GUJARAT 2002 RIOTS: AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS

by

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ABSTRACT

Considering the communal riots in 1969, 1985, 1992 and recently in 2002, communal riots between Hindus and Muslims are not new phenomena in Gujarat. Yet the active participation of people from all sections of the society, the scale and the brutality of violence and the spread of violence in new areas (that used to be peaceful earlier) make Gujarat 2002 a unique phenomenon. Why did riots occur in Gujarat? Why are the religious identities so hardened and politicized in Gujarat? This thesis develops an eclectic approach towards understanding communal riots by integrating the approaches of Asagar Ali Engineer, Paul Brass and Ashutosh Varshney.

The central argument of this thesis is that the existence of an “institutionalized riot system”- implying the support of the State- as Brass clams, is an essential condition for the occurrence of communal violence. Further, riots are endemic where the civil society organizations are inactive in controlling the riots as well as work in tandem with the State. Taking Gujarat 2002 riots as a case study, this thesis aims at developing a universal eclectic approach towards understanding communal violence.
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Terms and Abbreviations

Adivasis: tribal people

Babadev: A tribal God

Bajaran Dal: founded in 1986 is a youth wing of the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (World Hindu Council)

Bharat Ekata Yatra: A procession for the unity of Indians

Bharatiya Janata Party: A political organization of the RSS

Ganesha: God of intelligence in Hinduism

Ganesha Visarjana: the “good bye” ceremony to a Hindu God

Gaurav Yatra: A procession for celebrating pride

Ganges: one of the holy rivers from northern India

Gujarat Samachar: A Gujarati Vernacular newspaper

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: the National Volunteer Organization in 1925. This organization has promoted the ideology of Hindutva in the nook and corner of India through its various outfits working in the civil society sphere

Hindutva: A commitment towards establishing a Hindu nation

Harijan: Sons of the God. M. Gandhi coined this term for the untouchables

*Jalaram sampraday*: A religious sect from Gujarat

Kshatriya: Warrior caste

Lord Rama: One of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, a central God in the Hinduism

Lok Sabha: the lower house of the Indian parliament

Madarassa: A Muslim school

Mahuda: A specific tree
Modi Narendra: the Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat in 2002

Om: an auspicious letter in Hinduism

Panchyat: the political organization at the village level

Patels: a landowning caste from Gujarat

Patidars: a landowning caste from Gujarat

Pithoba: a tribal God

Pushti Marg: A religious sect from Gujarat

Rathawas: tribal people from eastern Gujarat

Ram Janma Bhoomi movement: the movement for the liberation of the temple of a Hindu God, Lord Rama

Rath yatra: Chariot Procession

Sabarmati Express: A name of a railway in India

Sarpanch: the leader of the political organization the village level

Sandesh: a Gujarati vernacular newspaper

Sangh Parivar: a family of organizations is a family of organizations committed to promote the cause of Hindutva.

Saraswati Goddess: Goddess of Knowledge according to Hinduism

Shakti Sampraday: A religious sect in Gujarat

Shila Pujan: Literally praying the rock

Swaminarayan Sampraday: A religious sect in Gujarat

Swadhyay movement: A religious sect in Gujarat

Trishul: it is believed that the triad is the weapon of Lord Shiva who destroys the world when it is ruined
Vande Mataram: Literally, Hail Mother. One of the famous poems from the national independence movement of India

Vanavasi Kalyan Aashram: A sister organization of RSS that works in the tribal areas

Vajpayee Atal Bihari: The Prime Minister of India in 2002

Vishwa Hindu Parishad: AKA World Hindu Council was established in 1984 to consolidate, strengthen and make invincible the global Hindu fraternity. VHP reaches the grassroots of Indian society by working on the issues such as medical relief, and education. It reaches to urban Hindus by promoting Hindu socio-cultural activities
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis analyses the recent communal carnage in Gujarat. It attempts to comprehend the collective communal violence in Gujarat by mapping out the violence and then analyzing the reasons of the violence.

In trying to synthesize the role of various organizations, institutions, and the state in violence, I have used various resources such as the Concerned Citizens Tribunal Report, The Human Rights Watch Report, The Women’s Panel, The People’s Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi and the Times of India, Ahmedabad Edition extensively.

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Chapter One
TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING GUJARAT 2002

Introduction

On February 27, 2002, in Godhra, a small town in India’s Gujarat state, two train cars were set on fire, killing at least fifty-eight people. The victims were Hindus returning back to Ahmedabad from Ayodhya, the contested birthplace of a Hindu God, Lord Rama. This incident was followed by horrific communal carnage all over Gujarat for more than four months. Over 2000 people were killed in the violence. Sixteen of Gujarat’s 24 districts were engulfed in the organized armed mob attacks on Muslims between February 28 and March 2, 2002 (Sawant et.al. 2002). The shrines, properties and businesses belonging to the Muslim community were systematically destroyed. The Sangh Parivar, a family of organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva, justified the violence that followed Godhra carnage as a ‘natural reaction’ to the Godhra train tragedy. ¹ Was the communal hatred the root cause of the communal riots in Gujarat?

Was the communal carnage in Gujarat strictly a reaction to the trigger event at Godhra?

The Godhra tragedy and the politics of narratives

As Ashutosh Varshney puts it, how a trigger event gets interpreted in people’s minds is very important in determining whether there will be any rioting (Varshney 2002b). The explanatory narratives published in local newspapers about the trigger event

¹ Sangh Parivar, meaning a family of organizations, is a family of organizations committed to promote the cause of Hindutva. The aim of these organizations is to transform India into a Hindu nation, thereby making all the other religious minorities as second rate citizens. The chief architect of Hindutva was Mr. Golwarkar, who established an organization called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, i.e., the National Volunteer Organization in 1925. This organization has promoted the ideology of Hindutva (the ideology that aims at making India a Hindu nation) in the nook and corner of India through its various outfits working as the civil society organizations.
are crucial in shaping the communal discourse that follows. The *Sangh Parivar* interpreted the killing of 60 passengers at the Godhra railway station as the pre-planned and organized attack on Hinduism. The fundamentalist Hindu forces justified attacks on Muslims that followed the Godhra incident as a natural and a ‘spontaneous reaction’ by the *Sangh Parivar.*

Besides the interpretation given by the *Sangh Parivar*, there were various accounts of the situation at Godhra railway station. According to one version, some Hindus near the Godhra station molested a Muslim girl and the Muslim vendors who used to work on the railway station retaliated against the Hindus’ attempt to pull the Muslim girl inside the train. Another version claimed that some Hindus from the train bought tea from a Muslim vendor but refused to pay him, leading to an altercation between them (Mishra 2003). The Hindus that were sitting on the roof of the train stripped themselves and made some obscene gestures towards the Muslim women who were living in nearby areas according to yet another version. The Gujarat state government claimed that Muslims residing near the railway station that had gathered in large numbers threw fireballs into the train and that resulted in the fire (Sawant et al. 2002). The exact course of the incident at the Godhra railway station is still unclear.

In spite of the ambiguity about the events at Godhra, the various interpretations and explanations about the event led to horrific violence all over Gujarat for more than four months. In the days following the Godhra massacre, government officials and the local media branded the Muslim community as terrorists. Armed gangs of the Hindu

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2 See, Sudhir Vyas, "Indian Polity, Pesudo Secularism Responsible for Current Crisis," *Times of India*, March 25, 2002. In an interview with Mr. Sudhir Vyas, Mr. Praveen Togadia, the international general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Council, i.e., the World Hindu Council claimed that the post Godhra violence was a natural reaction for the attack on the pilgrims on way to Amarnath (a holy place for the Hindus situated in north India), attack on Sabri Mala in Kerala, attack on Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir.
fundamentalist organizations mobilized to kill Muslims as a retaliatory action against the Godhra tragedy. During these attacks, properties and businesses belonging to Muslims and Muslim worship places were the main targets. Hundreds of women and girls were gang-raped and sexually mutilated before being burnt to death. This set off a chain reaction effect so that the Muslims destroyed the Hindu homes and properties in the following weeks. As Pankaj Mishra quotes,

The worst violence occurred in the commercial city of Ahmedabad. Between February 28 and March 2 the attackers descended with a militia-like precision on Ahmedabad by the thousands, arriving in trucks and clad in saffron scarves and khaki shorts, the signature uniform of the Hindu nationalist groups. Chanting slogans of incitement to kill, they came armed with swords, sophisticated explosives and gas cylinders. Computer printouts of the Muslim families and their properties guided them. The scale of the violence was matched only by its brutality. Women were gang-raped before being killed. Children were burnt alive (2003).

As the Concerned Citizens’ Tribunal Report (CCTR) claims, a total of 151 towns and 993 villages, covering 154 out of 182 assembly constituencies in the state of Gujarat, were affected by the violence (Sawant et.al. 2002). Though the post-Godhra violence was horrific in terms of its scale, magnitude, and intensity, it was not the first incidence of communal violence in India. To put it differently, communal tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities have escalated into violence in India with formidable frequency. Varshney identifies Ahmedabad, Bombay, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Meerat, Baroda, Calcutta and Delhi as the eight communal hotbeds in post- independence India (2002:7).

The first major wave of communal violence occurred immediately after India’s independence in 1947. Dr. S.K.Ghosh rightly claims that many Indian states including Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Bihar, and Punjab were rocked by communal violence after the partition of India (1987). The mobilization of the Hindus during the movement for the
liberation of the birthplace of Lord Rama during 1990s resulted in the demolition of the Babri mosque. The Hindu Muslim violence reached its peak in north and west India (Ludden 1996). This was the second major wave of communal violence. In addition to these major waves of communal violence, Hindu-Muslim violence has been recurrent in India since independence. As Paul Brass argues,

Indeed, it is likely that not a day passes without many instances of quarrels, fights, and fracases between Hindus and Muslims in different places in India, many of which carry the potential for conversion into large-scale riots in which arson, looting, and killing may take place (2003:6).

Why do religious identities emerge so often in antagonistic terms? Why do the masses resort to violence? This work intends to interpret the communal riots in Gujarat 2002. I will take into consideration the role of the political economy, the State and the various civil society organizations in controlling communal riots. In other words, the distinctive contribution of this work will be in developing an eclectic approach towards understanding the dynamics of communal riots. Even though, Gujarat 2002 riots will be the main focus of this study, I intend to develop a theoretical framework that will have a universal applicability in interpreting riots.

**Explaining the Riots in Gujarat**

Communal violence follows observable patterns in its nature and scope. First, riots have been essentially urban phenomena, as they have not affected all parts of a particular locale evenly. According to Varshney, 18% of the Indian population has been ‘riot-prone’ in the post-independence period (2002:7). Second, riots have been mostly locally concentrated. To illustrate, even in the case of cities, only certain areas are affected during riots and others are not affected. For example, in case of Ahmedabad, only the eastern part was affected in 2002, while the western part was comparatively
peaceful. Third, as the Indian state is a secular state, it has always aimed at controlling the spread and intensity of the violence. Despite being controlled by the state in most of the cases, communal riots occur more intensely in areas where there is a systematic mobilization of the masses against the ‘other’ ethnic community.

It is almost impossible to give a single causal explanation of riots, as many actors are simultaneously involved in the occurrence of riots. To illustrate, the underlying enmities between the businessmen, politicians, and religious leaders are expressed in the form of communal violence in many cases. Riots occur in some areas because they are beneficial for certain groups of the society such as the politicians. In other words, it is difficult to understand the occurrence of riots in certain parts without analyzing the underlying local level enmities, and sets of interests.

Although the specificities of the occurrence of riots change from place to place and time to time, the overall pattern of the collective violence could be theorized. Paul Brass’s analysis of communal riots is the most compelling analysis in this context. Brass argues that the occurrence of riots in India is predictable. Generally riots occur in areas where Hindus and Muslims are in the nearby localities or in places such as slums. As most of the population in these areas is economically impoverished, there is a constant competition for getting petty jobs which in turn leads to a struggle for the replacement of one group by the other. The timing of the occurrence of the riots is also predictable according to Brass (2003: 31). Riots occur mostly at the time of intense political competition and mass mobilization.

Riots appear to be spontaneous reactions of the communities in most of the cases and an element of spontaneity is certainly involved in the occurrence of riots. However,
targeted attacks against a particular community are not merely the spontaneous overflow of feelings. They are a result of the complex interplay of many factors such as demography, economics, electoral competition with internationality and direct human agency (Brass 2003: 34). There exists what Brass calls an “institutionalized riot system” in the occurrence of riots. A full length discussion about the “institutionalized riot system” is to follow in the next session. It is sufficient to say here that communal violence is often not a spontaneous mob-action, but it is a well-orchestrated attempt by a group of people having some incentive in the production of violence. The groups having incentives in the production of riots are involved in the prior mobilization of the ethnic communities. Boundaries between the ethnic communities are hardened as a result of the mobilization and they culminate in the intensification of hostilities, which in turn is expressed in terms of violence.

