Understanding Communal Violence in India: A Review of New Perspectives

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Abstract

The paper discusses the recent trends in studies relating to communal riots in India. Communal riots have been endemic in India since pre-colonial period but the problem became more acute in the colonial period. After the partition riots which accompanied independence, communal riots subsided but did not disappear. Since the early seventies in the post independent period communal riots gradually became a recurring feature in several parts of the country. Historians and social scientist have analyzed the causes of communal violence in India from different perspectives. In the last two decades some new interpretations and approaches have been developed by social scientists by doing extensive ethnographic works along with study of archival data. Here an attempt is made to understand the contributions of these new perspectives to the literature of communal conflict in India. In these approaches, civic engagements in civil society, electoral connections, caste rivalry and colonial origin of problematic relationship in between Hindus and Muslims have been explored from multiple perspectives.

India since the pre colonial period has been witnessing problems of Hindu-Muslim conflict which in the colonial period became more acute leading to large scale violence. According to most of the Indian scholars though there were tensions in between the two religious communities in the pre-colonial period, the communal problem became more pronounced in the colonial period because of the introduction of new colonial governmentalities. Since the first half of the 20th century, the emergence of communal organizations further promoted rivalries of the elite and middle classes of both the communities in the contexts of electoral fortunes, business interest, contest for government jobs which led to growth and development of communal discord and violence resulting in partition of India in 1947. The partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947 created unprecedented communal violence which was responsible for killing and migration of millions of people. Communal violence became endemic in certain parts of India especially in urban areas even after 1947.

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Historians and social scientist have analyzed the causes of communal violence in India from different perspectives. The primordialist approach explains Hindu-Muslim violence in India in terms of the 'given' difference between these two communities. The colonial administrators popularized this notion of 'given' differences between Hindus and Muslims and though it is discarded by the social scientist, this approach is still popular among the communal organizations and the politicians who subscribe such views. Some social scientists have explained communal violence from the point of view of ideological approach where the communal ideology of the organizations and the political parties are primarily responsible for such tensions and violence. The instrumentalist approach explains communal violence as strategy of the political elites to further their political and economic interest. According to this approach the political elites for their own interest instigate and organize violence. The social constructivist approach tries to understand the emergence of the communities in terms of social constructs through time and space where prevailing discourses determined the course of relationship in between these two communities. In the last decade some new interpretations and approaches have been developed by social scientists by doing extensive ethnographic field works along with study of archival data. Here an attempt is made to understand the contributions of these new perspectives to the literature of communal conflict in India. The books discussed here were published in the last two decades.

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In his book "Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life : Hindus and Muslims in India", Ashutosh Varshney enquires into the existing frameworks of analysis of Hindu-Muslim problems in India and tries to give an alternative explanation in terms of civic engagements in between the two communities. The intensity and dynamics of civic engagement in between the rival communities is explained as the determining factor in emergence of ethnic violence. Varshney states that inter ethnic tension and conflict in between communities are a common phenomenon but this tension does not invariably lead to inter ethnic violence. He says that "ethnic peace should, for all practical purposes, be conceptualized as an institutionalised channeling and resolution of ethnic conflicts. It should be visualized as an absence of violence, not as absence of conflict" (Varshney 2002:25). This difference in between ethnic conflict and ethnic violence is not properly investigated in the existing literature on Hindu-Muslim violence in India. In a multi ethnic and multi cultural state there will always be ethnic conflict arising because of socio-economic, political and cultural factors but conflicts does not always necessary leads to violence. According to him, it should be investigated why in spite of communal tensions, certain cities and localities in India continuously face communal violence whereas some other areas remain safe from such phenomenon. His main research question is to understand why ethnic conflict turns into ethnic violence. The answer to this question is answered in diverse ways by the social scientist and historians. According to him, most of the explanations suffer from two deficiencies. First, they fail to distinguish between ethnic conflict

