by those organisations which provide them with opportunities, both for action and leadership. Most of the communal organisations are making use of this fact, be they the extremists of Punjab or the Senas like the Hindu Sena, Adam Sena, Bajrangbali Sena or Ali Sena. The Shiv Sena's overwhelming membership comprises such unemployed youth. It is interesting to study the list of Shiv Sena candidates, for the Aurangabad elections. Why did it give tickets to low caste candidates such as *marangs*, *chamars*, *kalals*, *bhangis* etc? Probably because it wanted to convince low-caste 'Hindus' that it was their champion too, and not only of upper and middle-class Hindus. Also, no established political party gave any importance to these low castes. The Shiv Sena would not have got much support from the upper-caste leaders anyway, who had already carved out their niches. Thus by giving tickets to these low castes the Sena achieved a double purpose: it attracted young blood for its party and also appeared as a champion of low-caste Hindus.

The Sena used militant Hindu ideology for winning the municipal elections. There were several reasons for this. It definitely wanted to carve a Hindu constituency for itself. It could hardly compete in secular issues with other established secular parties. As it is, even in Hindu militancy it had to compete with established communal parties like the BJP, the RSS, etc. Without its unrestrained Hindu militancy people would not have preferred it to the others. The expression of Hindu militancy by the Shiv Sena was so unrestrained that the president of the BJP, Shri L. K. Advani was compelled to express his disapproval of it. There was another reason behind the use of militant Hindu ideology: the Sena's candidates were mostly of low-caste origin. How could they win legitimacy in the eyes of Hindus except through the use of a militant Hindu idiom?

Lastly, it must be said that this is now the game being played by all the parties, secular or communal. The elections are now lost

or won on caste and communal considerations, not on people's issues. And, those with a criminal background can do it much more openly and unscrupulously. That is why both the Shiv Sena and the Muslim League which had fielded many candidates with criminal backgrounds resorted to such tactics so freely in the Aurangabad elections.

III

As the whole election campaign was based on communal propaganda and vote-bank concept, there was bound to be communal tension. Bal Thackeray openly thundered that the Congress had converted Aurangabad into a Muslim vote-bank. (The MLA was a Muslim, Mr. Motiwala). The Congress had given tickets to twenty-two Muslims out of sixty seats which in fact was roughly in proportion to their voting percentage (which was about 38%). Bal Thackeray said that he would retaliate by converting it into a Hindu vote-bank. Tempers were frayed by such blatant and unabashed propaganda. On the other side of the fence, the Muslim League too was appealing to the Muslims to vote for it, on the basis of religion. In fact a leaflet is said to have been distributed in the name of *Ittehadul Muslimin*, appealing to all Muslims of Aurangabad to vote only for Muslim candidates, whatever party they belonged to. The Shiv Sena made maximum possible use of this leaflet. It distributed a Marathi version of this pamphlet among the Hindus, asking them to vote only for those representing Hindu interests, i.e., the Sena candidates. The Marathi pamphlet was published by *Marmik*, the Sena mouthpiece.

However, Mr. Shahbaz Rafiq of *Aurangabad Times* expressed his doubts about the genuineness of the pamphlet on two grounds: there was no such organisation in Aurangabad as the *Ittehadul Muslimin*, in whose name the pamphlet was issued. Secondly, the pamphlet did not carry names of any Muslim leaders on it, which made its authenticity questionable. Whatever the truth, it did create a lot of hot air and polarised the voting on communal lines.

Then there came the victory rally by the Sena on 10th May which was addressed by its chief, Bal Thackeray. According to intelligence reports, the rally was attended by more than twenty

thousand people. Others claim an even greater number (fifty thousand). Mr. Thackeray is reported to have said the following in his speech: "The Congress has turned Aurangabad into a Muslim vote-bank. I have turned it into a Hindu vote-bank. The Hindus need not fear now." It was quite a provocative speech. However, the sense of jubilation soon turned into a sense of frustration for the *sainiks*, as the Congress, the Muslim League and the Dalits (e.i., Ambedkarites) joined hands to elect a Congress mayor and a Muslim League deputy mayor. This anti-climax was most explosive in its consequences.

It was wrong on the part of the Congress to have coveted the mayor's post and that too by wooing the Muslim League. To genuinely attend to Muslim grievances is one thing but to ally with a communal organisation like the Muslim League for a political motive alone, is quite different. When it (i.e., the Congress) did so, it should have anticipated what was in store and taken preventive measures.

The then Chief Minister, Mr. Chavan, did anticipate such trouble as per his own press statements but completely failed to take any preventive measures. Not only was the police force in the town not strengthened, but on 16th May, an SRP platoon was actually removed for *Id bundobust* elsewhere. This was done despite warnings of danger by the Congress-I party MLA, Mr. Motiwala and others. It was a most unthought of step which the administration would regret later. Many responsible people told our researcher, Mr. S. Insaf, that if the administration had been alert, and had so desired, the riots could have been certainly prevented. But it was not to be.

IV

The inevitable happened at last on the fateful day of 17th May, just a day before the Muslim *Id*. A large crowd gathered outside the court where a petition challenging the election of the mayor was coming up for hearing. An alert administration would not have allowed such a huge crowd to gather there, specially when tempers of the Shiv *sainiks* were frayed. Also, right outside the court, Mr. Chagan Bhujbal, the Sena leader notorious for his com-

munal outbursts, was threatening that the whole city (of Aurangabad) would burn if the judgement went against them (i.e., if the mayoral election was not set aside). But something quite unexpected happened: the hearing was adjourned for a week.

The unruly Sena crowd went berserk and started towards the city, burning rickshaws and shops. On the first day itself, five persons were stabbed fatally (four Hindus and one Muslim) and one hundred and thirty-six were injured, of which eighteen were Muslims. The fact that the casualty figures for Hindus were high too, clearly shows that the Muslim anti-socials had also made full preparations. It was also alleged by our source of information that men of Mr. Javed Khan, the Congress dissident, wreaked havoc on their political rivals. The places where Mr. Khan's opponents had put up posters supporting his rival, were attacked.

The police clamped curfew at about 1.15 p.m. i.e., within two hours of the outbreak of disturbances. But curfew was of little avail. Arson and loot continued almost unabated. The *Lokmat Times*, a local English daily wrote, "Arson, stone-throwing and stabbing incidents took place with lightning speed and even before one could realise what was happening, the entire city was in the grip of fear and panic. Marauding groups of people appeared in many areas and went about stoning cars, scooters and other vehicles...". The affected areas were Baujipura, Jinsi, Kaisar Colony, Chistiya Colony, Indiranagar, Sector N-7 in CIDCO, Lota Karanja, Shahganj, Mulumchi Bazar, Gandhi Chowk, Roshan Gate, Kasari Bazar, Aurangpura and Gulmandi. Mobs belonging to the two different communities clashed in Rangar Galli, throwing stones at each other.