Although most of the people that participate in the riots have specific incentives, they do not produce the riots by themselves. As Brass explains, riots are a dramatic production in which the directors are not in complete control of the results of the drama (2003: 33). The only elements that have the most control over the production of riots are the institutions of the state and the civil society organizations. State in this case implies the institution that has the supreme power to use physical force in order to control the violence. The civil society organizations are the organizations that are better organized that the small social groups but are not part of any institutions of the state. The civil society organizations work in areas such as health, education, and social harmony. In other words, they are the second most influential factors in maintaining social health after
the State. Overall, large scale ethnic violence occurs only in places where the state and
civil society organizations play a crucial role in aiding riots.

What was the role of the civil society organizations and state in the case of
Gujarat? Considering the large-scale violence against Muslims in Gujarat, it can be
hypothesized that the state and civil society organizations have actively participated in
the production of riots. This thesis intends to understand the process of a systematic
mobilization of the Hindus against the Muslims in Gujarat in the last two decades. The
civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva have been mainly
responsible for the mobilization. Along with the civil society organizations, the state in
Gujarat was actively involved in the production of violence.

A review of Existing Approaches to Inquiry

In order to understand the anatomy of communal riots, we need to develop a
time theory that will explain the social processes involved in sharpening of the ethnic
identities and the process of establishing an organized system to carry out violence.
Cynthia Enloe's definition of "ethnicity" is useful for our present purposes. Enloe refers
to ethnicity as "a peculiar bond among persons that causes them to consider themselves a
group distinguishable from others" (1973: 13).

According to Horowitz, some notion of ascription, however diluted, and an
affinity deriving from it are inseparable from the concept of ethnicity (1985: 52). The
bond of shared culture creates a sense of belonging to the same group in communities.
However, it does not automatically lead into ethnic violence. As Enloe argues, it is hard
to mobilize a political movement on the basis of ethnic pride when ethnic plurality is not
clearly visible to the average citizen (1973: 20). Most of the times, the ethnic
organizations help a person to identify with and relate oneself to a group. As Satish Sabrewal explains, a religious tradition is used like a compass, helping one chart a course through life. It is used as a sanctified manual, listing the do’s and the don’ts for coping with the universe (Madan, 1992:344).

Communal/ethnic groups may co-exist peacefully most of the times. However, in societies where there is a history of hostility between the two communal/ethnic communities, ethnic organizations have a potential to become a stumbling block in the social harmony. The ethnic difference in two groups may lead to ethnic hatred if there is a struggle for the resources such as land, power, or the natural resources that have a great monetary value. Communal organizations such as the National Volunteer Organization and the Muslim League in India are case in point. To summarize, communal/ethnic hatred and communal violence are qualitatively different. Hatred for the ‘other’ community does not automatically lead to violence. Masses need an internal motivation to participate in riots; therefore, the dynamics of riots cannot be understood without analyzing the social processes that motivate and inspire the masses to be active in riots.

Theories of ethnic conflict and violence

All explanations regarding the existence of an ethnic conflict can be categorized within two broad themes: ethnic conflict exists because of the unrest and hatred in the masses, or because of the mobilization by the elite. The explanations of the former type, namely, that give more importance to the masses than the elite imply an element of primordiality in the existence of communal conflict whereas explanations of the later type claim that ethnic conflict is unnatural, i.e., produced by some groups that have special incentives in the production of violence. Most of the theories explaining communal
violence in India have tended to focus on one or more aspects of communal violence. For example, there have been studies of ethnic violence that claim the economic causes are the root causes of communal violence. Asaghar Ali Engineer has developed his theory based on the economic factors as the root cause of communal riots. Some scholars such as Ashutosh Varshney argue that the network among the civil society institutions is the crucial factor in the occurrence of communal riots. Some studies regarding communal violence claim that the state has the ultimate power to abet or aid communal violence. Paul Brass has adopted this approach. To summarize, we will discuss three types of theoretical approaches towards understanding communal violence in Gujarat, namely, the political economy approach, the civil society approach and the institutionalist approach. Although we focus on the specific case of Gujarat 2002 in this work, the theoretical insights that will be developed in this work will have a universal utility.

Engineer: Riots as distortions of economic and social rivalries

Engineer considers that one needs to understand dynamics of social and economic factors in the macro (national) as well as micro (local) level in order to develop a theory of communal riots (1995: 108-10). Engineer’s theory of communal riots is based on the dynamics of economic development and social change accompanying it. He maintains that macro and micro level factors are involved in any communal riot. Whereas micro level factors are mostly ideologically oriented, the micro-level factors tend to be local-issue oriented. The most important aspect of macro-level reasons for communal violence, according to Engineer, is the class nature of the society and the under-development of economy. The uneven development of the economy creates strong sense of rivalry in the
business elites. As the rivalry cannot be expressed directly in terms of economics, it is expressed in terms of religion in some cases (Engineer, 1984: 15).

Engineer considers that the local level or the micro factors are essential ingredients of the communal riots in India. The percentage of the population that is Muslim, nature of competition between the two communities, history of communal riots in a particular area, election politics at the local level, and the role of anti-social elements can be considered as the micro factors that promote violence. According to this theory, social changes in the society are a vitally important factor in the occurrence of communal riots.

Varshney: Communal riots and the civil society organizations

Most of the explanations about communal violence in India assume that it is a nationwide and an omnipresent phenomenon. A recent analysis by Varshney illustrates the regional and temporal variations in the occurrence of communal riots, which occur as a result of the nationalistic appeals. Varshney makes a case for: the importance of understanding the socio-political contexts, histories and structural relations that underpin existing communal relations, the centrality of political action, at all levels, from trade unions to cadre-based parties, in contexts where communal peace is successfully kept, and the primacy of power-relations and their consequences, in all these contexts, both violent and peaceful.

Varshney argues that temporal and regional variations in the occurrence of communal riots can be explained by analyzing the role of civil society organizations at the moments of communal violence. These organizations have the capacity to prevent the spark from becoming fire. In other words, they can work on killing rumors,
misinformation, or they can prevent the anti-social elements. According to Varshney, the communal peace in a society remains intact where the associational relations in the civil society are strong. Thus the role of civil society organizations becomes vital in the prevention of communal riots (Varshney 2002: 37). Thus, the civil society elements is a key element in Varshney’ theory of communal riots.

Brass: Production of communal violence and the “institutionalized riots systems”

Political scientist Paul Brass argues that riots are systematically produced by the political organizations that have definitive interests in fomenting the violence. Riot-prone cities have to a greater or lesser degree such informal organizational networks. Brass claims that there are, rather, a whole series of specialized roles that are occupied in larger riots, including provocateurs, monitors, informers, “riot captains and thugs”, provisioners of transport and liquor, criminals, bomb manufacturers, journalists and pamphleteers, graffiti writers, and distributors and plasterers of scurrilous posters (1997: 16). As argued before, Brass’s approach seems to be the most relevant approach in understanding the occurrence of communal violence. His work will be used extensively for interpreting the Gujarat violence. In other words, this work could be called as the case study of Gujarat based that uses the theoretical insights from Brass’s work.

In his study of violence between Hindus and Muslims in the contemporary India Brass proves that riots are endemic in some places because of the existence of “institutionalized riot systems” in which known persons and groups occupy specific roles in the rehearsal for and the production of communal riots (2003: 32). By “institutionalized riot systems” he means a network of persons who maintain communal, racial and other ethnic relations in a state of tension, of readiness for riots. He contends
that the places where communal riots are endemic are not inherently communal in nature. The transformation of the so-called trigger incidents into communal riots entirely depends upon the attitudes taken by the local politicians and local representatives of the state toward these incidents. The elevation of these incidents into grand communal confrontations depends upon their interpretation by the press and extra-local politicians and authorities. Riots in India are structured, purposeful and rational incidents having calculated uses. To take it further, Brass argues that although most people everywhere are capable of committing acts of violence, violence occurs only in places where it has a functional utility (Brass 1997: 9).

Riots are undertaken by “specialists”, who are ready to be called out on occasions, and they profit in terms of money, and social or political power from the production of violence. In case of India, the riots are used by the state and national Muslims to mobilize the Muslims minority, on the one hand and by militant Hindu nationalists to consolidate Hindu communal sentiment.

As against analysts who perceive riots as spontaneous expressions of mass anger and resentment against the state or another group, Brass argues that the riots are planned and orchestrated events and are part of an overall plan being implemented by a political party or a state. Riots, in other words, are not spontaneous though they may have elements of spontaneity. They are designed to appear afterwards as spontaneous actions of the masses. The most essential condition for the occurrence of riots is the existence of an “institutionalized riot system” in which people play specialized roles in order to produce and sustain the violence. Riots cannot be sustained in places where they are not interpreted and represented by a group of people that have incentives in their occurrence.
In other words, riots are endemic in places where there are specialized people who can transform the meaning of particular acts of violence into a broader "repertoire of collective violence". There are various sets of specialized roles (actors) involved in the production of riots. The informants carry messages to political leaders about the incidents of violence. The propagandists create messages to be conveyed to certain sections of the society, and to the press. The poster plasterers and graffiti writers are significant for they help the looters identify the neighborhoods belonging to a particular community. The rumor mongers transmit the messages by the word of mouth, the recruiters play the most important role of collecting crowds from schools and other educational institutions to carry out the actual looting and killing. Brass argues that two roles are crucial in the dynamics of riot production, namely, "fire tender" and "conversion specialists". The "fire tender" keep the animosities alive by interpreting and misinterpreting the incidents of violence. The "conversion specialists" are pivotal as they have the potential to turn a mere local incident into one with riot potential by including a crowd and giving signal to specialists to let loose the violent action. The vernacular journalists are the "conversion specialists" they publish the incidents in the form of "news" in the newspapers. "Conversion specialists" are people that have political connections and they generally instigate violence but do not participate in violence themselves (Brass 2003:33).

Finally Brass claims that in most of the riot-prone cities, one is certain to find community organizations, cultural organizations, and political parties that are devoted to the advancement of a particular ethnic community; for example, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its sister organizations including a political party known as Bharatiya Janata Party are devoted to the cause of the advancement of the Hindu
community. Such organizations try to convince the people that the other ethnic communities are their enemies and that they are the cause of the deterioration of their own community. By configuring the other community as the enemy, oppressor and threat to the existence of their own community, these organizations gain legitimacy from the general public belonging to their own community. To encapsulate; Brass’s explanation for the occurrence of riots is a functional analysis of riots. Riots, he claims, occur because they have some functional utility. They are not spontaneous actions of the mob. In fact, they require an “institutionalized riot system” which consists of specialists who play crucial role in the production of riots.

Where does this discussion of various approaches to understanding communal violence in India lead us? To put it differently, what are the implications of these three theories for the riots in Gujarat? Brass’ explanation of the existence of “institutionalized riot system” is most relevant for understanding the role of the state in the control of riots in Gujarat. In addition, Varshney’s explanation is useful for analyzing how the changing nature of the civil society in Gujarat proved to be significant in the occurrence of communal violence in Gujarat.

Implications for Gujarat

This section aims at discussing the implications of various theories of ethnic violence in the case of Gujarat. I will examine the necessary conditions for communal violence according to each theory and then will analyze how these theories could be useful in order to understand the Gujarat riots.

According to Engineer’s theory, communal riots are the distortions of intensified economic rivalries. In order to apply his theory, we need to discuss the dynamics of
economy in the places that became targets of violence. Similarly, we will have to analyze the social changes that accompanied the economic rivalries that ultimately sparked violence in the communities. This theory will be certainly useful to understand the dynamics of riots in the big cities such as Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Surat. However, this theory may not be fully sufficient to explain the participation of masses the riots. More so, the participation of the adivasis from the tribal belt in Panchamahal district cannot be considered strictly as a response to economic rivalries.

Ashutosh Varshney’s analysis of the role of the civil society institutions will help us understand the changes in the social fabric of the Gujarati society in the last two decades. The civil society organizations such as Vanvaasi Kalyan Ashram (a sister organization of the National Volunteer Organization that works for the betterment of the tribal people) have played a crucial role in homogenizing the Hindu identity in the last two decades. Therefore, these organizations would have been powerful in controlling communal violence. However, these organizations have been responsible for creating communal violence in many cases. Therefore, Varshney’s analysis helps us understand cases such as Tandalaja in Vadodara where the secular civil society organizations were influential in maintaining communal harmony. However, his analysis suffers serious challenges.

The first major problem with Varshney’s theory is that he assumes that all civil society organizations are secular in nature, but that may not be case. As explained above, the civil society organizations of the National Volunteer Organization promoted the sectarian tendencies instead of abetting them. The second major challenge that Varshney seems to overlook is the power of the institution of the state. Especially in the case of
Gujarat, the police were not cooperative with the minority community in controlling riots. In fact, the secular civil society activists such as Mrinalini Sarabhai, and Achyut Yagnik became victims of attacks by the leaders of the sister organizations of the National Volunteer organization. To summarize, Varshney’s analysis is useful in understanding the communal harmony in the midst of communal violence. However, it does not take into consideration the power of civil society organizations to produce riots. Moreover, it does not take into account that the civil society organizations become almost powerless in the cases where the state supports violence.