and ethnic violence. In a multi ethnic society, ethnic conflict is a reality which if regulated through institutional system does not lead to violence. Secondly, existing explanations are 'pitched at a high level of aggregation- global or national'. Though global or national causes can help to understand the context, they don't enlighten us to understand specific violence which is concentrated in certain local areas. Generalized explanations fail to take into account the local specifications which are more important as in spite of similar demographic presence; certain areas remain free of the violence whereas some areas witness endemic violence. Varshney argues that it is strength/ weakness or the dynamics of inter communal civic relationship which is only variable that determines why in spite of having communal tensions certain localities see intense communal violence whereas other areas with similar communal tensions see relative communal peace. According to him, "the pre-existing local networks of civic engagement between two communities stand out as the single most important proximate cause. Where such networks of engagement exists, tensions and conflicts where regulated and managed; where they are missing, communal identities led to endemic and ghastly violence" (Varshney 2002: 9). In order to maintain peace in a particular locality in spite of communal tensions the civic engagements in between the communities must be inter-communal and not intra-communal. Where civic engagements are only intra communal there is always a greater possibility of emergence of communal violence. According to him, these interethnic civic engagements can be associational forms of engagement and everyday forms of engagement. He states, "Both forms of engagements, if inter communal promote peace, but the capacity of associational forms to withstand national level exogenous shocks – such as India's partition 1947 or demolition of Babri Mosque in December 1992 in full public gaze by Hindu militants – is substantially higher" (Varshney 2002: 9).

He explains that if engagements is only intra communal and not inter communal, even unconfirmed reports, rumors, victories and defeats in sports can lead to violence and "a multi ethnic society with few interconnections across ethnic boundaries is very vulnerable to ethnic disorders and violence" (Varshney 2002:12). Varshney shifts the attention from political institutions and elites to structure of civic life to explain causes of ethnic violence. He states, "The same political party, for example choose to polarize ethnic communities in one place but not in others, and even if it seeks to polarize, it may not succeed in engendering ethnic divisions. It can be shown that structures of civic life constrain the political strategy and their outcomes (Varshney 2002: 13). In spite of nasty rumors, tensions and small clashes between the two communities in different towns, there were different outcomes in terms of communal peace and communal violence. This explains the importance of local networks of inter communal engagements to understand why tensions led to violence in certain cities and localities where as relative peace was possible in other areas with similar demography.

In his explanation of civil society, Varshney makes a critical evaluation of existing

literature on studies of civil society, its origin and functions. He states that ethnic associations or religious associations must not always be understood as organizations which cannot perform the functions of civic organizations - allowing people to come together, making public discussion possible issues, challenging the caprice or misrule of state authorities and promoting modern business activities (Varshney 2002: 43). If such conditions fulfilled the function of an ethnic organization, it should be considered as a form of civil society. In rural India in spite of absence of formal associations, civic interconnections exist among communities. Even village commons, play grounds and entertainment or community functions can also provide space for group interaction. According to him "Informal group activities as well as ascriptive associations should be considered part of civil society so long as they connect individuals, build trust, encourage reciprocity, and facilitate exchange of views on matters of public concern-economic, political, cultural, and social" (Varshney 2002 : 46).

Varshney specifies the links between civic life and ethnic conflict. Continuous contact and communication among different communities always provide the space to discuss the tensions, rivalries and helps to moderate the conflict so that it does not lead to ethnic violence. If such engagements in between the communities do not exist there is never any possibility of local level moderation of the conflicts. Moreover, in cities where there is active associational and day to day engagements between the communities the foundations of peace is much stronger. As without a nexus between politicians and criminals big riots does not happen, cities with strong inter-ethnic associations and vibrant civic life has the potentiality to contain such happenings (Varshney 2002: 47). Every day and informal forms of civic communication may contain conflict and tensions in the villages but associational civic engagement is necessary in urban areas to serve the same purpose.

The thesis of civic engagement of Varshney is tested with data which he collected along with Steven I Wilkinson as part of a collaborating project to put together a database on Hindu-Muslim riots in India from 1950-1995. To prove the thesis of civic engagement as the determining variable of ethnic violence he analyses the data of violence in three sets of paired cities where each pair contains one riot affected city and other one a relatively peaceful city with substantial portion of minority population. In first place he compares and contrasts the cities of Aligarh and Calicut. To answer the questions why do Hindus and Muslims lived peacefully in Calicut but not in Aligarh, he tries to investigate the history and dynamics of civic engagement of the two communities in these two cities. There is a strong civic engagement between the two communities in Calicut which determines why politicians failed to become successful in politics of religious division and tension. On the contrary in Aligarh the civic engagement in between the two communities is very fragile which explains the endemic communal violence. The civic networks in Calicut were politically constructed since the early 20th century. Kerala politics witnessed the assertion of social justice within the Hindu society rather than communal rivalry