Stabbing incidents took place in Jijamata colony, Nehru Bhavan, Juna Bazar, Khara Kunwa, Rangar Galli, Kaisar Colony and Jinsi. In all, eighty-five persons were stabbed. The injured were admitted to the Government Medical College Hospital. Also, a cloth shop, a house, two godowns behind Mohan cinema in Sarafa Bazar, a religious place in the same area, a country liquor shop in Lota Karanja and a rickshaw in Pan Dariba, were set afire on the very first day. According to the police sources, the mob also tried to burn the houses of Javed Khan (the Congress dissident), Taqi Hasan (who was elected deputy mayor) and Mr. Gangwal. These

houses were located in old Aurangabad. According to the fire brigade sources, eleven cases of major arson took place, which included shops and houses.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Chavan and the Central Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh reached Aurangabad to review the situation. As the situation was serious, the Chief Minister issued orders to shoot at sight. However, in view of Id, curfew was relaxed from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. on 18th May, to enable Muslims to offer Id prayers. But when the Muslims were coming back after prayers, disturbances started again and the police fired, killing five Muslims. The police, however, asserted that only three were killed in the firing. While the police maintained that it fired to disperse an unruly crowd, the Muslim sources asserted that the police fired on a peaceful crowd which was returning from the Id prayers. Only a thorough judicial inquiry could have brought out the truth. The police also opened fire in Roshan Gate, the Nizamuddin Chowk, the Kaisar Colony and the Kokanwadi areas to disperse violent mobs. This took the toll up to 11 persons in two days of mayhem in the city. Again an indefinite curfew was clamped from 11 a.m. onwards and over six hundred persons were rounded up until the 18th evening.

Riots broke out on 19th May in Paithan, fifty-five kilometres from Aurangabad, and in a village called Bidkin. Both in Paithan and Bidkin, violence broke out in reaction to what had happened in Aurangabad, and was directed against the Muslims. In Paithan, according to the police sources, seven persons were killed in various stabbing incidents and nine were injured. The police had to fire three rounds to disperse a violent mob but no one was killed. There was panic among the Muslims in Paithan. In Bidkin, twenty-five km. from Aurangabad, one died of bullet injuries and two were injured in violence. The violence in Paithan apparently started after a dead body was discovered near the cinema house. Six houses were set on fire and thirteen shops were burnt. The shops belonged to the minority community. Arson took place in Kavano, Narala, Rangar Halti areas and a shop was looted in the Indira-nagar slums.

The outbreak of violence in Paithan was quite unexpected. Apparently Id was celebrated there with traditional gaiety, with Hindus and Muslims greeting each other. This clearly shows that

the mischief was masterminded by non-locals with a view to inciting hatred and creating a rift among Hindus and Muslims. The Vice-President of the Paithan Municipal Council, Mr. Prashad Dhande and the Youth Congress-I leader, Mr. Ibrahim Pathan alleged that Mr. Pannalal Papidwal, Mr. Balu Ghule and Mr. Kamlakar Wanole had instigated the people to violence and demanded stern action against them. However, according to Mr. Chandrakant Ghodke, the MLA from Paithan, it was the third incident of violence in Paithan in two years and it was nothing but a reaction to the violence in Aurangabad.

Incidents of violence took place in Jalna too, which is a flourishing business centre in Marathwada. The Shiv Sena tried to hoist its flag near the Jama Masjid and tension mounted on 19th May. Violence broke out on the 20th, in which two persons were killed and forty-five injured. Weapons like knives, swords and wooden sticks were used for the attack. The Sena hand was obvious in the Jalna riots. When the Sena district chief, Mr. Shivaji Chothe was asked to comment on this, he simply said that he had been out of station at the time of the riots.

Thus it would be seen that the round of violence in Marathwada was mainly a political strategy of the Shiv Sena which was trying to exploit Hindu sentiments for its own ends. It was a highly dangerous trend in Maharashtra. Unfortunately there was no single leader of vision who could check this trend. S. B. Chavan, who otherwise was non-communal, was paralysed with dissidence in his own party and lacked the courage to take any action against the Sena chief. It is a pity that the Chief Minister of a state was afraid of taking action against the head of a communal outfit which was doing an immense amount of damage to secularism in the country.

(Note: Mr. Insaf carried out investigations on behalf of EKTA, Ikhwanus Safa and Institute of Islamic Studies.)

CASTE AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

S. B. Kolpe

While the national dailies, particularly those in English were generally restrained in covering communal riots immediately after Independence till the "fifties", later on one finds that they also joined the ranks of the regional and language papers in giving a slant to their coverage of communal riots. This is probably because of the big shift in the ownership pattern of newspapers, with Marwari business houses assuming full control over them.

While the Hindi and other language newspapers (including some Urdu papers) owned by Hindu business interests tend to adopt an anti-Muslim bias in reporting communal events, the Muslim Press (particularly Urdu newspapers) adopts a "defensive" communalist and sectarian stance without trying to inculcate a truly secular spirit among its readers. They begin to highlight even the social evils of the Islamic world — ignoring the basic teachings of Islam. They give exaggerated importance to communal forces like the Jansangh (now BJP) and RSS while underestimating the contribution made by secular elements among the Hindus in fighting those obscurantist forces.

This can also be said of the press controlled by the other minority communities like the Sikhs and Christians. It can be said that, by and large the press in India, never played the role of cementing the gulf between the Hindu majority and the minority communities even in cultural, social and literary fields.

I would rather initiate the discussion on the role of journalists in communal riots during the post-independence period in India by narrating a personal experience of my own as a reporter, when

I covered the communal carnage at Jabalpur in 1962 as a correspondent of the *Free Press Journal*.

It cannot be denied that communal partition imposed by the national leadership of the sub-continent did shock the minorities left behind in India into a state of shock and sense of insecurity. With a large section of the Muslim intelligentsia of India having migrated to Pakistan, the Muslim masses, large chunks of whom were converts from low caste Hindus, had a sneaking sympathy for Pakistan as an "Islamic" nation, and they also had an idea that Pakistan could protect them against aggressive majority communalism in this country.

In Jabalpur, a Hindu unmarried girl — Usha Bhargava—committed suicide and two Muslim boys were arrested on a charge of attempted rape. This incident sparked off riots which most of the national dailies reported to be a conspiracy of Pakistani agents to foment communal riots. Pakistan was alleged to operate a secret transmitter from a mosque. Scores of persons mainly Muslims, were killed and in one instance 25 persons including women and children were burnt alive.

Most of the newspapers, reports were identical, obviously emanating from the same source. On reaching Jabalpur after persuading my editor to let me go there, I found that two or three strangers working jointly for several national dailies were responsible for these reports which had a damaging effect on the political life of a nation as a whole. Only one of the three knew enough English to write readable reports. The others copied these with minor changes.

The facts reported were collected from the local police who were not free from communal bias, and no reporter ever bothered to verify the "facts" doled out to him. Since I was known to most senior journalists in Jabalpur as an activist of the working journalists' trade union movement, I had no difficulty in mixing with the local fraternity.

Some gave me the background material to the riots which evidently commenced after Usha Bhargava committed suicide. There was an alleged attempt at raping her by the two Muslim boys, according to a story originally put out by the local Hindi

daily, the *Yugadharmā*, a Jansangh-RSS paper, and picked up by other newspapers in Madhya Pradesh and outside, while there were other rumours with their own versions.

According to the police reports the girl was friendly with one of the Muslim boys arrested in the case. She had been seen with the boy at cinema houses. She may have had certain personal problems and in that case any marriage was ruled out in the orthodox atmosphere of Jabalpur. That might have been the reason for her suicide.

The boys were seen near her house on the day of the tragedy and arrested on charges of attempted rape. The police were trying to build up a case against them.

One of the boys involved was the son of an established bidi manufacturer, whose factories in Jabalpur and other neighbouring towns were burnt down by communal mobs, following the publication of the rape report. The story did not sound very convincing to me.

I approached the Inspector-General of Police of Madhya Pradesh. He revealed some shocking facts about the behaviour of newsmen in the town. He blamed the press entirely for fabricating the whole story. He also denied reports about Pakistani agents having assembled in a mosque with a secret transmitter, etc., frankly admitting that it was a total concoction. But no newspaper was prepared to publish any denial of the earlier reports.