Paul Brass’s analysis is useful in understanding the organized nature of violence specifically in case of Gujarat. His theory is useful to understand the establishment of an “institutionalized riot system” that in turn results in the production of riots. However Brass’ analysis may not be useful to understand the power of the civil society organizations in places such as Tandalaja. Since all of these theories have to offer something for the analysis of Gujarat violence, there is a need to formulate an integrated approach towards understanding communal riots.
The major hypothesis of various theories and their implications in case of Gujarat can be summarized in a table as follows:

**Table One: Theories of Communal Violence and Implications for Gujarat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Implications for Gujarat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Economy Approach (Engineer)</strong></td>
<td>Communal riots are the distortions of economic rivalries.</td>
<td>Riots in some cities were the expression of the changing nature of the business elite. There were systematic attempts to wipe out the businesses and properties of Muslim communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil Society Approach (Varshney)</strong></td>
<td>Civil society networking is the key factor in controlling or promoting communal violence.</td>
<td>The civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutuva were crucial in the production of violence in Gujarat whereas the Gandhian and other organizations committed to establishing a plural society have lost their strength in Gujarat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutionalist Approach (Brass)</strong></td>
<td>State is the key factor that can escalate violence and therefore in cases where riots occur, the state is a key factor in the production of riots.</td>
<td>The state government in Gujarat was the key factor in the production of violence against Muslims.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence from Gujarat

As Bhiku Parekh observes, burning people alive in a systematic and gruesome manner was a novel feature of the riots. Violence was targeted not only against those so called responsible for the Godhra tragedy, but against the entire Muslim community in Gujarat (Parekh 2002). It can be hypothesized from the reports that the violence against Muslims was planned and that the state authorities supported and promoted the violence against the minority Muslim community. For instance, the rioters seemed prepared to target the specific community as they carried computerized lists of Muslim shops and houses in the Muslim neighborhoods.

One more distinguishing feature of the post-Godhra violence was its geographic distribution. Earlier riots were confined to the urban areas, mainly to the three cities of Gujarat: Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat. However, the 2002 riots spread to remote villages and tribal areas apart from these three urban centers (Macwan 2002). In this work, I will argue that Gujarat 2002 riots were 'unique' in several aspects. The tacit consent of the majority community, the magnitude and scale of violence and the support of the state machinery ensured the riots were radically different from the previous riots.

The scale and magnitude of the violence during the riots depends of the strength of the organization that supports the production of riots. Conflicts may turn into skirmishes if they are supported by the civil society organizations that do not have a mass membership. However, riots can lead to massive carnages such as the post-Godhra bloodshed if they have the support of the institutions such as the government. The killers participate in riots fearlessly when they know there will be no repercussions. This operational consensus in the production of riots was produced systematically by the
Sangh Parivar through its civil society networks and was supported by the federal and state level Bharatiya Janata Party government.

State and the state administration played an active role in the production of riots. When asked about the violence, the Chief Minister of the state, Mr. Narendra Modi used the analogy of Newton's third law to reduce accountability: “every action has an equal and opposite reaction to virtually justify what is happening”.\(^3\) Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, did not visit Gujarat until thirty-six days after the Godhra massacre. Even during his visit to Gujarat, Vajpayee went to Godhra at first before visiting the other riot-affected areas in Gujarat (Brass 2002: 7). The Prime Minister’s visit to Godhra and then to the riot affected areas can be considered symbolic of his sympathy to the victims of Godhra tragedy as compared to those of the riots. The Gujarat Chief Minister’s anti-Muslim campaign indicated a last attempt to animate Hindu sentiments against the Muslim community in October 2002. Mr. Modi, the then Chief Minister of the State of Gujarat, consolidated the Hindu vote by carrying out a chariot procession (\textit{rath yatra}) called \textit{Gaurav yatra} (literally meaning: pride procession). During his eighteen-day procession all over the Gujarat, he made appeals to the Hindu community that what followed Godhra was a retaliatory and therefore justifiable action.\(^4\) There seemed to be an operational consensus by the state in the production of riots.

Taking into consideration the past incidents of communal violence, the problem of communal violence did not occur all of a sudden in Gujarat. Gujarat witnessed

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\(^3\) For details, see: 'Newton' Modi has a lot to answer, \textit{The Times of India}, Mar 2, 2002 edition, available online at \url{http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/}

\(^4\) See, \textit{The Times of India}, Sep 7, 2002-Sep 20, 2002 available online at \url{http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/}
communal violence in 1947, 1969, 1982, 1985, and 1992.\(^5\) Therefore, to state the problem only in relation to the immediate happenings will not enable a proper understanding of the causes of violence. It is essential to grasp the local and national contexts of the violence in order to comprehend the causes of communal violence in Gujarat.

The economic, cultural, psychological and political factors were "fire tenders" in keeping the communal fire alive. As analyzed by many scholars, the economic rivalries between the local elites were expressed in terms of communal rivalries. In some cases, local political calculations provided an immediate upsurge of violence. The rumours that were spread against the minority community also led to violence in some cases. All three theories discussed above will be useful in understanding various stages of the development of communal conflict in Gujarat. However, I will show that the existence of the "institutionalized support system" along with the active involvement of the civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva were the main causes of the 2002 riots.

**Plan and method of study**

The design of this work is to contextualize post-Godhra riots in their social milieu. This chapter has raised research questions regarding ethnicity and communal violence and develops a theoretical model to understand the problem of communal riots in Gujarat. I will use the theories set out here to organize the following chapter and will give a brief summary of the anatomy and demography of the post-Godhra riots. Finally, the third chapter aims to unravel the regional and national contexts of the communal

violence in Gujarat in the light of the theoretical framework that is developed in the first chapter.

The data for the present research has been collected mainly thorough secondary sources. The content analysis of local newspapers such as Sandesh as well as regional and national newspapers such as Times of India, and The Hindu was useful in understanding the demography and phases of riots. The Human Rights Watch Report and the two volumes of the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal Report were useful in mapping the violence and in comprehending the social history of Gujarat. Finally, the enormous literature on ethnic conflict, violence and the communal problem in India has helped to develop an insight into the problem of communalism in India in general and in relation to the Gujarat 2002 in particular.

Conclusion

The following chapter aims at understanding the specific patterns of violence in Gujarat. The main purpose of the next chapter is to understand the spatial and temporal spread of the communal violence in 2002. I will take account of the patterns of violence in various cities and villages. This will be useful to analyze the reasons for mass participation and the hitherto passive masses in the production of violence.
Chapter Two

MAPPING THE VIOLENCE: THE DEMOGRAPHY OF GUJARAT VIOLENCE

Introduction

The first chapter of the thesis set the theoretical ground for further analysis of the 2002 riots. I proposed in the previous chapter that the violence between Hindu and Muslim communities in India are not spontaneous. In fact, it involves systematic planning and preparation. Echoing Paul Brass’ argument, I hypothesized that the riots in Gujarat involved an “institutionalized riot system” that promoted the production of riots at various stages. (Brass, 2003: 32). Specifically, the riots that followed the train tragedy in Gujarat 2002 cannot be considered as a spontaneous retaliation. They involved a systematic planning and organization. Considering that there were systematic attacks on the belongings of the people of specific communities, it is argued that the riots were a part of a program supported by the state. Moreover, the “institutionalized riot system” came into operation because of the mobilization of the masses by the civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva from the last two decades. Bharatiya Janata Party, the political wing of the National Volunteer Organization (RSS) was in power in Gujarat in 2002. The civil society and the state seemed to be in tandem with each other. Despite being powerful, the successful working of the system depended on the role of the civil society associations. In places such as Tandalaja, Sama village communal harmony was intact in spite of appeals for attacks on the Muslims. Taking a leaf from Ashutosh Varshney’s argument, I argued that the role of civil society
associations is crucial in the working of the "institutionalized riot system" (Varshney, 2002: 9).

It is almost impossible to understand the dynamics of the contemporary communal violence without a careful analysis of the communal history of Gujarat. Therefore, the main question that will be addressed throughout the chapter is: why do religious identities emerge so often in antagonistic terms in the case of Gujarat? To put it differently, if there is a systematic effort to homogenize Hindus and Muslims, then why does that appeal become successful in Gujarat?

Communal identities cannot spark violence unless the communities in the society are vitiated. In the case of Gujarat, a peculiar type of culture of communalism needed for the occurrence of communal riots has been produced by the Hindu nationalist organizations. In addition, the social processes such as the changing political economy of the state, the dynamics of the competitive party system, and the dynamics of the caste associations in Gujarat became catalysts in vitiating the communal relations between Hindus and Muslims. The social space for mutual communication between Hindus and Muslims seems to be shrinking due to the process of ghettoization of the two communities over the last two decades. To take an example, Hindus and Muslims have preferred to live in separate neighborhoods for last two decades. This automatically results in less interaction between the two communities. I will touch on all of these dimensions in this chapter in order to understand the dynamics of social processes involved in the communalization of Gujarat.

It is essential to understand the social, political and geographical background of the state of Gujarat in order to contextualize the recent violence. Gujarat as a state came
into existence on May 1, 1960. Situated on the west coast of India, Gujarat shares borders with three states, namely, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in north and northeast, southeast and south respectively. It is bounded by the Arabian Sea in the west and Pakistan in the north. It has a 663 kilometres coastline, which is 30% of India's total of 5700 kilometres. According to the 2001 census, Gujarat has 25 districts, and 18,622 villages. It has a population of 48,387,270 people- 36,964,228 Hindus and 3,606,920 Muslims.  

**History of Gujarat**

Gujarat has been a famous trading centre throughout history. From medieval times, Gujarat had overseas trade relations with a large number of countries - Sumer, Phoenicia, Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Arabia, Iran, Maskat and Yeman, Hormuz and East Africa in the west and Sri Lanka, Brahmadesh, Malaya, Burma, Java, Sumatra, Cambodia and China in the east. As a result of the overseas trade and transport, the population of Gujarat has always consisted of various ethnicities such as the Arab, Turkish, Iranian, Jewish, Dutch, Portuguese, English and American traders. Its trading community has created and fostered the culture of Gujarat (Sawant et.al.2002). Thus the culture of Gujarat is a result of the syncretism of various ethnicities. It is because of the business ethic that the communities in Gujarat have tried to have cordial and peaceful relations with each other in general.

Despite being a 'trading hub' and being peaceful in general, there have been episodes of communal violence in the post-colonial era. In trading cities such as Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara the communal identities have been sharpened at times.

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which has resulted in bursting communal violence. The social history of Gujarat consists of eras of communal co-existence followed by the times of communal flashpoints. To illustrate; Gujarat has been peaceful during all times except during the episodes of communal killings in 1969, 1982, 1989 and 1992. Moreover, the process of ghettoization of Hindu and Muslim communities has sharpened after 1980s due to the political mobilization of Hindus by the Hindu Nationalist Organizations.

Communal violence is not a totally new phenomenon in Gujarat. However, it was restricted to a few sections of the society until the 1980s. As against this, masses began participating actively in violence after the 1980s. In short, the culture of Gujarat was that of peaceful co-existence until the 1980s. We need to contextualize the contemporary communal violence in Gujarat in this background.

In order to understand the reasons for the occurrence of communal violence in Gujarat, one needs to analyze the social dynamics involved in most of the major communal riots that occurred in Gujarat in the post-independence era. One can easily identify the patterns of violence in the post-colonial era. In general the three most popular trading hubs, Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Surat have been the victims of communal violence in most of the cases until the 1980s. However, after the 1980s, the spread and nature of communal violence has become more and more gruesome with the active participation of masses that had been yet silent. Analyzing the major episodes of communal violence since independence would help us understand the social dynamics of the process.

The first major blot in the communal history of Gujarat was the 1969 episode.

A gruesome episode in the afternoon, September 20, 1969, 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 might indeed be done away with. Wood from broken shops was 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 (Sawant et.al. 2002).

The violence that took place after this incident included a systematic destruction of the shops of the Muslims. According to the Concerned Citizens’ Tribunal Report, the violence took over 1,100 lives. Most of the shops owned by Muslims were identified and destroyed (Sawant et. al. 2002).

The next phase of communal riots in Gujarat was between 1981 and 1985. In 1982, in Vadodara, there were riots at the time of procession in the name of the birth-anniversary of Lord Ganesha. In 1983, there was the first political mobilization of the Hindus by the Sangh Parivar (the family of Hindu nationalists organizations) around the Ganga Jal (Holy water from the Ganges) and the Bharat Ekata Yatra (literally meaning the procession for the unification of India) symbols (Sawant et.al. 2002). The developments in this period set the stage for the further violence that in the later two decades. In addition to the communal riots based on religious animosities, the policy of reservations for the under-privileged castes was a major catalyst in the occurrence of riots during 1981-85. The conflicts based on castes were translated into religious conflicts in many cases. According to the Indian constitution, the government of India reserves some seats for the under-privileged castes in government jobs and electoral politics. As a result of the policy of ‘positive discrimination’, some seats were reserved for people

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7 For detailed discussion about the policy of reservations in the Indian constitution, please refer to Article 243D, available online at http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/india/India994-15.htm
belonging to *Kshatriya* (warrior castes), *harijan* (literally meaning: people belonging to Gods, a term coined by Mahatma Gandhi for the untouchables), *adivasis* (tribals) and Muslims (KHAM acronym for *Kshatriya*, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslims). Until the 1980s, the Patels and Patidars were the two dominant castes in Gujarati politics. However, because of the new policy of reservations for the KHAM, the hegemony of these castes was in danger. In order to maintain their legitimacy, the Patels took on the task of dismantling the KHAM. Since the religious identity of all three communities from the KHAM namely, the *Kshatriyas*, *Harijans* and the *Adavasis* was Hindu, Muslims were the only left-outs. The leaders belonging to the upper castes including *Patels* unified people from all three communities (except the Muslims) against the Muslims on the basis of their religion. The Brahmins and the other upper caste people translated the caste-animosities into religious animosities. Approximately 210 people were killed in the anti-reservation riots, which turned into communal riots in 1985. In sum, the caste politics was translated into religious politics that culminated in communal riots during this phase.