and caste mobilization became central to Kerala politics. On the contrary communal politics is the central narrative of politics in Aligarh. Communalism in Aligarh emerged because of a declining Muslim aristocracy who wanted to maintained their interest to which the Hindu middle caste where opposed. The British also used this divide to further their colonial interest. Aligarh civic life is epitomized by highly segregated educational system which has been primarily intra-communal. On the contrary, in Calicut intra-communal links exists along with inter-communal links. This explains why Aligarh witnesses recurring communal violence and Calicut is relatively peaceful.

In the second pair of cities Varshney selects Hyderabad and Lucknow. Both these cities were part of erstwhile Nawabi Muslim rule. Here Hyderabad is prone to communal conflict and Lucknow witnessed relative communal peace. Explaining historical reasons of civic engagements in Lucknow he mentions, "If in the first comparison Hindus were badly divided along caste lines in the city of Calicut, it is the Shia-Sunni conflicts in the city of Lucknow that have been functionally equivalent. By identifying the main enemy within the Muslim community, Shia-Sunni conflicts facilitate Hindu-Muslim integration" (Varshney 2002:171). In Lucknow there is a mass level integration in between both the communities which works as defender of peace and this engagement is based on mutually dependent economic activities. This economic inter dependence in between the two communities works as a bulwark of peace in Lucknow. But in Hyderabad there is only elite Hindu-Muslim integration and absence of mass level Hindu-Muslim civic engagements which aggravate communal tensions to develop into communal violence. Of course, the history of freedom struggle and participation of common people of both the communities fostered the civic engagement in Lucknow whereas the troubled history of Hyderabad prevented such engagements in between the common people of both the communities which also determined post independent troubled civic relations.

In the last pair of the cities of his study, he selects two Gujarat cities, Ahmedabad and Surat, both of which were part of the Bombay presidency during the colonial period. Here, Surat was mostly peaceful but Ahmedabad had endemic riots. In the early part of the 20th century, due to dominance of Gandhian politics and mobilization across religious lines, both the cities witnessed strong civic bonds across socio-economic life. Though riots erupted in Ahmedabad in between 1941 and 1947, these could be brought to control due to the pre existing civic relations. Surat was free of such tensions as there was strong civic engagement in between the two communities. But in the post independent period there was a steady decline of the pre-independent civic communications and civic order, decline of Gandhian social institutions, rise of bootleggers and growing strength of the non electoral wings of Hindu nationalism which led to a series of riots in Ahmedabad. But Surat remained free of such riots as the business associations which were inter communal remained vibrant where as such inter communal business organizations were continuously on the decline in Ahmedabad. But in 1992, Surat witnessed riots where 197 people were killed in

just five days. Most of the cases were reported from the shantytowns where inter communal civic unions had declined. On the contrary, the old city where the civic relations of the two communities were still strong did not suffer as the business organizations were interested to maintain peace.

In his alternative explanation of the causes of the communal violence in terms of civic engagement Varshney states, "In short, for communal peace, inter communal civic engagement is better than no engagement or only intra-communal engagement; and within the former category, as the size of the locality increases, associational engagement is better than everyday engagement. The key determinant of peace is inter-communal civic life, not civic life per se"(Varshney 2002: 282). Varshney in his new perspective on communal violence does not give much importance to the instrumental theories which puts the blame on the politicians, bureaucracy, police forces and the role of the states. According to him the view that blames the biases of the state officials specially the police for riots needs revision. Though he accepts that biases are there at various levels but the argument that they are primarily responsible for riots or for states failure to prevent riots is flawed. He feels that, "Police biases should of course be worked upon …but one does not have to wait until the biases disappear to work for and secure peace" (Varshney 2002: 296).

These fresh explanations about the causes of communal violence in India in terms of the dynamics of civic engagements in between the two major communities, Varshney is criticized for not taking into account the agency of the communal organizations, politicians and the nexus in between the police force, politicians and criminals. Varshney does not explain why in spite of strong civic engagement at the local level, certain localities witnessed severe communal conflict. The active engagement of the communal forces to create problems in pre-existing civic relations in between communities is also explored. In such cases the role and agency of the communal organizations in collaboration with the interested political parties with active support from the state agency, police forces and criminals to vitiate the atmosphere is not properly worked upon.