He asked me to go around all the places and see for myself what the situation really was. I collected all the local correspondents at the police Kotwali, and suggested that a press party should go round the affected areas, and also visit the controversial mosque to find out the facts.

The mosque, now almost deserted, had been searched by the police several times earlier. There was no sign of any radio transmitter anywhere nor were there any Pakistanis in the mosque. When asked how they could publish such totally false and dangerous reports, the local reporters had no answer. One explanation was that the information was based on a secret intelligence report.

We went to a nearby village where 25 persons, mostly women and children, all Muslims, had been dumped inside an old house

which was later set on fire. It was cold-blooded murder, and they had perished without the outside world knowing much about the ghastly tragedy, thanks to our so-called "free-press".

I discovered that almost all the bidi factories burnt down in the riots belonged to Muslims. A friendly professor in a local college informed me that one newly emerging Hindu industrialist family which had links with all the national parties, including the Congress, was financing the riots. It was not difficult to establish the economic motive behind the riots.

Our local correspondent who was a party to the distorted coverage of the events earlier was intimidated by local dadas. I was also threatened with dire consequences if I persisted in my "pro-Muslim propaganda".

About the alleged rape case itself I could persuade some local journalists to see the veracity of the theory I had gathered. But none of them had the courage to write about it even if it was true, lest it should hurt the sentiments of the majority community. Meanwhile, when my reports began to appear in the newspaper they created a sensation, as the paper had a fairly good circulation in that area.

After this the trend of the general coverage of the Jabalpur riots began to change. Urdu papers in Bombay and other places began reproducing my reports. Many senior journalists attached to national dailies were sent to Jabalpur to cover the riots since they roused national interest. Some of them met me and agreed with my analysis.

I had serious altercations with local political leaders including the then Congress MP from Jabalpur, Seth Govind Das, whom I accused of suppressing the truth about the riots from the rest of the country. One agency correspondent in Jabalpur frankly told me that only journalists from outside Bombay could put up a bold fight against local vested interests, but people like him had to live in the town. Obviously, he did not have the courage to report facts which local vested interests did not like because vested interests controlled the local newspapers.

Pandit Nehru, the then Prime Minister, was greatly perturbed over the Jabalpur riots which had national repercussions. He

sent a team of MPs led by his daughter Mrs. Indira Gandhi, on a fact-finding mission. The *Free Press Journal* reports, I was told later, proved very helpful to the mission.

I tried to make a study of the socio-economic genesis of the riots based on facts.

By the time I left, there were quite a few senior newsmen in Jabalpur. Most of them complained that their reports were distorted in their offices. At least six of them agreed to join me in drafting a factual account of the riots and the forces behind them and publishing it in a popular weekly like the *Blitz* or reproducing it as a booklet for distribution. After my return to Bombay, I prepared a report, as acceptable to most of the signatories.

Mr. R. K. Karanjia, editor of the *Blitz*, agreed to publish our report in his weekly, but to my surprise all but one of the correspondents who had earlier agreed to sign the report backed out and refused to sign it under one pretext or the other. The report, however, was published in the *Blitz* — signed by me and the correspondent from Nagpur (who is now attached to a U.N. body).

This state of confusion which persisted till the sixties was exploited by the Hindu communal elements to depict Muslims as people with a "dual loyalty" basically closer to Pakistan. It should not also be forgotten that after partition, the Indian Government, despite its secular claims, did give the Muslim masses discriminatory treatment as second-class citizen in the matter of recruitment to the Armed Forces and Civil Services. This attitude of the Indian ruling class was generally reflected by the Indian press.

By the mid-sixties and particularly by the beginning of the seventies a new post-partition generation of Muslim intelligentsia had emerged in India which had begun to realise that Indian Muslims must identify themselves with other secular forces in the country and stop thinking in terms of being influenced by Pakistan.

The vivisection of Pakistan with the emergence of Bangladesh and military dictatorships in Pakistan had a much greater

impact on the Indian Muslim mind, than the impact of the secular and socialist forces within the country. This new social and secular consciousness of the Muslim masses led to a new relationship between the Hindus and Muslims — more so in areas where communal riots erupted.

The various communal riots that broke out in India in the sixties and later showed that it was the “majority” communalist that launched the “offensive”, taking advantage of minor incidents. In the changed conditions members of the minority community began to resist the onslaughts let loose against them, in some places in an organised manner.

The fact that the Muslims had begun to resist attacks on them incensed the Hindu communalists all the more. They could not believe that it was possible for Muslim masses to fight back; although in the final analysis in every riot the main sufferers, in terms of casualties suffered and properties lost or destroyed were Muslims.

A new “theory” had to be invented to explain the “aggressive” stance of the Muslim masses. Since Pakistan could no longer be accused of being the abettor of the communal riots, now “foreign hands” had to be invented as the “force” behind the Muslim resistance. Obviously, the accusing finger was pointed at the Gulf countries whose money was allegedly flowing into India for this purpose.

The Indian big business houses which have traditionally been linked with multinationals and business interests from the West especially from USA, UK, West Germany, France, Japan, etc., have been allergic to Arab investments in India. Certain big Indian newspapers started the canard that some of the Arab countries, egged on by groups of Muslim fundamentalists, are pumping petrodollars into the coffers of Indian Muslim organisations to create a sense of insecurity among Indian Muslims by fomenting communal riots. They were also accused of trying to increase the Muslim population in India by promoting mass conversion of Harijans to Islam.

One of the leading theoreticians of these "neo-communalist" elite is Mr. Girilal Jain, Chief Editor of *The Times of India* owned by the Jain Group of Industrialists.

Mr. Jain is not strictly a Hindu, being a Jain. (The Jains, under the influence of the Marv ari bourgeoisie, want to be treated as a separate religion.) Once a follower of M. N. Roy, he has the advantage of being considered a "rationalist" and not a "communalist".

In one of his editorial-page, signed articles in *The Times of India*, in August 1980, following the Moradabad riots in UP, Mr. Jain (1980) wrote, "It is highly premature to conclude that there is a hidden hand behind the sudden upsurge of communal trouble in the country. But after the outrage in Moradabad in UP on Id day it is no longer possible to dismiss this possibility."

Mr. Jain was "exercised" over the unconfirmed report spread by the Hindu communalists that the Moradabad riots started after the Muslims, in an Iddgarh Congregation, armed with firearms and a variety of lethal weapons, attacked the police. If this is so, the Muslims invited their own massacre, for several of them were killed in the police firing.

According to Mr. Jain the "miscreants" in the congregation exploited the appearance of a pig (considered a sacrilege) straying into the area, to create trouble deliberately. He called it a conspiracy.

Mr. Jain's main objective in writing the article appeared to be that of refuting Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi's allegation earlier that the CIA was fomenting riots in different parts of the country to destabilise Indian politics. In the same article, he avers that the riots could be the handiwork of the KGB also. The RSS journal the *Organiser*, in fact, had blamed the Soviet Union for U.P. riots.

The Moradabad riots followed in the wake of the clashes with the army in Kashmir on 26 July 1980. An international Islamic conference was to be held from 22 to 26 August 1980 in Srinagar, supposedly financed by a "foreign dignitary". (The conference was ultimately cancelled.)

In this background, Mr. Jain (1980) discovered that "a lot of Oil money has been pouring into India," He wrote, "This has certainly encouraged the extremists and facilitated the task of promoting fundamentalism. Of late these extremists have adopted an aggressive posture." This the Muslim fanatics could not have done, according to him, without "financial support from abroad".