The period between 1987 and 1990 was comparatively peaceful. However, although the actual incidents of communal riots were only a few, there was a systematic mobilization of Hindus by the various Hindu nationalist organizations that had a long lasting impact on the Gujarati society and politics (Sawant et.al. 2002). The first attempt to mobilize Hindus was on the issue of the construction of the temple of Lord *Rama* at Ayodhya, a place in Uttar Pradesh. The movement for the birthplace of Lord *Rama* culminated in the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992 (Sawant et.al. 2002).

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*8 Patels and Patidars are the peasantry castes in Gujarat. They have been dominant in Gujarati politics in the post-independence period.*
In this context, *Rath Yatra* (chariot procession) was a very significant event in the history of communalism in Gujarat. The liberation of the temple of God Ram was the central issue during the chariot procession in Gujarat. In the wake of this movement, there was massive violence in Gujarat. The *Rath Yatra* (chariot procession) started from the temple at Somnath in Gujarat in September 1990. As a result of the political mobilization of Hindus during the chariot procession, the communal identities of Hindus and Muslims were hardened. The hatred against Muslims turned into attacks in many rural areas that had hitherto been largely unaffected by the politics based on religion. For example, Surat, a town with an unblemished record of communal harmony, joined other centres in Gujarat, which had a more fractured history of inter-community relations.

Many incidents of communal riots were reported in the decade of the 1990s. In September 1990, on the occasion of *Ganesh Visarjan* (good-bye ceremony to Lord Ganesha), Vadodara saw the worst-ever riots. Shops belonging to Muslims in Vadodara were broken open with the aid of gas cutters, looted and burnt. Elected leaders of the BJP directed well-planned attacks on the property of Muslims on the main road. The Jumma Masjid near Mandvi was also attacked. Stray incidents of violence continued for months after this incident (Sawant et.al. 2002). In fact, communal riots became a pan Gujarati phenomenon for the first time in the riots that broke out after the movement for the liberation of Lord Rama. The chariot processions carried out for the movement for the liberation of Rama temple in Ayodhya homogenized the Hindus from all castes, and classes. The campaigns during the Ramjanmabhoomi movement (a struggle for the rescue of the birth place of Lord Rama) led into a unification of Hindus from various castes and classes. The unification of Hindus increased the insecurities in the minds of the other
religious minorities including the Muslims. The Muslim community from various sections of the society were uniting during the same time. The atmosphere of threat and intimidation deeply affected the social fabric of Gujarati society from 1997 to 1999. A new trend of communal tensions was visible in south Gujarat from 1997.

Communal violence broke out in Ahmedabad after the Kargil war that took place between India and Pakistan near the Kashmir border in 1999 (Sawant et.al. 2002). In 2000, Muslim property was looted and destroyed all over the state in retaliation for the killing of pilgrims going on the holy Amarnath temple pilgrimage by terrorists in the Kashmir valley. The communal violence in 2002 can be understood in a better manner only after analyzing the social fabric of the Gujarati society during the past two decades.

**Contextualizing the Communal Violence**

As laid out in the introduction to the first chapter, the recent spiral of communal violence started with the train tragedy. On February 27, 2002, a bogey of Sabarmati express was set on fire near a place called Signal Falia in the town of Godhra in Gujarat and 57 passengers were killed. The attackers were Muslims and the victims were Hindus returning back from their journey to Ayodhya, the bone of contention in worsening Hindu- Muslim relations of the 1990s. What happened at Godhra was absolutely inhuman, especially because what followed was a planned crime against humanity. Communal riots broke out in various places in Gujarat and Muslim houses and shops were destroyed, and Hindus used Muslim women as instruments of violence. Post-Godhra violence was the worst violence in the history of communal riots in Gujarat in terms of intensity and scale of violence. Riots occurred in three phases: the massacres in

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9 For details about the Godhra incident, please refer to page 1 of this thesis.
Godhra and Ahmedabad that followed immediately the train tragedy; the attacks against the Muslims all over the Gujarat; and finally the retaliatory attacks against the Hindus.

One of the distinguishing factors about the 2002 riots was that the violence against Muslims was not spontaneous. It involved a lot of planning and preparation. The state and state authorities promoted the production of an “institutionalized riot system” (Brass 2003:32-33). The participation of the yet silent majorities in the production of riots can be understood by considering the political mobilization of Hindus through civil society organizations; these organizations have been increasingly committed to the cause of Hindutva over the past three decades. However, considering the examples of places such as Tandalaja -- where communal harmony remained intact despite appeals from the fundamentalist organizations -- civil society organizations played a major role in promoting or controlling the communal violence in Gujarat.

As argued in the first chapter, 2002 Gujarat riots were different from earlier riots in two aspects; the spread of violence into previously riot free areas and the participation of people from all sections of society (Banerjee 2002). The next section will narrate the spread of violence and this will reflect the distinctiveness of these riots.

**Patterns of violence**

The communal violence erupted in sixteen of Gujarat’s twenty-four districts. The general pattern of violence was such that mobs of two to three thousand Hindus attacked Muslims. The attackers were mostly armed with *trishuls*, swords, and agricultural instruments.\(^{10}\) The patterns of violence can be identified as follows:

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\(^{10}\) *Trishual* is a weapon with three heads. It has a symbolic in Hindu philosophy, as it is a weapon used by Lord Shiva.
1. Selective targeting of Muslims.
2. Brutality and bestiality of attacks.
3. Unprecedented scale and degree of violence and looting and destruction of property.
4. Military precision and planning behind attacks.
5. Complicity of civil society and the state.
6. Use of Hindu religious symbols.
7. Use of hate speech and hate writing.
8. Mobilization of women, tribal people and the untouchables (Sawant et.al. 2002).

The patterns of violence illustrate the amount of preparation involved during the riots. The systematic attacks on the properties belonging to Muslims, the use of instruments during the riots and the appeals by the state authorities during the processions exemplify the planning and preparation. The specific discussion of every pattern of violence would be useful to understand this process of institutionalization of riot systems.

Muslim properties and pilgrims were the main targets in the post-Godhra violence in all its phases. For example, in most places, the Hindu houses among the Muslim majority places were marked with the Hindu symbols such as saffron flags and the pictures of Hindu Gods. The general strategy of the attackers was to loot the houses belonging to the Muslims and then to burn them. The couples that had entered into intercommunity marriages were specifically targets of violence because they challenged the idea that Muslims and Hindus could not live together.

In particular, the properties and belongings of Muslims from Ahmedabad and Vadodara were the main targets during the first phase of riots (February 28, 2002- March 5, 2002). The attack on Gulberg society in Ahmedabad was launched on February 28,
2002. The home of Mr. Ahsan Jafri, a former Member of Parliament of the Congress Party, was the main target of the mob, which consisted of about 20,000 - 25,000 people. About 70 persons died, 49 from the local society and 18-20 from outside who had come to seek shelter at Jafri’s house (Sawant et.al. 2002). The reports show that Mr. Jafri was assured of police assistance by the Commissioner of Police of Ahmedabad, Mr. P. C. Pandey, and that was the reason why Muslim people from the neighbourhood had taken shelter at his place. The Concerned Citizens’ Report discusses the details of this gruesome incident as follows:

Between 2.30 and 2.45 p.m., Ahsan Jafri, who was clearly a specific target, allowed himself to be dragged out of his own house. There, just outside the home that he had so painfully created, for 45 minutes, he was brutally dismembered and then finally decapitated. He was stripped, paraded naked, and asked to say ‘Vande Mataram!’ and ‘Jai Shri Ram!’ He refused. His fingers were chopped off and he was paraded around in the locality, badly injured. Next, his hands and feet were chopped off. He was then dragged, a fork-like instrument clutching his neck, down the road, before being thrown into the fire. A man who had devoted his life to public service, had met a brutal end. In this attack, Jafri was killed along with his three brothers and two nephews (Sawant et.al. 2002).

After this ghastly event, in between 3:30pm and 4:30pm, 10 to 12 women were raped, cut into pieces and then thrown into fires. When some people went back to the area that evening, they saw that neighbourhood goons were ‘playing cricket’ with the skulls of the dead.

The other target of violence in Ahmedabad was the Naroda gaon. Naroda Patiya has a mixed community of Hindus and Muslims and mainly consists of around 1,000 daily wage Muslim workers. A Hindu mob of 5,000 to 10,000 people burnt the Noorani mosque in this area, which was the first target of the attackers; these attackers used gas cylinders, tyres, petrol and kerosene to attack.
Apart from these two main targets of violence, the attackers looted the Naroda Fruit market and they destroyed the Babanshah Mosque at Swami Narayan Chawl. The New Gujarat (National) Kabadi Market Corporation, near Bhulabhai Park, Behrampura, was attacked for three full days from February 28-March 2. Among the other urban areas of Ahmedabad, Vatwa was one of the targets. There were repeated attacks on Muslims from February 28 to March 20 and again on April 5, 2002. The houses, places of worship and shops in this area were destroyed.

In Gomtipur violence erupted from February 28 and areas like Barasaanche Ni Chawl, Nagori Chawl, and Sone Ki Chawl were destroyed by the members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (The World Hindu Council—a sister organization of the National Volunteer Organization). It was reported that in Sundaramnagar the police openly supported the miscreants and deliberately opened fire against the Muslims (Sawant et.al. 2002). It was claimed that the home minister of Gujarat state, Mr. Godhran Zapadiya (a Hindu) encouraged the mobs to participate in the attacks against Muslims. In the case of Vadodara, in Madhvanagar, Amin Transport, a business owned by a Muslim known as Abdulrreheman Safree was broken into, looted and burned. A Hindu friend of Safree helped him escape. In other areas such as Ashabibi ni chawl, a mixed locality of outsiders, both Hindu and Muslim, were sickened by the attacks.

In Raghovpura, out of a total of 41 houses belonging to Muslims, 36 houses and the masjid, along with two buildings belonging to the mosque were burnt down by a mob of five hundred strong, armed people late night on March 1. The families targeted were well-off agriculturists who collectively lost property estimated at 2400 Canadian dollars (Sawant et.al. 2002).
The Best bakery incident was the most famous incident from the Vadodara district. Fourteen bakery workers were attacked and burnt alive. Stomachs of the three Hindu workers at the bakery were slit open before they were thrown into the fire. A Hindu, who owns Phoolchand bakery, was among the attackers and he took away ample stock of flour, ghee, and other things after the attack. In Hajimiyan Ki Sara area, 39 homes were burnt in addition to 19 shops, a bakery and a coal depot.

The brutality of the attacks can be understood from the types of weapons that were used. The use of gas cylinders, trishuls and swords, chemicals and gelatine sticks was very common during the riots. Women and children were the main targets of violence. The viciousness of riots was seen in all the phases of violence. However, it became prominent in the second phase of riots, March 5 to March 28, 2002. In many cases, the victims were dragged and paraded naked, urinated upon, burnt and cut into pieces. Women were not just raped but all kinds of objects and instruments were forcibly inserted into their bodies. For example, in Naroda Patiya area from Ahmedabad district, one woman, Kauser Bano, who was nine-months’ pregnant, had her belly cut open and her foetus wrenched out before being dashed to the ground and flung into the fire. According to eyewitness accounts, at least two more women were subjected to a similar fate (Sawant et.al. 2002).

Apart from Ahmedabad and Vadodara, Dahod district became one of the targets of violence in 2002. The pattern of attacks in the Dahod district was distinctive. The mobs arrived in vehicles such as trucks, tempos, jeeps, cars and they were led and directed by local Hindu community leaders belonging to the Sangh Parivar. There were always groups of people who followed the directions given by the leaders; these people
had weapons, guns, *trishuls* and swords, and the arsenals, petrol, diesel, kerosene and chemicals to start the fires. Apart from the attackers, there were people who were mainly involved in looting property from the houses and shops belonging to the Muslims. In many cases, this group consisted of tribals.

As mentioned before, the most disturbing trend in the post-Godhra riot was the degree and scale of violence, which was unprecedented. Across Gujarat, over 1,100 Muslim-owned hotels, the homes of about 100,000 families, and over 5,000 vehicles were badly damaged or completely destroyed. In case of rural Gujarat, the bore wells of Muslim farms were destroyed in such a manner that there would be no repair.

**Complicity of civil society and the State**

The role of the state government in Gujarat was crucial in enabling and aiding the violence. The reactions of officials, including Chief Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, then Prime Minister Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the larger police administration indicate that the state implicitly supported the production of riots. Chief Minister Mr. Modi stated that the attack on the train at Godhra was pre-planned by Muslims? Even before the official reports came out. As Chief Minister Mr. Modi’s statement provoked many Hindu citizens in Gujarat; this resulted in riots (Network 2002). During times of emergency, the prime function of the state is to support the minorities and look after their rehabilitation and resettlement. Mr. Modi sounded insensitive towards the issues of relief and rehabilitation of the minorities as he ordered the closure of the relief camps for Muslims justifying that these relief camps were child-making factories (Bunsha 2002).