The active collaborative engagement of the different agencies in the riots was studied by Paul Brass. According to Paul R. Brass, places where riots are endemic three phases can be discerned: preparation/rehearsal, activation/ enactment, and explanation/ interpretation. And these three phases is meticulously worked upon by the active nexus in between the political parties, communal organizations and criminals with tacit support from the police force in the period of riots. According to him "Especially important are what I call the 'fire tenders', who keep intergroup tensions alive through various inflammatory and inciting acts; 'conversion specialists', who lead and address mobs of potential rioters and give a signal to indicate when violence should commence; criminals and the poorest elements in society, recruited and rewarded for enacting the violence; and politicians and the vernacular media who, during the violence, and in its aftermath, draw attention away

from the perpetrators of the violence by attributing it to the actions of an inflamed mass public"(Brass 2006: 5). Brass states that in Northern and Western India since independence there have been active presence of institutionalized system of riots production which are activated at the time of elections or for political mobilization (Brass 2006: 65). He developed the theory of Institutionalized Riots System in the context of the communal violence in Meerut city from 1961 to 1982. From ethnographic studies done in Meerut city he explains the presence of institutionalized riots system which worked through the nexus between communal organizations, political parties, police and local criminals. He explains through his research that even where there is strong civic engagement, they succumb to the power of political and communal machination. According to him, "From a policy point of view, it is a pure diversion to invest resources in promoting civic engagement, when attention and resources should be directed towards uncovering the system and process of riot production and the producers thereof" (Brass 2006: 69). He strongly feels that "It is politics and police, not civic engagement or is absence that determines the course of communal violence" (Brass 2006: 93).

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Steven I. Wilkinson's book *"*Votes and Violence: Electoral competition and communal riots in India*"* starts with a interesting comment made by Richard Nixson who said "Riots are spontaneous. Wars require advance planning". Wilkinson says that ethnic riots, far from being relatively spontaneous eruption of anger, are often planned by politicians for a clear electoral purpose. Though Varshney and Wilkinson use the same sources and data of riots in India from 1950 to 1995 which they collected together, Wilkinson arrives in a different conclusion regarding the causes of communal violence in India which is entirely different from that of Varshney. Wilkinson gives an electoral theory of communal violence in India from his readings of the same data. Of course, he collected new archival data regarding communal violence in India that happened in the early part of the 20th century by extensive fieldwork. According to him the riots are solutions to the problems of how to change the salience of ethnic issues and identities among the electorate in order to build a winning political coalition. Political competition can lead to peace as well as violence, and he identifies the broad electoral conditions under which politicians prevent ethnic polarization and ethnic violence rather than incite it. He shows that electoral incentives work at two levels-the local constituency level and the level of government that controls the police – which interact to determine both where and when ethnic violence against minorities will occur, and more important, whether the state will choose to intervene to stop it.

The relationship between electoral politics and riots had been discussed and indicated by other scholars as well. Even Human Rights Watch on the basis of a worldwide survey of ethnic violence in 1990s stated that ethnic riots and pogroms are usually caused by political elites who play on existing communal tensions to entrench (their)

own power or advance a political agenda. But these pre existing explanations were critiqued by Wilkinson for three reasons. Firstly, these explanations cannot explain why some politicians seem to do exactly the opposite and use their political capital and control of the state to prevent ethnic conflict. He states that there has no proper explanation why in 2002 Narendra Modi of Gujarat failed to contain large-scale anti-Muslim violence in his state, whereas other chief ministers such as Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh or Digvijay Singh in Madhya Pradesh were successful in preventing riots in their states. Secondly, the political explanations for ethnic violence cannot properly explain the variation in patterns of violence within states. For example why riots erupted due to the "national" issue of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi in 1989-92 in some towns and states but not in others are not adequately explained. Thirdly, though such explanations speak some sort of political gain for the elites, there is no proper explanation and investigation regarding the political incentives which are responsible for the riots at the local level (Wilkinson 2004: 2-3).