Mr. Jain's thesis on the "hidden hand" behind communal riots is full of ifs and buts. In itself it is not important because beyond making baseless allegations he has managed to prove nothing.

The Times of India for several days published scores of letters supporting his thesis of a "foreign hand behind riots". Indeed there were a few selected letters, mostly from Muslims, rejecting his theory, which were published.

Since then the "thesis" that oil money is behind the conversion of Harijans to Islam at Meenakshipuram, as also behind communal riots has become respectable among the Hindu communalists. This is classic case of credibility being given to a myth which has no basis whatsoever and has only added fuel to the fire.

We have discussed the role of the Indian press mainly in covering and commenting upon the communal riots which had a historical origin under the British imperialist rule. The "divide and rule" policy of the British Raj in relation to the two major communities which led to the partition of the sub-continent was continued by the Indian ruling class in the post-independence period in relation to the masses of the two communities to keep them divided and always fighting.

The attitude of the Indian press, barring a few exceptions of left-oriented secular journals in various languages owned by monopoly houses and read by upper castes, has remained generally biased against Muslims. It has also remained largely biased against the Dalits and lower castes in the "caste wars" that erupted in India in the post-independence era. It should not be forgotten that in the caste hierarchy, in Hinduism, Muslims are treated on the same level as Harijans.

The caste wars are a peculiar phenomenon of rural India, which have assumed a special dimension during the last two decades or so, especially with the emergence of a better organised rich farmer class.

This class of rich farmers or "*kulaks*" drawn mostly from middle-caste groups which prospered at the cost of the agricultural workers and other sections of the rural poor, with the various so-called "Land Reform" legislations, since the advent of political freedom, found itself confronted against the Dalit farm labourers who also began to get organised, with their demands for better wages and security of service.

Any resistance by the Dalit farm labourers, traditionally treated as chattel slaves and outcastes, even in defence of the honour of their women, was an anathema to the neo-rich upper-caste farmers, who resorted to brutalities of all kinds, from rape, murder, flogging and arson to social boycott, to crush them.

With the spread of literacy and education among the Dalits and other backward communities, the resistance of the rural poor against their exploiters assumed more organised forms in different states. But in isolated villages in backward regions, the attacks on Dalits by upper-caste elements degenerated into the worst types of carnage and mass murder.

These caste wars are in fact class wars in the peculiar Indian socio-economic context. Generally, newspapers have reported these atrocities as mere caste conflicts, often presenting them outside their social and economic context, as narrated by local politicians and police officials who themselves are responsible for these crimes.

However, it must be said to the credit of a few national newspapers that they did some investigative reporting on some of these atrocities at least as a sequel to the pressure of high ranking political dignitaries and leaders of the places where these crimes were perpetrated.

The caste "riots", if they can be called riots, were not merely a rural phenomenon, but they had their urban ramifications also. The anti-Dalit offensive in Marathwada let loose by upper castes as a sequel to the agitation against a proposal unanimously adopted by the Maharashtra Legislature for renaming the Marathwada

University after the late Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had its widespread repercussions in the urban centres of the region as well.

The upper-caste Hindus, including students and their parents, took advantage of the issue of renaming the Marathwada University to terrorise the Dalits (who constitute nine per cent of the total population in the region) for a variety of social and economic considerations.

Marathwada has the largest percentage of educated youth (graduates and double graduates) among the scheduled castes. This had become an eyesore for the upper-caste youth especially in the rural areas. The growing resistance of the Dalit agricultural workers to the exploitative tactics of the upper-caste landlords and rich farmers was perhaps attributed to the new awareness among the Dalit educated youth, children of the once docile land labourers. Under the influence of emerging Dalit intelligentsia, Dalits began to assert their rights under the Civil Rights Protection Act and various anti-untouchability laws, which infuriated the upper-caste elements. Some of the upper-caste elements were prosecuted by the police on complaints lodged by Dalits, causing new tensions.

Besides there was the competition between the unemployed educated Dalit and *Savarna* (caste Hindu) youth. In recruitment to services the Dalit youth had the advantage of reservation as also in admissions to technical and medical colleges. All these tensions added up to the outburst of the anti-Dalit violence in Marathwada in 1978.

The local Marathi newspapers remained by and large pro-*Savarna* and anti-Dalit in their coverage, raising the bogey of the Marathwada identity being lost with Dr. Ambedkar's name being given to the Marathwada University. Highly distorted accounts of the "disturbances" with anti-Dalit slants were published in the Marathi newspapers. The views of Dalit organisations and leaders got distorted due to poor coverage, despite the fact that Maharashtra has had a tradition of egalitarian reformist movement. The main endeavour of the state-level newspapers was to give the entire upsurge the character of a mere dispute between those "changers" (Dalits as well as *Savarnas*) who wanted the

University's name to be changed and those "no-changers" (only *Savarnas*) who opposed it. The press bypassed the socio-economic genesis of the conflict.

A monogram published by S. P. Punalekar entitled *A Study of Marathwada Riots: Aspects of Class and Caste in Social Tensions*, published by the Centre for Social Studies, Surat, gives an insight into the whole problem in Marathwada although it does not deal with the role of the press in this connection, except indirectly. It can be said that the press, because of its upper-caste bias, miserably failed in educating the people about the socio-economic aspects of this major "caste-cum-class" conflict in Marathwada.

The anti-reservationist agitation of upper caste medical students in Ahmedabad and other centres in Gujarat early in 1981 was yet another shameful event in the recent caste-cum-class wars in India. The *Savarna* students (backed by their rich parents) in five colleges of Gujarat — two in Ahmedabad and one each in Jamnagar, Vadodara and Surat — were agitating against the 25 per cent reservation of seats in post-graduate courses of medical colleges for students from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes. (The percentage reservation is 7, 13 and 5 respectively.)

Whereas the backward communities which constitute 60 per cent of the total population in the State get 25 per cent of the seats in the post-graduate course, the *Savarnas*, constituting 40 per cent of the population, get 75 per cent of the seats. Yet they resisted strongly the 25 per cent of seats given to the backward communities. In reality these communities get much less than even the percentage allotted to them, since there are no candidates to seek admission.

Almost the entire press in Gujarat, nearly all Gujarati newspapers backed the *Savarnas* and incited mob violence against Dalits, publishing false and fabricated reports. The entire anti-reservation agitation degenerated into organised hooliganism against members of the scheduled castes in Ahmedabad and Cen-

tral Gujarat districts with the Patidar rich peasants playing an aggressive role in the anti-Dalit campaign.

The Indian Federation of Working Journalists deputed a group of four senior journalists consisting of Mr. S. B. Kolpe (Editor, *Clarity Weekly*), Mr. Dinkar Sakrikar (Editor *Poorva Monthly*), Mr. Madhu Shetye (Special Correspondent, the *Patriot*) to study the situation and make a report. Their findings were published in *Clarity Weekly* (1981 a,b,c.) in the form of articles by different members of the delegation.

The case of the *Savarna* Students was blatantly unjust and totally reactionary. Yet the anti-reservationist agitation assumed the character of a state-wide caste war. At least 30 persons were killed in police firings and group clashes in different parts of the State.

Dalit bastis not only in Ahmedabad and other important urban centres but also in several villages of Mehsana and Kheda districts were attacked and burnt down, in some places with police connivance. A section of the millowners and industrialist financed the agitation ostensibly to divide the labour unions which got vertically divided into Dalit and *Savarnas*. Trade unions of middle-class employees in banks, LIC, ONGC etc., were also affected.