The state government evidently supported the violence against Muslims in many cases. However, in federal countries such as India, the role of the central government
proves to be crucial in times of crisis. According to Article 356 of the Indian constitution, the central government has powers to dissolve a state government if that government is not working properly. What was the role of the central government in the case of Gujarat massacre? Strikingly the central government did not take any concrete action against the state government of Gujarat in spite of much criticism against the working of the state assembly and the leadership of Mr. Modi. More than that, Mr. Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of India, justified the post-Godhra violence during his speech at Bharatiya Janata Party’s session at Goa, India. He claimed in his speech that the Godhra train tragedy was the reason for the violence that followed Godhra. In addition, he labelled the Muslims to be the culprits of the violence in Gujarat (Sawant et.al. 2002).

In some cases the complicity of other state authorities was evident. For example, the police did not respond to many phone calls from the victims; the police refused to protect victims of attack on the Noorani mosque in the Naroda gaon saying that they had no orders to protect the victims. As cited in the Human rights Watch report, a thirteen-year-old- boy described the role of the police during the attack:

The police was with them. The police killed seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds. The mob also burned down our home. At 10 a.m. they went after our mosque. Thirty to forty tear gas shells were released by the police as we, about fifty boys, were trying to save the mosque.... They killed one seventeen-year-old and eight to ten other boys were injured.... We kept calling the police but no one came.... The police would pick up the phone and hang up when they heard it was from Naroda Patia (Narula 2002).

The above quote exemplifies that the state administration failed to contain violence.

Hindu religious symbols were used throughout the riots. This included trishuls,\(^{11}\) and slogans such as Hulladiya Hanuman (meaning Riot hanuman), Jai Shri Ram (meaning let the Ram be the winner), Sabse Bada Hanuman (literally, Hanuman is the

\(^{11}\) Trishul i.e., it is believed that the triad is the weapon of Lord Shiva who destroys the world when it is ruined.
greatest among all), which were all extensively used during the course of violence. A statue of Lord Ganesha (the elephant headed Hindu God) was installed at the damaged Shenshani mosque on Waghodia road. In the Vadodara district, the Ram Dhuns, which were being, organized everywhere else in India around March 15 proved to be oil in the fire.\textsuperscript{12} During these prayers to Lord Rama, Hindus were being organized and being prepared for the violence that followed. Many weapons such as the triad (trishul) were officially distributed during the processions and prayers. Violence spread like wildfire even in areas where the situation was getting better.

\textbf{Mobilization of Women, tribal people, and the untouchables}

Violence spread to rural areas of Gujarat by March 3, 2002. Dalits (untouchables) and members of the notified tribes such as Waghris and Charas were active in the violence in urban areas. In some cases, it was reported that the outfits of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh like the Bajrang Dal paid salaries from 3,000 to 5,000 rupees (approximately $100 Canadian) a month to lure unemployed Dalit youth to camps where indoctrination against Muslims and arms training were the main activities. Along with the tribal communities and untouchables, women from the affluent classes of society were seen participating in the riots for the first time. Thus, violence in 2002 was distinctive in that the patterns of violence in various areas of Gujarat were identifiable and comparable and the state and the civil society organizations were supporting the violence explicitly for the first time.

Despite similarities in the patterns, there were some differences in the manifestations of communal riots in various areas. The violence in Gujarat could be

\textsuperscript{12}Ram Dhun literary means the public prayers in the name of Lord Rama.
understood in three phases. In the first phase, the riots erupted immediately after the Godhra train tragedy from February 28, 2002 to March 5, 2002 (specifically in places such as Godhra and nearby localities and Ahmedabad). Most of the other areas of Gujarat remained unaffected during the first phase of riots. In the second phase of violence, riots spread to many areas in Vadodara and other tribal districts between February 28 and March 2 after the newspaper reports in the regional newspapers. Finally, the third phase of riots began all over Gujarat after March 28, 2002 when the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Mr. Narendra Modi, carried out a procession to acclaim the pride of Gujarat.

A brief discussion about phases of communal violence will elucidate how communal violence became a pan-Gujarati phenomenon for the first time in 2002. The following section will discuss the instances of violence in various districts of Gujarat explaining how an “institutionalized riot system” operated in 2002.

**Targets of the post-Godhra violence**

The districts of Godhra and Ahmedabad were the main targets of the attackers during the first phase of riots. Godhra, a city of 150,000, is evenly split between Hindus and Muslims (Kakodakar 2002). There were several incidents of altercations between Hindus and Muslims on February 28, 2002. For example, there were reportedly altercations between a Muslim tea vendor and a Hindu customer on the Godhra railway station, and the Hindu activists in a separate incident molested a Muslim girl. The sequence of events continues to be disputed. Violence spread like a wildfire in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Panchmahal, Mehsana, Kheda, Junagadh, Bharuch, Rajkot, and Gandhinagar immediately in the next seven days after February 28, 2002.
Gulberg Society and Naroda-Patia were the two most affected areas in the Ahmedabad district. In addition to these two areas, Paldi, Gomatipur, Surendranagar, and Vatwa from the urban part of Ahmedabad and Absana, Kuha, Por from the rural part of Ahmedabad became victims of the violence were attacked in the second and third phases of riots.

Considering the geographical location of Godhra (the place where the trigger event occurred) in Panchamahal, violence in this district needs a detailed analysis. Dailol, Pandharwada, Eral, Mora, Vejalpur, Anjanwa and Lunavada, Athawawala were the main areas of targets of the attackers in the second and third phase of riots. On March 1, Muslims who were escaping from Dailol and surrounding villages were attacked by a 5000-6000 strong mob. In Pandharwada village, nearly 70 Muslims were butchered on March 1. The attackers were the local Patels, Panchals, harijans and some 3000-4,000 tribals. In Eral village, the attackers took protection money from the victim villagers before attacking them. In other villages like Athawawala, Muslims were being openly told that if they wanted to return to their homes, they must accept Hindu religion. In some cases, the regional factors directed the chemistry of communal tensions. For example, in the case of the village Boru, the leader of the attacking mob- Shanker Sinh Chandrasinh, had lost elections to the Congress sarpanch.

Malavan village from this area deserves a special mention. This village has had a history of communal harmony. The role of the police and the authorities at the time of the attacks or later was very special. A First Investigation Report (FIR) filed by six persons

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13 Harijan literary means the servant of God. Gandhi used this term to refer to the untouchables in India during the independence movement.

14 Congress party is one of the dominant political parties in India and it is the prominent opposition party of the Bhartiya Janata Party in the central government.
from Malvan named 16 attackers. During the peace meetings, which were conducted between the Hindu and Muslim communities and the state representative, a formula for compromise was put forth. It was agreed that the Muslim residents would prepare affidavits withdrawing the names of the culprits that they had included in the first information reports i.e., FIR and state that they had been misled and were wrong. The FIRs would stand against unidentified mobs from outside, and, in exchange, these people would be allowed to come back and not be attacked. The mass attacks on the minorities were possible only because of the explicit support of the state and state administration.

The district of Vadodara was comparatively peaceful immediately after the Godhra incident. However, unprecedented violence erupted after March 5 in Vadodara. Kisanwadi, Sama area, Makarpura area, Tarasali area, Hanuman tekri, Hajimiyan ki sara, Wadi, and Panigate were the main victimized areas immediately after the train tragedy. However, riots erupted in almost all areas such as Manchchipith, Taiwada, Bahar colony, Bawanpura, and Fatehgunj, Taiwada, Raja rani talav, Suleimani chawl, and Tandalija. It was disturbing that violence spread in the tribal belt of Vadodara in places such as Tejgadh, Panwad, and Kanwat.

One of the disturbing trends during riots in Vadodara was the participation of the adivasis (tribals) in the riots against Muslims. The tribals from areas such as Tejgadh, Panwad and Kanwat participated actively in the riots. Panwad had a history of communal harmony till 2002. The Muslims and Adivasis used to attend each other’s functions and were on cordial terms. However, this area became prey to attacks.

Despite this, overall the situation in Vadodara was not as bad as Ahmedabad. Further, the situation in most of the areas was getting better by the end of the first phase.
However, the appeals of communal riots became successful by the end of March and the beginning of April 2002.

In Banaskantha, violence spread in Dhanera, Pantwada, Palanpur, Vadga, Sihori and Gazipur. In the Patan district, the most affected area was Radhanpur and Ode village from the Anand district was the most affected area. Visanagar, Saradarpura and Kadi were the main targets in the Mehasana district. Violence escalated mostly after the Victory procession (on March 28) carried out by Chief Minister Mr. Narendra Modi.

**Kisanwadi Sama Villages and Tandalja**

A distinctive aspect of the Vadodara district was that in most of the areas, either the local social workers or the residents repelled the attacks. In many cases, Hindus tried to save their Muslim friends. In some areas such as Kisanwadi, the efforts of Hindus such as Ramdas Pillai, a social worker, were noteworthy. He provided shelter to about 500 Muslims in his house and thus saved them. Sama area was among one more affected area in the first phase of riots. This area is relatively a new area in the city and it has a predominantly Hindu population. One of the noteworthy aspects about the Noor park area and Gotri village was that in many parts the citizens took the initiative in the peace keeping activities.

Tandalaja, situated on the western border of Vadodara city, is an area with about 80 per cent Muslim population and about 20 per cent Hindu population. The Hindu population includes people from the other Indian states such as Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in addition to Gujaratis. There are a number of temples and mosques in the area. Some temples share their boundaries with mosques. This area had a long background of
communal harmony. As a result of this, after the 1982 riots, some mosques like the Dar-ul-Uloom mosque were shifted from Mandvi, in the walled city, to Tandalaja.

As a result of the communal riots all over the state, the Hindu and Muslim areas in Tandalaja have been clearly demarcated over the last few years. However, there was plenty of social interaction between Hindus and Muslims before their segregation; they visited each other, were invited to each other's weddings, ate together, and they owned shops in the same market areas. The case of Tandalaja is thus, an example of a strong civil society network, which is committed to the secular causes as against the cause of Hindutva. As a result of the prior civic networks, Muslims as well as Hindus reached out to each other as soon as violence erupted in other parts of the city. Peace committees formed by these people helped in building an atmosphere of mutual trust.

On one occasion, a Bajrang Dal-VHP mob of about 500-600 people from outside got as far as Ashwamegh society, a Hindu residential area adjacent to Tandalaja. The mob had come to attack Tandalja. Ashwamegh was part of the peace committee. Local leaders from Ashwamegh stood between the mob and Tandalja. They did not allow the mob to cross the road. The masterminds of the mob later sent bangles to the residents of Ashwamegh, to suggest that they were cowards for not supporting the attack on Muslims for the cause of Hindutva. But the people of Ashwamegh said that their understanding of Hinduism was different. In this regard, the role of civil society networks proved to be exceptionally important in case of many places in Vadodara including Tandalaja.

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As women wear bangles in their hands and they are considered to be traditionally weaker than the men, sending bangles to men in this case implied that those men were being considered as cowards.
Conclusion

The intensity and scale of violence of the 2002 riots was unprecedented. One of the unique characteristics of riots was that the yet silent majorities participated very actively in the violence for the first time. Only those communities such as the one in Tandalaja did not participate in the riots as they had civil society network oriented to preserving the communal peace that was stronger than the one committed to the cause of Hindutva. Although riots in Gujarat were singular in that they were widespread, some districts such as Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Panchamahal were more affected than the others.

The narration of events in Gujarat brings us back to the questions raised at the beginning of the chapter, namely, why did riots occur in Gujarat? Why is it that the appeals to attack on the minorities became successful in Gujarat? It is evident from the above discussion that the state as well as the civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva participated actively in the production of riots. In other words, riots occurred in Gujarat because of the existence of an “institutionalized state system” along with the support of the civil society network oriented to bigotry. Moreover, the appeals to attack the minorities became successful because of the systematic mobilizations of the masses during last three decades. The appeals of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh during various processions carried out in the last two decades have resulted in the process of homogenization of the Hindu identity. This in turn has resulted in ghettoization of two communities, namely, the Hindus and Muslims.\(^\text{16}\) It is as a result of these processes that Gujarat became victim of violence.

\(^{16}\) Ghettoization is a technical term used extensively in the Indian literature on Hindu-Muslim violence. Ghettoization implies a forced separation of two communities. However, the separation is not forced by any
There were temporal and regional variations within the state in the occurrence of riots. For example, at many places such as Ahmedabad, violence erupted immediately after the Godhra train tragedy. However, most of the areas in Vadodara and northeastern districts of Gujarat were peaceful during the first phase of riots (February 28, 2002 and March 5, 2002) and were engulfed in the gory of violence only after the Victory procession carried out by the Chief Minister of the state (March 28, 2002). In some places such as Tandalaja, the civil society networks were successful in maintaining peace even in the second stage of violence.