Wilkinson addresses the question of interstate and town-level variation in ethnic violence in India: why do apparently similar towns and states have such different levels of violence and the conditions under which the politicians who control the administration have an incentive both to start and / or prevent ethnic violence. His main argument is that town-level electoral incentives account for where Hindu-Muslim violence breaks out and that state-level electoral incentives account for where and when state governments use their police forces to prevent riots. According to him whether violence is bloody or ends quickly depends not on the local factors that caused violence to break out but primarily on the will and capacity of the government that controls the forces of law and order (Wilkinson 2004: 5). He gives a comparative evidence to suggest that large-scale ethnic rioting does not take place where a state's army or police force is ordered to stop it using all necessary means.

According to Wilkinson riots occur because of the incentives at the local level and state level. At the local level riots happen because of electoral competition. If the political competition is very competitive, parties that represent elites within ethnic groups use anti-minority protests, demonstration and physical attacks that precipitate riots in order to 'encourage members of their wider ethnic category to identify with their party' (Wilkinson 2004: 4).

He argues that it is the state government which is responsible for law and order which determines whether to prevent violence or not. According to him state governments protect minorities when 'minorities are an important part of their party's current support base, or the support base of one of their partners in a coalition government; or when the overall electoral system in a state is so competitive in terms of the effective number of parties-that there is therefore a high probability that the governing party will have to negotiate or form coalitions with minority supported parties in the future' (Wilkinson 2004: 6-7). Even concern for vote pooling changes the behavior

of nationalist parties who does not have much of minority support because of the compulsion of coalition politics where other partners in the ruling coalition might have minority vote support. If the ruling party have no minority support and a electoral competition in that particular state is very low and there is no possibility of having support from minority supported parties, politicians in government will not be interested to stop riots by enforcing law agencies.

Most Indian states can be included in category A, where intense party competition leads to better security to minorities as they are important in the political alliances or for future alliance. Some of the states can be included in B category, where bipolar party competition is present. Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are such kinds of states. Among them Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan can be included in the sub-category B_i where the ruling party have to rely on multi ethnic support base with substantial Muslim support. According to him only in Gujarat in 2002 the worst-case scenario happened (subcategory B_{ii}) where there were both low levels of party competition in the state (2.97 effective parties) and a government in power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), that did not have any minority support base and therefore had no incentive to protect Muslims.
He explains that bipolar party competition at the local level leads to violence but multi polar competition at the state level in most Indian states results in containment of violence. At the town level where competition is bipolar violence may result in constituencies where there is very high electoral competition which he measures by the margin of win or defeat in previous election.

He shows that in the post independent era Hindu-Muslim violence happened even in Congress rules states and "At one time or another, Congress politicians have both fomented and prevented communal violence for political advantage. Congress governments have failed, for example, to prevent some of India's worst riots (e.g. the Ahmadabad riots of 1969, the Moradabad riots of 1980, and the Meerut riots of 1987) and in some cases Congress ministers have reportedly instigated riots and have blocked riot enforcement" (Wilkinson 2004:153).

Wilkinson uses statistical analysis along with qualitative data based on archival research, extensive field work and primary and secondary sources. He tested his theories of electoral explanation of Hindu-Muslim violence in India by using state and town level data on Hindu-Muslim riots in India for over five decades. He says that "Because the resulting data are town-level as well as state-level, and extend back more than a century (unlike Government of India aggregate figures on communal violence, which have only been published since 1954), they allow me to test theories of Hindu-Muslim violence much more completely than has been done before, which should increase confidence in my conclusions." This novel explanation of the communal riots in terms of the electoral politics is criticized by Varshney (Varshney 2005:4219-4224) Varshney states that as the data was town specific it needs further investigation to arrive at the conclusions drawn by Wilkinson. Moreover, regarding

the power of the Indian state to prevent conflict at will gives the impression of the Indian state as a monolithic and omnipotent entity. He states that though ruling party is the boss of the beauracracy and the police forces, the opposition parties also wield considerable power. Moreover, the police forces and officers can also 'subvert the ruling parties through subterfuge, dissimulation and feigned compliance' which explains why ruling parties may not be able to control the riots in spite of the best intentions (Varshney 2005:4223).