Tragically enough, according to an editorial in the *Clarity* (1981a). "Almost all newspapers, especially Gujarati dailies in Ahmedabad and in centres like Rajkot, Baroda and Surat are running a virtual crusade against reservation, with the *Gujarat Samachar*, owned by the President of the IENS (Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society), playing the role of a torch-bearer of *Savarnas*."

As for the "merits" of anti-reservation agitation it has been sufficiently demonstrated that the *Savarna* medicos were used as pawns by upper caste leaders to serve their sectional interests. The reservation provision did not really hurt the interests of the *Savarna* students.

On the contrary since 1975, out of 420 seats reserved for backward communities, only 37 had been filled since there were not enough qualified Dalit or backward community candidates to fill the vacancy. The unfilled seats from the reserved quotas went to

upper-caste students. In 1981, again, there were only seven applicants available among SC, ST and SEBC students to fill 65 seats available in B. J. Medical College in Ahmedabad for post-graduate courses. In all Gujarat medical colleges, less than 4 per cent of the teaching staff belong to the Dalit and backward classes. We can endlessly discuss the utterly irrational approach of the *Savarna* students to the problem of reservation of seats in post-graduate medical courses for Dalits.

Let us conclude by quoting the *Clarity Weekly* (1981a) on the pernicious role played by the press in the reactionary anti-reservationist agitation in Gujarat.

"False reports about alleged Dalit atrocities against upper castes are freely published (and their contradictions ignored). Statements issued by political parties and prominent citizens against the reactionary agitation are suppressed."

"This is a sad commentary on the state of the press in Gujarat where the top police brass and newspaper proprietors appear to have made a common cause against Dalits.

"In the rural areas the dominant communities of Patels (Patidars) and Kshatriyas, mostly rich farmers, have exploited the agitation to terrorise Dalits, all of whom are agricultural workers, living in isolated localities to subserve their economic interests.

"Although the Bharatiya Janata Party on a national scale has opposed the anti-reservation stir, local BJP and RSS workers are very much involved in different parts of the state. There should be a thorough probe into the anti-Dalit atrocities perpetrated by upper caste reactionaries in Gujarat. A nation-wide popular sanction against the Gujarat type of anti-Dalit agitation should be created by all progressive, secular and socialist sections of society."

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DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF THE TERM COMMUNAL ORGANISATION AS SUGGESTED BY THE MINORITIES COMMISSION

1. THE TERM 'communal' has, in the context of certain facts and developments in our country, acquired a bad odour. It is derived from 'commune' which was a small territorial division of self-government of France. It meant "a group of people living as a community". It implies living as a self-governing body for certain limited local purposes sharing certain common objects of living together as organisms within a larger national entity.

2. In our country, the word, 'communal' has been used for those who are united by religious bonds to pursue certain objects intended to benefit their particular community. It has acquired, not without good reasons, the meaning of an 'objectionable activity' by trying to benefit from some communal bond, especially religion, to gain an unfair advantage over and even at the cost of others similarly organised on the strength of communal or religious bonds. The original meaning, as a group of persons living in a locality and sharing the requirements and pursuing the objects they are entitled to enjoy on the basis of their organisation into an organ of local self-government, has not only been overshadowed but displaced by the objectionable implications of an organisation, working on the basis of a religious or radical or caste affinity, to attain political and economic ends and aggrandisement at the expense of others.

3. In the latter sense, every organisation which purports to exploit any common bond, such as that of creed or caste or locality or language or culture, for the purpose of gaining unfair ad-

vantage for the members of the organisation could be called a "communal organisation."

4. That national outlook and integrity, which have to be kept in view for the purpose of attaining aims and objects stated in the preamble to our Constitution and which have to be achieved through the pursuit of Directive Principles of State Policy and respect for equal fundamental rights of all citizens, tend to be wiped out by organisations working on communal lines particularly those of religion and caste with a view to serving political, economic or social ends. Exclusion of others from the benefits which such an organisation is supposed to bring to its members would be anti-national, predatory, and anti-social.

5. It is true that certain organisation, on the basis of religion, caste, linguistic, or cultural affinity, may aim at raising the standards of life of those who organise themselves in this fashion without damaging other people. But, this is very difficult unless certain prescribed standard and limits are observed. The object, for example, may be to remove superstitious ideas or phobias which divide Indian citizens, but as soon as an organisation, even if originally based on some communal bond, begins to entertain wider objects and acquires an integrationist outlook, it begins to lose its communal or exclusive character.

6. An organisation intended for true socio-economic and laudable political purposes must necessarily keep the integrationist ideology of our Constitution, reflected in the Preamble and Directive Principles of State Policy, in the forefront as its object. In other words, all healthy organisations must necessarily be based on the concept of at least an organic interlinking, an equal participation, and an equal benefit to all citizens instead of serving the interests of only a section of the nation distinguishable as a community or caste.

7. In practice, the actions of members of an organisation, taken together with their objects, will determine the extent to which it is benefiting or damaging the basic concepts of national integration. Those organisations which challenge the basic concepts or spread hatreds and hostilities which would divide Indian citizens from each other or promote discord between them could be

penalised or discriminated against within the objectives of the Constitution. The absence of discrimination against any persons or citizens contemplated by the Constitution does not preclude discrimination against those who want to destroy or challenge the very basis of national integration contemplated as the foundation of all national development, progress and endeavour under the Constitution. If they are punished, or penalised or even if their organisation is banned it can be urged that the grounds of discrimination against them are absolutely legitimate and constitutionally valid.

8. Even Article 25 of the Constitution, conferring religious freedom both in belief and in action subjects citizen to the requirements not only of law and order, morality and public health, but also the identical rights of other citizens. Activities that could strengthen the bonds which unite citizen and citizen and the citizen and the State are legal and laudable. Organisations and activities that damage those bonds can be penalised as anti-national and anti-social.

9. The test in every case should not be the mere discrimination of the bonds but their objects and the manner in which those objects are pursued for the purpose of the religious worship and expression and propagation of religious ideas on the strength of a common religious bond and label. It may take to education, social reform, and economic uplift. A line can, however, be drawn against allowing it to indulge in political activity. The secularism contemplated by our constitution at least requires separation of religious organisation from organisations for political purposes.

10. It is true that secularism, carried to its logical conclusion excludes the religious from economic, legal, and social spheres as well. Nevertheless, organisations based on religious bonds could be permitted if their activities are intended to better educate the members of religious community or to prove their economic or social lives. The object may be to deal with what is ultimately strengthening and integrating for the whole nation in a piecemeal fashion. The political bond, however, must stand for the common national objects which cannot be cut into pieces or severed by

religious classification. Hence, banning of political parties organised on the basis of religious affinity should be permissible. But, the pursuit of other activities on grounds of religious affinity as the communal or uniting bond may be punished only where the activity is such that it goes beyond promoting the welfare of those organising themselves and is designed to injure others. As feelings, against others and tolerates exploitation of others who do not share the same bond the activities of the organisation would fall within a field which is objectionable. It should then be discouraged or penalised.

11. This, it is submitted, is a rough statement of what policy should and could be in accordance with our Constitution. It indicates the policy underlying constitutionally valid law making with regard to communal organisations. An organisation limiting the right of membership by virtue of religious or any other similar qualification such as caste, language, or culture could be suspected as a communal organisation. Nevertheless, its activities should be prohibited or penalised only when they enter the obnoxious or offending zone. Its character will depend only partly on its stated objects, and even more so, on the nature or result of its activities. The twin tests of object plus activity should determine whether the communal organisation is obnoxious or harmless from the point of view of national interest and integration.