The pre-planning of riots can be seen in places where the Muslim community became target of attacks immediately after the Godhra train tragedy. The preparations and use of instruments during the attacks, the responses of the police to the victims, and the responses of the state authorities explain that there existed an “institutionalized riot system” in many places. More than that, the participation of the major portions of the people that were silent until then was a result of the systematic mobilization of the Hindus by the civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva. In other words, the role of the state and civil society institutions was important in case of production as well as control of riots in case of Gujarat.

After laying out the theoretical foundations of communal violence in the first chapter, this chapter focused on mapping the violence in Gujarat. The main aim here was to explain the phases of communal violence in the particular case of Gujarat. As narrated in previous sections, violence spread in the various regions in Gujarat in three phases. Areas in Ahmedabad and Panchmahal districts were affected in the first phase

external authority as state in this case, in fact, it is the force of intense ethnic conflict between the two communities that leads to the separation.
of riots. And areas from the other districts such as Anand, Banaskantha, Mehasana etc.
became targets of violence in the second and third phases of riots. Thus communal riots
became a pan-Gujarati phenomenon in 2002. In the following chapter, I will attempt to
integrate the analytical framework developed in the first chapter and the specific case of
violence in Gujarat laid out in the second chapter. Ultimately, I will discuss the future
of communal violence in Gujarat along with some strategic suggestions for controlling
communal violence.
Chapter Three
EXPLAINING COMMUNAL RIOTS IN GUJARAT

Introduction

Drawing upon the analysis of the previous chapter, I examine the structural conditions needed for the occurrence of riots in the case of Gujarat in this chapter. The Godhra train tragedy was a gruesome incident. However, the violence against Muslims that was orchestrated thereafter was among the worst crimes against humanity in India’s history. Considering the spiral of violence starting from February 27, 2002, it can be said that the riots involved some kind of preparation and planning. They were systematically produced in various cities in Gujarat. The state government supported production of riots in many ways ranging from not answering the phone calls from the members of the minority community to sending orders to the police not to cooperate with them. Besides, riots did not pick up the fire in areas where the civil society organizations committed to preserving communal harmony were stronger than those committed to the cause of Hindutva; however, they were endemic in areas such as eastern tribal belt where the civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva were dominant.

It is almost impossible to give a single causal explanation of riots considering the specificities of the local level variations and dynamics of the economic, political and religious rivalries. The riots appeared to be spontaneous in most of the cases. However, the elements of an “institutionalized riot system” discussed in chapter one were very well present in the Gujarat massacre.\(^\text{17}\) Different groups of the volunteers from the RSS and its

\(^{17}\) For detailed discussion about the elements of “institutionalized riot system”, please refer to pages 11 to 14 of this thesis.
sister organizations played specified roles in the production of riots. It is clear that a
group of politicians and the Bhartiya Janata Party had specific incentives in the
production of riots considering the upcoming of the state level elections.

The selective targeting of Muslim families and their business establishments
makes it clear that the riots were a planned attempt to knock out the minority community.
The organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Bajrang Dal and Vishwa
Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) played a significant role in the planning and
preparation of riots. Following the declaration of a strike with detailed action plans,
including steps taken to ensure police complicity, many of the Bharatiya Janata Party’s
elected representatives were active in leading the mobs targeting Muslims (Times News
Network, 2002).

Integrating the theory developed in the first chapter and the evidence given in the
second chapter, this chapter aims at analyzing the causes of the Gujarat massacre. The
following section discusses why Gujarat riots cannot be considered a single-causal
phenomenon and that the national and regional level social mobilization by the RSS in
the last two decades has resulted in hardening communal identities in Gujarat. In the next
section I show how the Gujarat riots had elements of an “institutionalized riot system”
that was established by the RSS and its sister organizations. Taking examples from areas
such as Tandalaja, I show how the civil society organizations played a significant role in
controlling riots. Finally I conclude by discussing the lessons to learn from the Gujarat
massacre in order to control massacres in Gujarat in particular and in India in general.

18 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh the National Volunteer Organization, Bajrang Dal, founded in 1986 is a
youth wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council). The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), or,
World Hindu Council was established in 1984 to consolidate, strengthen and make invincible the global
Hindu fraternity. VHP reaches the grassroots of Indian society by working on the issues such as medical
relief, and education. It reaches to urban Hindus by promoting Hindu socio-cultural activities.
Gujarat: not a single-causal phenomenon

It is almost impossible to argue that riots in Gujarat were a result of a single cause such as the economic rivalries or the political competition or religious conflict. In fact, the reasons for participation in the riots were different in various regions of the state. For example, the main reason for participation in riots in some tribal regions such as Banaskanatha, Panchamahals was the ideological appeal to join the Hindu mainstream by the Hindutva organization called Bajarang Dal (Bhatia 2002). In areas such as Surat, Ahmedabad, the business rivalries were expressed in the form of communal rivalries (Breman 2002).

According to Ganesh Devy (2002), the rumors about the possibility of attacks by Muslims along with the economic rivalries between the Muslims and tribals were the main motivations of their participation. In Dahod district, as K. Balgopal notes, the economic relations between tribals and the Muslims have provided a great impetus to the struggle. The communal riots in such cases were distorted forms of class struggle. The Muslims were farmers, and the tribals were laborers or doorkeepers in most of the cases. The tensions between them arose because Muslims tended to be rural traders and the tribals were dependent on them to borrow money (Balgopal 2002).

Thus, the reasons for participation in the production of violence varied from region to region. The specific dynamics at the local level provided the immediate context for the violence. However, the social mobilization at the national and regional level was significant in homogenizing the communal identities and communal hatred. Therefore, understanding the development of the national and regional level politics of mobilization would be relevant at this stage (Balgopal 2002).
Politics of homogenizing Hindus and political mobilization

Consolidating the Hindu community since the 1980s

The mobilization of the masses against the religious minorities (especially the Muslims) has taken place at two levels. On the first level it is apparent that since the 1980’s, Hindu fundamentalist organizations have carried out systematic mobilization of the Hindus at the national level through their wings working in the state organizations as well as civil society organizations. Simultaneously, on a second level, at the national level, members of the World Hindu Council in Gujarat were active immediately before as well as during the riots in consolidating the anti-Muslim Hindu sentiment in various cities in Gujarat.

Before explaining the specific cases of mobilization of Hindus in Gujarat, let us consider how Hindus have been mobilized all over India since the 1980’s. Incidents, which were used by the Hindutva organizations to appeal to Hindu solidarity, need a special review in this context. In particular, as Christophe Jeffrelot (1996) observes, there was a great deal of anxiety among militant Hindus from 1979 onwards owing to the so-called calculated infiltration of Bangladeshi Muslims. Militant Hindus’ sense of insecurity was heightened in the wake of a series of communities’ conversions to Islam in South India in 1980’s. Approximately 1,000 members of the scheduled caste (formerly untouchable caste) in the village of Meenakshipuram (situated in the state of Tamil Nadu) converted to Islam on February 19, 1981.

To add to this, the Shah Bano affair in late 1980’s led to further criticism of the secular policy of the government by militant Hindus. Shah Bano a spouse of a Muslim lawyer who separated from him according to the Muslim customary law. She sued him
and established her right to alimony. However, according to the Shariat law (meaning the Muslim personal code), the husband should give alimony only for a period of 3 months after the divorce. The husband refused to give the alimony after that time. As this was contradictory to the Code of Criminal Procedure in India, the Supreme Court of India dismissed his appeal. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board criticized the decision of the Supreme Court and organized a “Shariat protection week” in October 1985. In July 1985, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board sent a memorandum to Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, calling for section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Article 44 (article regarding uniform civil code included in the directive principles of the state policy which has no legal enforcement) of the Indian constitution to be amended to exempt Muslims. The Prime Minister gave assurance that the customary law of the minorities would not be challenged. As a result of this, a Muslim Women Bill (Protection of Rights on Divorce) was introduced in parliament in February 1987; as a result a Muslim man was not obliged to give alimony to his wife beyond the term of three months. This position of the government and the Prime Minister was interpreted by some Hindu organizations as giving a privileged position to a religious minority, thereby neglecting the religious majority of the country.

The Hindutva ideology became intensified as the aforementioned incidents were interpreted as discriminating against Hindus. However, the social transformation within Hindu society in the 1980’s was a great force in the mobilization of Hindus. The decision to implement the report of the Mandal Commission needs a special mention in this context. In August 1990, V. P. Singh, the then Prime Minister of India, announced that as per the recommendations of the Mandal Commission report, 27% of posts in the central
and state government jobs will be reserved for the "other backward castes". The militant Hindus criticized this result as a threat to the unity of high-caste Hindus. The special reservations to 'backward' castes implied a potential change in the hegemony of the higher castes, including the Brahmins. Therefore, the Brahmins tried to shift the focus of politics from caste to religion. They were successful in shifting the paradigm of the debate from caste to religion, therefore solidifying a position that the tension was about differences between religions, and not amongst a religion. This resulted in a major paradigmatic shift in Indian politics during the 1980's.

At the same time, there was an organized effort to unite Hindus in the late 1980's and the early 1990's. As Jeffrelot (1996) notes, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a militant Hindu organization, adopted a twofold strategy to combat the threat from religious minorities. On the one hand, there were attempts to reform Hinduism and on the other hand, there was an attempt to form a Hindu community that would vote BJP en bloc. Specifically, attempts to reform Hinduism were evident in the effort of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which organized international Hindu conferences during the 1980's. The conferences organized by the VHP were aimed at representing different sections of the Hindu community, including the Buddhists. In 1982, the VHP formed a Hindu ecclesiastical structure by creating a Central Margdarshak Mandal (central guidance committee), where there were strategies to build new Hindu temples, facilitate conversions and re-conversions to Hinduism, adopt social welfare policies that would establish new schools in tribal areas, and establish centres for training children. This all led to the increased mobilization of Hindus as Hindus.

19 The Government of India appointed a commission for deciding the criteria for reservations of seats. This commission recommended that some unprivileged castes also known as Other backward classes should be given reservations.
The Ramjanmbhoomi movement was the single most important event in the mobilization of Hindus. This movement was centred on Ayodhya, a place in Uttar Pradesh, which was considered to be the birthplace of the Hindu God, Lord Rama. The RSS and other organizations that aim at the creation of a Hindu nation consider that a Muslim emperor called Babur had destroyed the temple of Ram which was built in Ayodha and built a mosque at the same place in the 15th century. Though the event had supposedly taken place centuries ago, there continues to be present-day outrage about this event by Hindu’s and as such many Hindu organizations want to liberate the site from Muslim control. The myths about the destruction of the temple and the construction of the mosque were constructed as historical facts by some Hindu leaders, in order to fuel anti-Muslim sentiment amongst the masses. In this way, Hindus were mobilized to unite against other religious minorities by adopting various strategies.

Another strategy involved the manipulation of the figure of Lord Rama, an important Hindu god. The receptiveness of the public to the manipulation of the symbol of Rama was heightened by the broadcast of the Ramayana serial on the national television in 78 weekly episodes in 1987 and 1988. In the original epic, two types of images of Rama are described; the image of warrior Rama and the image of peaceful Rama. However, only the image of warrior Rama was emphasized in the televised episodes. This incited an image of Hinduism that was premised on battle. Though difficult to quantify the exact impact of this depiction, it is likely that this fuelled the desire of Hindus committed to the creation of a Hindu nation to mobilize and fight Muslims. Various Yajnas (sacrifices in the name of God), and Rama shila pujans (prayers), pilgrimages, processions were organized throughout the India. The
mobilization of Hindus during the Ramajanma Bhoomi movement created a sense of urgency among the Hindus to liberate the site of Ayodhya. In spite of the order of the Supreme Court that no damage was to be done to the mosque, called Babri mosque, it was demolished by militant Hindus on December 6, 1992 (Frykenberg 1994, 647). As a reaction to this event, there was a Muslim backlash, and at the same time, anti-Muslim communal riots throughout India at various places such as Surat, Ahmedabad, and Bombay between 1992 and 1994.

All of this took place in the context of growing Hindu fundamentalism. For instance, The Bharatiya Janata Party, the political wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, manipulated the consolidation of the Hindu community for electoral purposes. The growing success of the RSS is evident in terms of its electoral support where the BJP won only 2 seats in the 1984 Lok Sabha, (the lower house of the Indian parliament) elections, but won 119 seats in 1991 and 298 seats in the 1999 elections (this included BJP and allies). The rise of BJP as a political party also implied a downfall of the only dominant party in India, namely, the Congress party. Until 1999 elections, Congress was the only majority party in the India. However, in 1999 elections, it won only 112 seats and became the opposition party.

In short, on a pan-India level there has been a fundamental social transformation in which religious identities and tensions have been sharpened. The changed social scenario provides the overall context for the hatred against other ethnic communities. At the same time, as the case study of Gujarat demonstrates, there has been mobilization of

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20 Bhartatiya Janata came into existence in 1980 and is the opposition party in the current Indian parliament.

21 Congress party has been a political party that has always taken a middle of the road policy meaning it is neither right-wing nor left-wing. In spite of having a balanced approach towards understanding society, it has lost its appeal and clout in Gujarat.
various sections of society at a local level. The next section explores the orchestration of riots at this local level in Gujarat.