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Through intensive ethnographic fieldwork in Gujrat, Ward Berenschot tries to explore the local contexts of the riots and understand the inner working of the ideology, machinations and the networks which fomented violence in three localities. In his book "Riot Politics: Hindu-Muslim Violence and the Indian state", Ward Berenschot investigates to answer fresh questions regarding the making of the institutional riot system, the character of the state and how different agencies function in the context of communal riots and why the common people participate in such riots. He states that "Although today most authors agree that many communal riots are instigated by political actors, there is little insight into the actual mechanisms that underlie the mobilization for, and the instigation of violence. Lacking documentation and an understanding of these mechanisms, the available literature about the political instigation of violence cannot account for the capacity of politicians to induce large mobs to commit violence: those who make up the mobs are depicted as docile followers, who can easily be swayed with the help of a little alcohol or money" (Berenschot 2013: 8). Taking a cue from Horowitz who argued that attention needs to be paid to developing theory that links elite and mass concerns and answer the insistent question of why the followers follow, Berenschot tries to explain the process of mobilization and instigation through which the common people become part of the communal game (Berenschot 2013: 8). His research questions are regarding how actually the riot networks are formed and how they function, the modus operandi of the networks which work through a meticulous division of labour at the time of riot and why the sane voices are not given due importance at the time of the riots. Through field works in three localities of Gujarat after the Gujarat riots of 2002, he tries to understand the electoral benefits of the politicians due to riots and how a system of patrons and clients function at the ground level which co-ordinate the people with the communal organizations and the various wings of the states. He also tries to understand why some cities or parts of the cities escaped the cycles of violence in spite of highly provocative situations. Ramrahim Nagar in Ahmedabad could escape from the rioters due to the active working of the inter-communal civic organizations. Through ethnographic work he tries to answer these questions by trying to understand and unravel the everyday affairs of the people, the localities, the interest and functions of politicians and the different intermediaries which function between the state system and citizens. He argues that, "The daily functioning of the networks around politicians as mediators between state institutions and citizens shapes the mobilization

and instigation that take place during the communal riots. Gujarat communal violence can be seen as the outcome of the historical process through which the state has come to be embedded in Gujarat's society: as wide-ranging networks of various brokers and intermediaries have formed to facilitate the interaction between state institutions and ordinary citizens, politicians have acquired the necessary local authority, contacts and incentives to foment violence" (Berenschot 2013:10). Through ethnography of the everyday state he explores the practices of brokerage, patronage and particularization – the practice of undermining the application of legal system for the advantage of private interest in Gujarat in three localities. He feels that the different networks which have been functioning in Gujarat should not be understood only in terms of institutional riot system as they are not created for the only purpose of creating violence as most of these networks functions as mediation between the citizens and the state for distribution of welfare schemes. According to him, "A focus on political mediation can help to understand how and why politicians, goondas, political workers, social workers and the police contribute to the occurrence of communal violence: the capacity of these actors to instigate and perpetrate violence, as well as their interests in doing so, is closely related to the different positions they occupy in the patronage networks that provide access to state resources" (Berenschot 2013:12). He shows that multiple right wing forces are well integrated into the local patronage in which the common people are dependent to have connections for getting state support for various schemes such as healthcare, education, or government jobs. Being associated with them or support to Hindu Nationalist Ideology serves to legitimize and strengthen these local networks. The dependence of citizens on political mediation to be incorporated into the welfare measures of the states creates an arena in which political actors with communal, exclusivist discourse control access to state resources (Berenschot 2013:13). He characterizes the state in Gujarat as a mediated state for the dependence of the state institutions on political mediation for functioning (Berenschot 2013:17). He observes that the violence of 2002 was in fact a planned and organized event, co-ordinate by relatively a small group of people. From the observations of the residence he discovers a 'fairly closely- knit network of municipal councilors, MLAs, the police, party workers' (Berenschot 2013: 7-8). He observes that in the riots " a division of labour emerges: some actors were involved in spreading rumors and accusations, some occupied themselves with the logistics of the mobilization, some instigated and led the mobs while others kept up morale and support by providing relief and by securing the release of those arrested. Throughout, Gujarat politicians seem to have played a pivotal role in these activities" (Berenschot 2013:7). Though he also uses the perspective of relational approach done by Varshney, he tries to understand the political context that required civic bodies to counter rumours and prevent hostilities and how different political actors actually function in creating communal tensions. He states "To revert to a well-worn metaphor, it is as if we would explain the occurrence of fire by looking at the presence or absence of a fire extinguisher, without looking at how or why the fire was lit in the first place. What is needed is a more inclusive approach: attention also needs to be