12 The test indicated above requires a determination of the usefulness of an organisation for purposes of national integration. If its objects and activities lead towards that result it is a laudable organisation whatever be its name. On the other hand, if its objects and activities promote national disintegration and disruption it is a harmful organisation which can be discriminated against. The mere facts that a subjective element enters the process of judging the effects of the aims, objects and activities of an organisation should not deter the determination or decision which should be based on practical commonsense. Objectively verifiable criteria must form the basis of even subjective assessments or else the assessment becomes arbitrary, whimsical and unjustifiable.

13. It has been sometimes stated that commonsense is uncommon. Nevertheless, the process of judging the effect of purposes found to exist or of their pursuits cannot be so difficult as to be elusive. It may be that certain organisations, which may be really pursuing or economic objectives, conceal themselves in the garb of merely religious, social or cultural activities. The removal of the garb is also possible by carefully gathering and analysing objective data of which lies underneath. The effects of objects and activities are, at any rate, capable of objective determination. They are disclosed by outbursts of violence and lawlessness. Any attempt to preach violence or hatred of another community should *prima facie* be considered legally actionable. Appropriate laws, their impartial administration, their firm, unbending, and speedy enforcement are matters capable of easy determination by experienced administrators.

14. Bearing the above considerations in mind a "communal organisation" may be defined as follows:

"A Communal organisation is one intended to facilitate the pursuit of or actually pursuing the objects of exploiting a difference of caste, community, religion, race, language, culture, or region for the purpose of obtaining unfair advantages at the expenses of other communities or propagating hatred or hostility against others not sharing the same organisational basis, and any activity pursuant to such an object will constitute an 'objectionable activity'."

15. It should be noticed here that even intention exhibited by forming the organisation is within the mischief aimed at by the definition. What is and what is not preaching "hatred" or "hostility" may require further elucidation and for that purpose this explanation may be added to prevent misuses:

"Explanation: Bonafide and balanced criticism, however severe, which could not reasonably provoke violence or hostility between classes or communities, would not be deemed to constitute an 'objectionable activity'."

Of course, both 'mens rea' and *actus reus* must concur to constitute any punishable offence which may be created, but, it is suggested, any action or conduct pursuant to or promoting an "objectionable object is one which could reasonably provoke outbreaks of violence.

INDEX

AHMEDABAD

Hindu-Muslim conflict, 179 ff.

Ali (Prof.), Ashraf
on Assamese agitation, 300

Aligarh

characteristics, 36, 55

Aligarh Muslim Univ., 48, 76, 211

Allahabad

characteristics, 36, 55

All Assam Students Union

(AASU), 296

and Muslims, rural, 301 ff.

nature and role of, 299-300

Ansari (Dr.), M.A.

communal tendency absent, 44

Anti-reservation agitation, Gujarat

Indian Press on, 349

Arab affluence

and communal tension, 111

Arya Samaj, 48, 52

and: Congress, 71; Muslims,
217, 289

Ashrafs (immigrant Muslims), 56

Assam

and Muslims, 299 ff.

problem in, 296 ff.

Aurangabad

characteristics, 330 ff.; Municipal
election and Shiv Sena,
332 ff.

Azad, Abul Kalam (Maulana), 44
and Shias-Sunnis, 154-55

BAKSHI, GULAM MOHAM- MAD, 159

Banaras Hindu Univ., 48

Bhagalpur blindings, 6, 107

Bharatiya Janata Party (formerly

Jansangh), 3, 26, 39-40, 80, 161,
175

and: caste, communal violence,
27, 29, 166; Jammu, 8; politics,
49, 220-21, 229-30, 241, 263,
290, 291; role of, in: Assam,
300-01; Hyderabad, 289, Meerut,
274

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, 166

Bhiwandi weavers

financiers: Gujaratis, Marwaris,
323

Bhujbal, Chhagan (Shiv Sena),

335

Bihar

characteristics, 56, 74, 98

Biharsharif

characteristics, 238 ff.

Brahmin-non-Brahmin conflict,

133

Brahmo Samaj, 48

CASTE AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

critique, 24-29

Castes, lower

rights asserted by, 315

Caste violence

see Riots

Chauvinism, Hindu, 3, 26, 93, 95,
106-107

Chavan, S. B.

Aurangabad situation reviewed,
337

Cheetah Camp, 319

Chopra children

murder of, 6, 107

Citizens for democracy

- on Godhra riots (1981), 165-66, 246 ff.
- Class violence
 - see Riots
- Communal
 - connotation, 4, 352 ff.
- Communal conflict
 - profile theory, 112-13
 - see also, Riots
- Communal conflict, Pre-partition
 - cause of, 34-5
- Communal content
 - probe into, 85
- Communal consciousness
 - heightening of, 69 ff.
- Communal disturbances (1968-79 state-wise), 54
- Communal exploitation
 - rooting out of, 11
- Communalism
 - aggravation, causes, 81-2
 - and: heritage, medieval, 42-3; politics, 76 ff.; religion, 43 ff. characteristics, 4-5, 68 ff., 73 ff., 140 ff., 228, 231; history, 230-31; origin(s) of, 2, 72-3; persistence of, 86; perpetuation, 72-3; term explained, 134-35
- Communalism, India
 - origins of, 42 ff.
- Communalist
 - and religion, 45
- Communal organisation
 - definition, 356-57
- Communal phenomenon
 - explanation, 99 ff.; factors, 33 ff.
- Communal prejudice
 - v. communal violence, 58 ff.
- Communal problem, 11 ff., 48 ff., 68 ff., 228-29
 - perspectives on, 130 ff.; solution to, 315; study of, 132 ff.
- Communal representation
 - principle, 70, 71
- Communal Riots
 - see Riots
- Communal tension
 - analysis, 110-12; areas prone to, 91; causes, 3, 63
- Comunal violence
 - see Riots
- Communist Parties, 27 ff.
- Communist Party of India, 240, 241, 245, 246
- Communities, Minority
 - rights asserted by, 315
- Communities, religious
 - cordiality between, 43
- Conflict
 - connotation, 4; turns violent, 62
- Congress (I), Meerut city and district
 - Presidents pro-RSS, 275
- Constitution of India
 - Article (25), 354; Directive Principles: State Policy, 353
- Conversions, Tamil Nadu, 264, 265, 269, 329-30
 - appraisal, barrier to, 118-19; approach to, 119 ff.; factors leading to, 6-7, 120 ff.; reaction, Hindu, 7, 125-26
- Cow agitation
 - campaign against, 71; Hindu-Muslim alienation, 178-79
- Crime gangs
 - and: Police, 319; riots, 319 ff.; growth of, 318-19
- DACOITS
 - 'encounters' with, 107
- Dalits
 - and Meerut riots, 273-74
- Dalits, Maharashtra, 314
- Deb, Shankar (Assam)
 - amity message from, 298-99
- Deoras, Balasaheb, 46
 - in Meerut, 274
- Durga Puja, 92
- EKATMATA YAGNA 315
- Elections
 - and Muslims, 70