**Hardening of religious identities in Gujarat**

In addition to the national level context for the hardening of the religious boundaries, the specific appeals to various sections of the Gujarati society by the RSS and its sister organizations were important in the production of riots. The overarching theme of appealing to Hindus was the urgency of saving the Hindu nation from the cultural attacks made by other religious minorities, especially those who believed in Islam or Christianity.

Until 2002, the riots were restricted to the urban areas and to the middle-classes in Gujarat. However, participation of the people from the tribal communities as well as the people from villages was a distinctive aspect of the 2002 riots. Dipankar Gupta rightly notes that Muslims constituted only 2.9 per cent of Gandhinagar district's population and yet villages in that area became victims of violence (Gupta 2002). The participation of the villagers in the riots was a result of the structural changes in rural Gujarat during the last few decades, where there has been a large-scale migration of people, including the scheduled castes, to cities as a result of urbanization. There have been two significant structural consequences as a result. First, the urban-rural interaction has increased significantly as a result of urbanization. The communalization in urban settlements has a spill over effect into rural areas. Second, the rural population consists mainly of land-owning castes.

This is important because the main land-owning castes from Gujarat, namely, the *Patidars*, supported the Congress party during the national movement; however, they
were frustrated with the Congress policy after the land reforms in 1950’s and their frustrations were systematically manipulated for political purposes by the BJP, which gained support from the Patidars. As Gupta (2002) observes, the patidars are numerically very strong in areas, which were hit by the current riots in Gujarat. In addition, the BJP and VHP have successfully supported the policy of reservations to the lower castes since the 1980’s, leading to growing support from Hindus in rural areas. Thus, the structural changes in the population of the villages in Gujarat have proved to be vital in the mobilization by those Hindus committed to a form of Hindu nationalism.

The context of the political economy and the ideological mobilization of the masses have been the main reasons for the homogenization of Hindus from villages. Similarly, the changed political economy in the cities of Gujarat has been a great motivation in the mobilization of the Hindus from the urban areas. The processes of closure of textile mills and the onslaught of economic liberalization of the market have been significant in the homogenization of Hindus. For instance, Ahmedabad was considered a city of textile mills until the 1980’s. The civil society networks in Ahmedabad consisted of the workers from the textile mills. However, with globalization, the political economy of the urban areas has changed radically. Jan Breman (2002) argues that there was a causal correlation between the closure of textile mills in cities such as Ahmedabad and the occurrence of communal riots. He explains that whenever communal tensions flared up and erupted in street riots in the past in Ahmedabad, the clashes could be defused by appealing to working class solidarity, which transcended the boundaries of ethnic loyalties. However, the space for inter-communal sharing and mutual protection shrank with the closure of mills.
The cultural loss due to the deterioration of the civil society networks was accompanied by the economic loss experienced by mill workers. The closure of mills resulted in the lumpenization of the mill workers. The front organizations of the Sangh Parivar were able to mobilize economically insecure people to assist in the operation of killing, burning, and looting. Without any food reserves left and bereft of all creditworthiness, the rioters were dependent on whatever private charities they could obtain, including from the sister organizations of the National Volunteer Organization. In many cases, the rioters participated in riots because of the economic incentives. Thus, the economic logic of the communal riots makes the spiral of violence perpetual (Breman 2002).

Among the rural areas, the participation of tribals in the production of riots (especially from Sabarkantha, Panchmahals, Dahod and Chotaudepur districts) was one more distinctive aspect of the 2002 riots. As Bela Bhatia (2002) analyzes, increase in education and income levels have led to rising middle-class aspirations amongst the tribals to join the Hindu mainstream. Bajrang Dal, a sister organization of the National Volunteer Organization, has tried to increase its base by building local level organizations with office bearers, some youth on its payroll, and regular events such as sports. The women members of VHP have been noted to conduct gatherings of the tribal women.

Scholars such as Asghar Ali Engineer and Jen Breman have considered political economy as the main reason for the occurrence of communal riots. Engineer claims that communal riots are the distorted forms of economic rivalries (1995, 108-10). Jan Breman (2002) explains the breakdown of the textile industry in Gujarat as the main cause of
lumpenization of politics, which in turn leads to endemic communal violence according to him. Policies of liberalization in the economy have proved to be one more opportunity for appealing to the economic insecurities of the people. Gujarat's leading textile, pharmaceutical and engineering industries have been affected by the economic liberalization of the market and free market economy lately. Local labor suffered in the process of liberalization because of the lack of skills and training. The events of 9/11, economic fluctuations in the US and the European Union, and (relative) industrial stagnation in the Gulf region have not helped this situation (Choudhari 2002). The National Volunteer Organization has appropriated the economic frustrations of the younger generation to fuel anti-Muslim feelings.

The Sangh Parivar has manipulated the economic and social insecurities in various sections of the society in order to consolidate Hindu sentiment. The mobilization of Hindus from various sections of the society before and during the communal riots has resulted in hardening the religious identities in Gujarat. The hardening of communal identities stimulated the process of hatred that in turn was reflected in the violence against Muslims. The above discussion throws some light on the social processes involved in the production of hatred. The communal hatred created the ideological setting for the production of violence. In addition, some specific structural elements i.e., elements in the economy that are essential for producing violence were present in Gujarat. Thus, riots in Gujarat were not a spontaneous reaction by the masses. In fact, the political economy context as discussed above proved to be catalyst in producing riots along with the systematic mobilization of the masses on the one hand and support of the

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22 The word lumpenization here means the process in which the mill workers became resource less and helpless due to the closure of mills.
“institutionalized riot system” on the other hand. Thus, the explanation by Engineer is useful to understand the preparations of the riots whereas those by Ashutosh Varshney and Paul Brass more compelling for understanding the later stages of communal riots. Their arguments are the most satisfactory for understanding violence in Gujarat, and it is their work that I build upon in my own analysis.

Institutionalized Riot System

It can be proved that the riots in Gujarat were systematically produced by certain sections of the society. The elements of an “institutionalized riot system” were very well present in the massacres that continued for four months. Brass observes that every great wave of rioting in India has been preceded by new mobilizing tactics that become integrated in the new repertoire and promote violence (Brass 2003: 12). Mobilization of masses on the basis of their ethnic identities is a necessary pre-condition of the production of riots. The mass participation in riots was a result of the consolidation of the Hindu sentiment, and in fact there has been a continued and systematic effort to consolidate Hindu sentiment and terrorize the Muslim minorities in Gujarat over the past two decades. The RSS and its sister organizations have been appealing to various sections of Hindu society by claiming that the religious minorities need to be treated as the ‘second class citizens’ because they are responsible for undermining the Hindu culture. Mass participation in riots is a result of the systematic mobilization of the Hindus against Muslims and Christians at the ideological level. The ideological mobilization turns into the actual violence as the masses become well equipped with swords, triads and other weapons that Hindu fundamentalist organizations distribute.
One of the distinctive features of the “institutionalized riot system” is that riots are produced systematically, in a well-orchestrated manner (Brass 2002: 5). Gujarat riots are definitely well-orchestrated attempts by various Hindutva organizations. For example, the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram has made considerable inroads into the tribal areas. The appeals of the VHP workers in the past two decades have been vital in homogenizing Hindus values against Muslims. Considering the use of phones and instruments of attack, the rioters were well prepared to carry out the violence against Muslims in 2002 riots. The rioters came in trucks and used cooking gas to carry out violence (Ahmed 2002).

Participants had clear incentives in producing riots. Masses participated in riots because of the three types of incentives, namely, political, economic, and social. The trigger event that resulted in producing violence for four months in Gujarat was unexpected. However, participants had clear incentives in producing that event. The state legislative elections were to be conducted in the next year and producing riots provided an easy pretext for the BJP to consolidate its Hindu vote bank. The properties and belongings of the Muslims were the specific targets of the attackers, which prove that the certain sections of the society had specific economic incentives in participating in riots. Many tribals participated in riots, as they perceived that fighting against Muslims would give them an opportunity to join the mainstream Hindu culture. As Bhikhu Parekh(2002) notes, burning people alive in a systematic and gruesome manner was new. According to Parekh, as many as 400 out of 1000 people were killed in this way. Women were used as the instruments of violence and the violence was targeted against the women belonging to the minority community. Thus, the rioters did not just aim at destroying the property and
prayer places belonging to the minority community; the main intention of attacks on women was terrorizing the minority community.

The Bhartiya Janata Party and the RSS claimed that the riots that followed the Godhra train tragedy were a natural reaction. They claimed that the attack on the Sabarmati express was planned by the members of the ISI agents (Pakistani intelligence agency) even before getting the authentic information. The consolidation of the Hindus against the Muslims was achieved by displacing the blame of the tragedy on the Pakistani agents. The principal beneficiaries of the process were the government and its political leaders who benefited in terms of political power in this process (Brass 2002).

Brass claims that political authorities produce riots in a dramatic manner in three phases; preparation or rehearsal, activation and enactment; and explanation/interpretation. The mobilization of various sections of the society against Muslims and the Christians was the stage of preparation for the riots. The distribution of hate literature and weapons of destruction to the Hindus was the second stage in the production of riots; this was the stage of activation and rehearsal. Finally, the interpretations of the Godhra incident and later on of various incidents of communal violence by the Chief Minister and other government authorities including the media can be considered as the third stage, viz. the stage of interpretation and explanation of riots. Various people such as professionals, especially doctors, lawyers and teachers, while avoiding active participation, donated money, offered moral support and encouragement, and provided free services to Hindu victims of violence (Parekh 2002). These people stimulated the third phase of the production of riots, namely, the phase of interpretation and explanation of riots.
Brass observes that in sites of endemic rioting, persons can be identified to play specific roles in the preparation, enactment and explanation of riots after the fact. Different actors in the production of Gujarat 2002 played specific roles in the dramatic preparation, enactment and explanation of Gujarat riots. The role of rumor mongers was significant in keeping the fire alive in many cases. In the case of Panvad, there was a rumor that a tribal dreamt that Muslims chopped down Mahuda tree, the most sacred tree of the Rathwas (a tribal community in Gujarat) and used to block the road. The rumor was spread that Babadev, or Babao Pithora God, was very angry and demanded revenge on those who had harmed the Mahuda. In addition to this, there was a rumor that policemen were scared of using their weapons because they believed that the tribals had a mantra by which they could spellbind the rifles used to block the road. Some rumors such as that Muslims had raped and kidnapped tribal girls to sell in the cities were systematically spread in the tribal areas. The spread of rumors was greatly responsible for the participation of the tribals in the riots against Muslims.

The role of poster plasterers and graffiti writers was evident in various localities. As Saurav Mukherjee (2002) reports, the posters of Hindu Gods and Goddesses became passwords to survival in mixed localities. One of the strategies of survival for Hindus was to put the posters of Goddess Saraswati, along with symbols such as OM that are considered auspicious in Hinduism (Mukherjee 2002). It was reported that the National Volunteer Organization and its sister organizations were distributing pamphlets that labeled Muslim community as anti-nationalists. The main argument was that the money Muslim citizens earned from their businesses was being used for preparing weapons to attack Hindus. Following this, a complete ban on Muslim businesses and belongings was
called for time and again. Some CDs and pamphlets containing blatant falsehoods about Muslims were distributed among the people from the tribal communities in Gujarat. The graffiti on the walls of many mosques were a very effective way of terrorizing the Muslims. According to the preliminary report of SAHMAT, a Delhi-based nongovernmental organization, its fact-finding team found graffiti left behind on the charred walls of a burnt madrassa in Sundaramnagar, Ahmedabad boasted of police support.

\begin{quote}
Yeh andar ki bat hai  
Police hamarey saath hai  
(This is inside information, the police are with us).  
Jaan se mar dengey  
Bajrang Dal zindabad  
Narendra Modi zindabad  
(We will kill. Long live the Bajrang Dal. Long live Narendra Modi) (Narula 2002).
\end{quote}

This poem symbolizes the police support to the Hindus. It is evident that there was a tacit understanding between the leaders of the Hindu fundamentalist youth and the police administration.

The BJP and VHP leaders along with the vernacular newspapers (Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar) played the role of “conversion specialists”. Widespread killings were carried out under the leadership of Bharatiya Janata Party Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Chief Minister Mr. Modi carried out what was called a Gujarat “Gaurav yatra” (literally meaning a Gujarat pride journey) that started from Hindu temples (Brass 2002). BJP appropriated the presumed Hindu political consolidation for electoral purposes.

The vernacular newspapers were responsible for converting the inappropriate information into the hatred against Muslims. As the regional newspapers are perceived as the immediate source of information in times of crisis, greater onus of publishing the
correct information lies on them. Two headlines from the leading newspaper of Gujarat need a special mention in this context. Immediately after the massacre of Godhra, *Sandesh* carried out a report on March 01, 2002 that mentioned totally false information that the breasts of two women were cut off (Haque 2002). On March 06, 2002, *Sandesh* published a report titled “Hindus Beware: Haj Pilgrims Return with a Deadly Conspiracy”. However, as Dionne Bunsha quotes a report by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and Shanti Abhiyan in Vadodara, “In reality, hundreds of terrified and anxious Haj pilgrims returned accompanied with heavy police escort to homes that could have been razed to the ground” (Bunsha 2002).