- FAIZABAD, 55**
 Fakir, Azan (Assam)
 amity message from, 289-99
 Faridi (Dr.)
 communal violence; solution to
 Firozabad, 55, 78, 79, 95
 Five Year Plans
 consequences of, 13 ff.
 Forrest, G.W.
 communities, religious
 amity among, 43
- GANDHI (MRS), INDIRA,**
 12, 328
 Hindu vote cultivated 330
 Gandhi (Mahatma), M.K., 45, 52,
 72
 assassination, 53; communal
 tendency absent, 44; on Jammu
 communal trouble, 159
 Ghanchi Muslims, Godhra
 condition of, 100, 247 ff.
 Godhra
 characteristics of, 36, 247-48;
 Hindu-Sindhi, Sindhi-Muslim
 relations, 247 ff.
 Godhra Municipality
 situation in, 257-58
 Golwalkar, M.S.
 ideologue, RSS, 44, 46
 Gorakhpur, 55
 Government
 and minorities, religious, 61-2
 Group identity
 stability of, 140-42
 Gujarat
 Hindu-Muslim relations, 177
 Gujaratis
 Bhiwandi weavers' financiers
 323
- HARIJANS, 44**
 atrocities on, 12 ff.
 conversion, 118 ff.
 Harijans, Meerut
 BJP woes, 274
- Hazratbal Shrine, 53, 161
 Heritage, medieval
 and communalism, 42-43
 Hindu communal groups
 objectives, 97-8
 Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti
 formation of, 182 ff.
 'Hindu' identity
 exploitation, 3, 38
 Hindu Mahasabha, 34, 49, 71, 95,
 158, 159, 160, 230
 Hindu-Muslim communities
 relations between, 51, 59, 69,
 134, 145, 175 ff.
 Hindu Rashtravad, 44, 49, 74
 Hindu Revival Movement, 329
 Hindus, 34, 35, 44, 45, 46, 47, 85,
 86
 middle class, attitude of, 316
 Hindu Sanghatan groups, 52
 Hitler, Adolf, 329
 Home Rule
 demand for, 48
 Husain, Taslim (Qazi), 217
 Hyderabad
 characteristics of, 288 ff.
 Police action, 288 ff.;
 Politics, electoral, 98, 291
- INDIA**
 characteristics of, 85-6, 116-17,
 340
 communal riots-free (1950-60),
 77-8
 democratic process and com-
 munal solidarity, 77 ff.
 development uneven, 1
 India, post-Freedom period
 situation in, 3
 India, post-Partition
 poor's nightmare, 11 ff.
 rulers generate dreams, 10-1
 Indian National Congress, 10-11,
 27, 28, 34, 48, 49, 52, 53, 69,
 72, 85
 and: forces, reactionary, 71-2;

- Indo-Pak war, 178; Justice Party, Muslim League, 72; problem, communal, 10-11, 76-7; untouchability, 10
- Intellectuals, 6
- apathy, emotional and bankruptcy, more 107-108
- Iran-Iraq conflict, 315
- JAGANNATH TEMPLE**
- Sadhu-Muslim clash, 184 ff.
- Jain, Girilal
- on Moradabad riots, 345-46
- Jamat-e-Islami, 8, 27, 49, 85, 162-63
- Jamiat-ul-Ulema, 179 ff.
- Jamiat-ul-Tulaba, 163
- Jammu and Kashmir
- accession (1947) to Indian Union, 160; characteristics of, 7, 156 ff.; violence, communal, 8
- Jamshedpur
- characteristics of, 36
- Janata Party, 40, 80
- Janata regime, 12
- Jitendra Narain Commission (1979)
- on Jamshedpur riots, 95-6
- 'Jizia', 68
- KAHARS VADODARA**
- position of, 282
- Kaaba, 85
- Kashmir, Maharaja of, 159 ff.
- Kashmir, Pakistan occupied Muslim majority, 7
- Khalifa, 53
- Khaliq-uz-zaman (Choudhry), 217
- Khan, Azmat Husain
- on Biharsharif riot, 240
- Khan, Liaqat Ali, 217
- Khan, Syed Ahmad, 70
- Khangahs, 69
- Khilafat Movement, 52
- Kodian, P. K.
- Harijans, pamphlet on, 12
- LEBANON**
- and communities, racial and religious, 64
- Lucknow
- characteristics, 55, 145, 152 ff.
- Lucknow Pact
- and Congress, Muslim League, 52
- MADHOK BALRAJ**
- Ahmedabad visit, 181-82; Indianisation theory, 230
- Madon Commission Report, 8, 33, 47, 167-69
- Mahajan, Meher Chand, 159
- Mahmud of Ghazani, 59
- Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimin, Hyderabad, 289, 290, 291
- Majlis-e-Mushawarat
- support to Swatantra Party, 179, 180
- Majoor Mahajan, Ahmedabad, 196-97
- Malaysia
- and communities, religious, racial, 64
- Malegaon
- characteristics of, 36
- Malerkotala, Nawab, 43
- Man, multi-dimensional being, 116-17
- Marwaris
- Bhiwandi weavers' financiers, 323
- Meenakshipuram conversions
- see* Conversions Tamil Nadu
- Meerut
- characteristics of, 271 ff.
- Municipal Corporation and parties, political, 275

- Mehta Balwantraj
 death in plane crash, 177
- Minorities Commission
 on communal organisation, 352ff.
- Mishra (Dr.), Jagannath, 242, 243
- Mohammed (Hazarat)
 teachings of, 45
- Moradabad
 characteristics of, 36, 40, 55, 79-80, 92, 94, 216 ff.
- Muslim alienation
 factors, 104-106
- Muslim community
 and Hindu prejudice, 59
- 'Muslim' identity
 exploitation, 3, 38
- Muslims, 314, 317
 and: British, 69 ff.; government, 59 ff.; riots, communal, 168-69; position of, 46, 74 ff., 84 ff., 111-12, 210 ff.
- Muslims Ahmedabad
 and Swatantra Party, 179, provocation from, 180 ff.
- Muslim segment
 and: Soviet Union, Thailand, 63
- Muslims, post-Independence
 status, economic better, 45 ff.
- Muslims, Pune
 conditions of, economic, 265-266
- Muslims, rural
 and AASU Movement, 301 ff.
- Muslims, Tamil Nadu
 status of, 122
- NAIRS**
 position of, 52
- Namboodiri Brahmins
 position of, 52
- Narayan Jayaprakash
 on Ahmedabad riots (1969), 90-91
- National Conference
 and Jansangh, 160
- National Integration
 and: Hindus, Muslims, 104-09
- National Integration Committee,
 12
- Nationalism
 nature of, 74
- National situation
 and violence, communal, 313-16
- Navman
 and RSS, 82
- 'Naxalities'
 elimination of, 107
- Nayar, Kuldip
 on communal riots, 21, 22
- Neili massacre, 296
 and police, 303
- Neo-Buddhist, 314
- ORTHODOXY**
 counter-attack by, 183-84
- PARSIS**, 316
- Piggott (Justice) Committee, 149
 ff.
- Political system
 condition of 108-109
- Political violence
 categorisation, 130 ff.
- Politics
 and: candidature, 65; riots, 2, 63
 ff., 73 ff., 197-99, 325
- Prejudice
 connotation, 4
- Press, Indian
 and: anti-reservation agitation, 349 ff., caste riots, 347-49; Muslims, 343
- Protest movements vs
 communal violence, 57-8
- Provincial Armed Constabulary
 (PAC) 80, 97, 278 ff., 309
- QUDDUS MIREL**
 on AASU agitation, 301

- RAGHUBIR DAYAL COMMISSION**, 83
- Rahman Hafeezur (Maulavi)**
on Ncili massacre, 302
- Rao, N.T. Rama**, 292, 294
- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)**, 348
and: chauvinism. Hindu, 3, 26, 93, 95; Jammu 8; Navman, 82; Politics, 49, 82, 102, 180, 220, 229, 241, 290; riots, 8, 27, 29, 83, 94 ff., 112, 159, 241 ff., 263, 300, 01 anti-anti-Muslim campaign, 217, ban on, 53
- Rasul Ahmada**
on Assamese agitation, 300-01
- Reddy (Justice), Jagmohan**
on Gujarat riots, 95
- Religion**
spirituality, core, 44
- Religious-cultural upbringing**
influence of, 315-16
- Riots**
and: government, 83 ff., 96-7, 201 ff., 209, 214 ff., 243, 254 ff., 263, 267 ff., 274, 277 ff., 284 ff., 317, 325-26, 332 ff.; 318, 326-28, 355 ff., Hindus, 310-11; intellectuals, 107-08; military, police, 97, 278 ff., 308 ff. 326, Muslims, 45 ff., 168-69; press, 115, 199-201, 208, 337 ff., problems, local, 318 ff., religion, 52, 315 ff., RSS, 8, 27, 29, 94 ff., 112, 154, 241 ff., 263, 300-01, Shiv Sena, 316 ff., situation, national, 313-15, VHP, 93-4, 96, 262, 263-64, 269, 275-76, 289
approach to, 174, causes, 3, 5, 30-2, 33 ff., 47, 92 ff., 165, 169-71, 238, 282 ff., 306, critique, 24 ff., data empirical, 36 ff., effects of, 109-10, explanation on, 99 ff; 313 ff., extent of 8, 21, factors leading to, 35 ff., 47, 62-3, 91, 101-02, features, 21-3, 55-7, 272 ff., measures, remedial, 113 ff., 171-72, nature, 8, 22, 51 ff., 74, 88, 318-19, origin, 55 ff., 320
- Ahmedabad**, 8, 22, 33, 51 (A.D. 1730), 59, 81, 83, 93, 95 ff., 176, 184 ff., 205 ff., 214, 261 ff. aftermath, overview 205 ff., background 175 ff., intensity, 190-91, Jayaprakash Narayan on, 90-1, participants, 191 ff., pre-planned, 188 ff.,
- Aligarh**, 45, 74, 94
cause, 100
- Amravati**, 330
- Assam**, 8
- Aurangabad (Maharashtra)**, 92, 97, 330, 337
- Baramati**, 93
- Bhiwandi**
and: Shiv Sena, 330 ff., causes, 22, 37, 81, 95; characteristics, 36, 37, 323 ff.; findings, 168-69
- Bhiwandi-Thane-Bombay belt**, 313 ff.
- Bidkin (Maharashtra)**, 337
- Biharsharif**, 1, 8, 45, 91, 238 ff., 323
causes, 239 ff.; field enquiry, 238-46
- Bombay**
and: Shiv Sena, 330; characteristics, 320 ff.
- Calcutta**, 21, 53
- Communal**, see Riots
- Godhra**, 8, 45, 228-37, 246-61
- Gujarat**, 176-77
and Harijans, 13
- Hatia**, 22, 95
- Hydrabad**, 8, 45, 95, 97, 291 ff.
- India**
objective study, 65-7
- India, post-Independence/Partition**, 11-2, 33-41, 68 ff.

- Jabalpur, 36, 92, 340 ff.
 Jalgaon, 22, 166, 172-74
 Jalna, 338
 Jammu, 159
 Jamshedpur, 53, 81, 93, 95-96,
 166-67, 215
 Karimganj, 78
 Khulna (Bangladesh), 53
 Kosa
 and: Shiv Sena, 330
 Marathwada, 330
 Meerut
 study of, 271 ff.
 Moplah
 aspect, agrarian, 52
 Moradabad, 8, 9, 45, 57, 85, 100,
 209 ff.
 Naokhali, 53
 Nasik, 330
 Paithan, 337
 Panvel, 330
 Parbhani, 97
 Pune, 93, 97-98, 263-70
 Ranchi, 22, 53, 81, 83, 96
 Rourkela, 53, 54 96
 Sambal, 79
 Solapur, 8, 93, 263-70
 Tellicherry, 95
 Thane, 321-22
 Udaipur, 228-37
 Uttar Pradesh, 79
 Vadodara, 8, 95, 281 ff.
 Varanasi, 51, 81, 305 ff.
 Ronaldshay (Lord), 70
 Rustamji, F
 on riots, 94-95
- SADHU SAMAJ, 31**
 Saharanpur
 characteristics of, 55
 Samad (Dr.), Abdus, 239
 on Biharsharif politics, 241-42
 Sampradaya Virodhi
 Committee, 21
 Sanatanis-Arya Samajis conflict,
 133
- Savarkar Vikram, 323
 Savarkar, V. D., 44
 Scheduled Caste tribes
 position of, 213, *see also* Hari-
 jans
 Secularism
 definition, 354-355
 Shahjahanpur
 characteristics of, 55
 Shankaracharya (Jagadguru)
 and cow slaughter, 178
 Shias-Sunnis conflict, 7, 134,
 144 ff.
 Allsop Committee Report, 152;
 settlement fails, 154-55
 Shivaji cult, 71
 Shiv Kahar, Vadodara, 283 ff.
 Shiv Sena, 8
 and: Municipal elections —
 Aurangabad, 332 ff.; Bombay,
 330; Muslims, 329 ff.; politics,
 329 ff.
 creation of 317 ff.
 Shuddhi Sabhas, 71
 Siddique, Abubakar
 on Neili massacre, 303
 Sikhs, 27, 46, 47, 314
 Singh Sabha, 48
 Social group conflicts, 133-34
 Society, backward
 change in, 38 ff.
 Socio-economic growth
 backwards rights-conscious, 314
 Solapur
 characteristics of, 268
 Somnath Temple
 plunder of, 59
 Soviet Union
 and Muslim segment, 63
 Sri Lanka
 Muslims in, 4
 Sufis, 69
 Suhrawardy Government, 53
 Swadeshi Movement, 71
 Swatantra Party
 and Muslims, 179, 180

TABLIQ

Jama'at, 85, 217; Movement, 52

Tandon, Parushottamdas

communal tendency absent, 44

Tewas, peasant caste, 120

Thailand

and Muslim segment, 63

Thackeray, Balasaheb, 316, 328,

329, 334

and communal violence, 316 ff.;

speech by, 317-18

Tilak, B. G. (Lokmanya), 71, 72

Tradition and modernity

no dichotomy, 89-90

Tyagi, Maya (Baghpat)

rape of, 6, 107

'ULEMA', 68

United Kingdom

and imperialism, 49

United States of America

India policy, 49

Urdu

status of, 105-06

Usha Bhargava (Jabalpur) suicide

case, 340

Uttar Pradesh

characteristics of, 56, 74, 75, 94

VADODARA CITY

characteristics of, 281-82

Vaniyas, peasant caste, 120

Varanasi

characteristics of, 36, 55, 307

Verghese, B. G.

on communal violence, 101

Violence

connotation of, 4; eruption, 62,

incidence, intensity, 88, 91 ff.

Violence, communal

see Riots

Violence, sexist

rise in, 11

Violence, social

categorisation, 130-32; dynamics

of, 1

phenomenon of, 109-10

Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 7, 315,

330

activities of, 264 ff.; and riots,

93-4, 96, 262 ff.; 269, 275-76,

289; RSS link with, 263

Vyas (Dr.), BJP leader, Bhiwandi,

323

WEST ASIA

and: Islamic fundamentalism,

85; Meerut Brassware, 80

West Bengal

and logic, communal, 74

World War II

and communalism, India, 49

YADAVAS, BIHARSHARIF

condition of, 241-42

ZAIDI, 317