The leaders of the attackers acted as “fire-tenders” who used mobile phones extensively to keep the others in the militia informed about the attacks and to keep the fire alive (Brass 2003:33). Swords and *trishuls* were sold to the people who attended the training camps organized by the *Sangh Parivar.*23 In some cases, the participants in the riots were given monetary incentives and liquor. The volunteers of the National Volunteer organization who were seen making rounds of the official institutions seeking names and addresses of Muslim students (Brass 2003:33).

The riot system worked successfully in Gujarat because of the support of the state and branches of the state. The state was responsible for the production of violence at least in two different ways: there was a general lack of state capacity to prevent riots, and the state was unwilling to protect the minorities. As Steven Wilkinson (2002) notes, the party system in Gujarat was partially responsible for the occurrence of communal riots. The ruling party could afford to neglect the minorities, as there was no party to check over the

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23 *Sangh Parivar* carries out martial training on a daily basis on places such as playgrounds, which are called *shakhas.*
policies of the ruling party. The government of India was equally implicated in the Gujarat pogrom as it had power and ultimate responsibility to control riots (Brass 2002).

Riots occurred against the political backdrop of the defeat of BJP in assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and the Punjab in 2001 (Engineer 2002). The BJP had lost heavily in the state panchayat/local level elections and the Gujarat state assembly elections were due in February 2003. It is argued that consolidation of Hindu votes during the riots was considered to be the most effective strategy by the BJP. Thus, the operationalization of the riot system depended on the role of the state.

There is no doubt that the attacks were pre-planned as the attackers carried computerized lists of names and addresses of Muslims' homes and shops. The pogrom began on February 28 when the state supported the strike declared by the VHP. In other words, there seemed to be an institutionalized support during the attacks on Muslims:

In Ahmedabad... one official recalled how for the last few months, there had been concerted attempts to get lists of Muslim business establishments from the Ahmedabad municipal corporation.... VHP volunteers have also been making the rounds of professional institutions and universities, seeking the names and addresses of Muslim students. Some government sources say VHP members have drawn up lists of government departments (for example, the Food Corporation of India) and their allied agencies, and identified "undesirables" and their addresses (Bhushan 2002).

It can be concluded from the above discussion how communal riots in Gujarat were well orchestrated and systematically organized by the RSS and its sister

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24 Gujarat riots were considered as pogrom organized by the state by Brass. In this context, it will be useful to have a dictionary definition of pogrom. An organized, often officially encouraged massacre or persecution of a minority group, especially one conducted against Jews available online at: www.dictionary.com.

25 Panchayat is the village level administrative unit in Indian political system. The elections to the Panchayats are conducted democratically after every five years. The Panchayat level elections were held in Gujarat in 2001. BJP won in only constituencies. The defeat of BJP in local level elections created a sense of urgency to consolidate the Hindu votes.
organizations. The scale, spread and intensity of the riots was unprecedented. Nonetheless, some areas in Gujarat remained peaceful during the riots. The appeals of the RSS to attack Muslims and terrorize them were useless in areas such as Tandalaja. Brass’ theoretical model is inadequate to understand the specificities of the places where the peace was intact in during the massacres in the other parts of Gujarat. It is at this juncture that we need to integrate the analysis of Ashutosh Varshney with the work of Brass. In fact, the distinctiveness of the present analysis of riots is that it integrates the two major approaches towards understanding riots in order to fill in the gap in the literature regarding communal riots.

Varshney argues that civil society networks are the key to controlling and minimizing riots. There is less possibility of riots in those places where civil society associations have strong networks compared to those places where these networks are weak (Varsheny 2002, 14). Considering the regional variations in the Gujarat riots, Varshney’s analysis would be the most relevant approach to compare the cases of communal peace and communal riots in various stages of communal riots.
Figure One: Anatomy of Gujarat Riots

A: PHASES OF THE PRODUCTION OF VIOLENCE

B. INSTITUTIONALIZED RIOT SYSTEM
Role of the civil society

Following Varshney's argument, it can be said that the deterioration of the civil society networks in Gujarat has been vital in the production of riots. The cultural transformation in Gujarat in the last two decades has led to the ghettoization of the Gujarati society. For example, Hindu and Muslim children go to different schools and the social interaction between the two communities is largely confirmed to the elite (Parekh 2002). Integrated local civic organizations could potentially play a crucial role in controlling violence. As Varshney explains, when Hindus and Muslims are integrated in local civic organizations sparks gets extinguished (Varshney 2002). The process of ghettoization of communities has led to the shrinking of the civil society space committed to the cause of preserving communal harmony in Gujarat.

The response of civil society institutions to the process of ghettoization in general and to the incidents of intolerance towards the religious minorities is noteworthy. The Gandhian civil society institutions that were vital in preserving the dialogical spaces in the society have deteriorated to a great extent in the process of globalization and closure of textile mills in Gujarat (Yagnik 2002). Moreover, as Tridip Suhrud (2002) observes, the Gujarat University nourished some of the most profound debates about the nature of religion -- including Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist tenets -- but it had no creative response to the burning of churches in parts of Gujarat.

The social conditions of Gujarat have changed in the past two decades due to the systematic attempts of communalization of the Hindus. As Rajni Kothari (2002) explains, there has been a shift from pluralism to polarization in the society. The culture of communalism has made inroads in the fibre of the Gujarati society. In addition, the
visibility of the Hindu religion has increased due to the widespread growth of modern associations of Hindu devotees of various sects and cults in the last two decades (Shah 2002). The rise of various Hindu sects such as Pushti Marg, Swaminarayan Sampraday, Jalaram sampraday, Shakti Sampraday and the Swadhyay movement is the case in point. The leaders of the religious sects are popular among the tribals in Gujarat. They do not explicitly discuss the Hindutva ideology or programs by the Sangh Parivar in their routine discourses. However, they have started praising and supporting the activities of the RSS in the last 10 years (Shah 2002). To add to this, members of the tribals have tried to identify with the higher Hindu castes by adopting the religious practises professed by these sects. Thus, the mobilization of Hindus has resulted in the homogenization of the Hindus and the hardening of boundaries between Hindu, Muslims, and Christians.

Lessons to learn: some final conclusions

The preceding analysis demonstrates the key role of the state and civil society organization in the dynamics of rioting. Specifically, this research work explains the role of state as well as the civil society organizations in producing and preventing communal riots. I have argued here that in case of Gujarat two types of social processes were at work in the production of violence. First, the decline of secular civil society associations along with the rise of fundamentalist civil society associations proved to be crucial in homogenizing the Hindu identity over the last two decades. Second, the changed character of the state proved to be a catalyst in the hardening of ethnic identities during the riots.
Following Brass’ argument, it was argued that the riots in Gujarat were not spontaneous. Instead they were produced by those sections of the society that had specific economic and political (appearing as social and ideological as defined earlier) incentives in the production of riots. Further, it has been argued that there existed an “institutionalized riot system” that was responsible for the orchestrated violence. The reports in the local media and the hate literature distributed by the sister organizations of the National Volunteer Organization played the role of ‘fire tenders’ in the production of riots. The leaders of World Hindu Council, and Chief Minister Mr. Narendra Modi acted as the ‘conversion specialists’. In this sense, Brass’ theory is especially useful in understanding the role of the state in the Gujarat 2002 riots. Yet, at the same time, the case study on Gujarat shows that the riots did not break out in all districts at one once. In fact, riots occurred in three phases in Gujarat. Most of the cities and villages except from those in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara and Panchamahal became targets of violence. In this way, Brass’ theory is inadequate in explaining the temporal and regional variations in the occurrence of riots.

The civil society approach by Ashutosh Varshney was used for explaining the regional and temporal variations in the Gujarat violence. Borrowing a leaf from Varshney’s analysis, it was explained that the civil society networks played a crucial role in shaping the riots. Communal peace in various areas in Gujarat was due to the strong civil society networks that were responsible for hampering the spread of rumors in the initial stages. The mass participation in the violence against Muslims was a result of the decline of the Gandhian civil society institutions along with the rise of the Hindu fundamentalist civil society organizations in the last two decades.
Varshney’s analysis is compelling while comparing communal peace and communal violence. However, it fails to explain the occurrence of riots in the later stages of riots when violence broke out in spite of strong civil society organizational networks. The central contribution of this work is to integrate the two major approaches towards understanding communal riots in India, and identify the gaps in the literature. The literature on communal violence can be classified under two categories—first type is the literature that considers the state as the main actor in the production of communal riots and the other type is the literature that considers civil society as key actors in the production or control of violence. However, borrowing from both these approaches, I have argued that the both state and civil society organizations are key actors in the production of riots. These two factors were inter-dependent and complementary to each other’s existence in case of Gujarat as a result of which there was a massive holocaust against the minority community.

One of the goals of this thesis was to understand the anatomy of communal riots in order to develop institutional mechanisms to deal with the social problem of communal riots. While arguing that the state plays a crucial role in the production of riots it can also be important in preventing riots or limiting the impact of riots. Further, civil society networks could facilitate in building confidence in communities. In fact, civil society organizations can potentially be the best sources to regain the confidence in the minority communities during and after the occurrence of riots. On the one hand, punitive actions against the destructive forces of rioting would be helpful in controlling the spread of violence and on the other hand constructive actions to re-build communities would be useful to overcome the sense of alienation amongst minorities. A harmonious relationship
between Hindus and the Muslims in the civil society sphere could have prevented the intensity, longevity and saliency of the riots.

Communal harmony could be built by taking strict actions against the forces that create religious tensions and differences in the society. Extensive networks of inter-communal groups should be formed. For example, considering the power of the civil society networks, the central and state governments should take actions to prohibit the distribution of religious symbols such as trishuls, swords and pamphlets regarding economic boycott against Muslim community. The state government should take strict actions against physical training in the shakhas. Further, state governments should ban or regulate newspapers for inciting hate. Similarly, the state should take punitive actions against the inaction of police officers. In addition, the state government should develop an effective mechanism to rehabilitate the victims of violence. Peace committees could be set up in riot-prone communities. Further, helping the victims to get back to their original places and belongings should be the prime concerns of the state. The places of worship belonging to the minorities should be re-built as soon as possible. Moreover, the central government should develop institutionalized civil society channels that would work towards building confidence in both the communities.

It is necessary to revisit the hypotheses about various theoretical explanations discussed in the first chapter. The hypothesis regarding the political economy approach was useful in understanding the specific dynamics of business rivalries and the production of riots in cities such as Surat and Ahmedabad. Further, the hypothesis about

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26 Shakhas are the training camps for the members of the RSS. People are trained to be physically fit in these camps. There is also an intellectual discussion about being physically fit in order to save the Mother India from the attack of the foreign cultures.
27 Please refer to page 18 of this thesis.
the civil society organizations was useful in comprehending the cases of communal harmony in places such as Tandalaja whereas the hypothesis regarding the structuralist approach was useful in understanding the issues regarding the intentionality in the production of riots. It was proved in this thesis that riots were endemic in Gujarat because of the presence of an “institutionalized riot system” that was supported by the state. Moreover, civil society institutions committed to the cause of Hindutva played a crucial role in promoting while those committed to the cause of communal harmony were key factors in preventing communal riots. Further, in areas where riots were endemic, the nexus between the civil society organizations committed to the cause of Hindutva and the state organizations was explicit.

To conclude, the “institutionalized riot system” that came into existence as a result of the mobilization of Hindus by organizations of the RSS culminated into the communalization of Gujarati society in the last two decades. Consequently, the dialogical spaces between both the communities have shrunk, creating forms of ghettoization. The RSS and its sister organizations produced the riots in a systematic manner. The production of this drama was carried out in three phases, preparation and rehearsal, activation and enactment, and explanation and interpretation.

The two questions that were raised in the beginning of this thesis were-- what is the role of the state in controlling the spread of violence? Does the civil society organizations play a crucial role in promoting or controlling violence?\footnote{Please refer page 5 of this thesis.} It can be concluded from the above analysis that the state plays a crucial role in controlling as well as in promoting the communal violence. In the case of Gujarat, communal violence
spread throughout the state because of the support of the state and the state administration. The deterioration of the civil society organizations on the one hand and rise of the civil society organizations on the other hand has affected the fabric of the Gujarati society to a great extent. This has ultimately resulted in the communal hatred and violence. The civil society organizations played a crucial role in controlling riots.

As discussed in this thesis, the state and the civil society organizations worked in tandem in case of Gujarat because the organizations that drove the Gujarat riots were actually part of the state and civil society. Thus, the state and civil society were not distinct in case of Gujarat. The aim of this work was to explain and interpret the occurrence of riots in Gujarat. Further, by integrating the existing approaches towards understanding the communal violence, I tried to develop an eclectic approach towards understanding the case of Gujarat riots in particular and communal riots in general. By identifying the main causes of riots, I implied that the riots in Gujarat could be controlled by developing institutional mechanisms for regaining the communal harmony and by taking strict actions against the destructive forces. Gujarat 2002 riots were distinctive in many ways and therefore, one may not be able to predict the occurrence of riots by using theories developed in this work. However, the arguments about the role of civil society and the theory of “institutionalized riot system” will be certainly helpful in understanding the occurrence of riots anywhere else in the universe. Thus, although I focused on interpreting only case of Gujarat in this case, the theoretical insights used and developed in this work have universal utility.
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