paid to how the structure of relations between communities (including associational life) as well as relations within a community creates incentives and opportunities to organize and instigate violence" (Berenschot 2013: 36). Rather than being confined to the question of the presence or absence of inter-communal civic engagement, Berenschot focuses on the evolving social and political life within the localities. He states that to understand the continuous violence we must try to understand the changing patterns of interaction between the elites, politicians, their supporters, the state officials and local residents of a single community. He tries to unravel the relation of mechanism behind the violence through understanding of the day to day interaction of the different agents of the state, the politicians and the patronage system for which the followers accept the ideology of the politicians and participate in riots. The communal violence in Gujarat in 2002 was possible because of active cooperation between the politicians, state officials and goondas, and he tries to understand the relationship in the light of the limited capacity of the state institutions to uphold laws and regulations. He states that, "The limited capacity of the police and the court to dispense the justice creates incentives for local politicians to make use of goondas as alternative enforcers of authority, which again poses obstacles for the police and the judicial in upholding government laws and regulations" (Berenschot 2013:135). His book also throws fresh insight into the question of political mediation, politics of identity and election. He shows the meticulous planning, the manipulations and strategies to create a Hindu vote bank and the compulsion or willingness of the voters who are dependent on the politicians and the organizations to facilitate their interaction which state institutions. He also tries to understand the infrastructure of violence through intensive ethnographic work in three localities where he shows the division of labour of the different communal organization in managing, instigating and mobilizing the people for riots. By negating the theory of spontaneity for the riots in Gujarat after the Godhra incident, he states that quite a lot of energy and money was spent on mobilizing crowds and spurring them into action at that time. The same networks which serve in the peace time as versatile networks of patronage that provide livelihood for their members by mediating between state institution and citizens, become active as institutionalized riot system in the time of riots. And this explains the power of the networks to make their followers complicit in the riot programme. He states "The links between goondas, politicians, the police and local fire tenders did not come about because of a shared interest in fomenting violence; they came about because of a shared need to cooperate in order to develop a profitable hold over the distribution of state resources and the implementation of state polices. For these actors communal violence is a beneficial strategy within a larger game of capturing (state) resources, gaining support and winning elections" (Berenschot 2013:167). By creating local base of supporters and earning legitimacy by mediating state resources for the citizens, these networks could spread rumours and create tensions. He states "Rioting can - depending on the political context in which it occurs - provide a chance to develop and strengthen these relations, whereas the prevention of violence might damage these relations. Rioting is maintaining

relations" (Berenschot 2013:185). He shows the limitations of the thesis of Varshney who makes a relations between communal violence and civic engagements by arguing that these networks could foment violence not only because of the decline of civic engagements between Hindus and Muslims but also because the gradual encroachment of state institutions on the terrain of even intra-ethnic civic activity (Berenschot 2013:175). Regarding relations in between violence and elections he states that the dependence of voters on politicians to gain access to resources can help to explain why communal violence helps politicians to win election. Moreover, these networks which work as patronage system during peace time and as fomenters of violence at the time of riots sustain because of the difficulties of the citizens in dealing with state institution and to get access to welfare schemes. The cooperation and coordination that can be observed during riots between neighborhood leaders, the police, local criminals, Hindu-nationalist activists, political party workers and politicians should be understood against the backdrop of the daily interaction between these actors as they cooperate with each other to develop and maintain lucrative access to state resources. Their daily exchange of favours shape and cement the infrastructure that, can be used to spread rumours, bring people to the streets, distributed weapons and prevent the police from interfering at times of communal tension (Berenschot 2013:190-191The intentions and the motives of those who participate in such riot programmes are determined by the interdependence of these stakeholders. Regarding the future of Hindu-Muslim relations in India, Berenschot states that it will depend on the courage and political will to enact measures to reduce the dependence of poorer citizens on political mediation. He reiterates that, "Inclusive economic growth and a more accessible and responsive state can lay the basis for a political arena that is less violent and more conducive to communal harmony" (Berenschot 2013:201)

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Sudha Pai and Sajjan Kumar's book 'Everyday Communalism: Riots in contemporary Uttar Pradesh' offers a new model of institutionalized everyday communalism to analyze sustained and constant low key communal tensions which became a new normal in Uttar Pradesh especially after 2000. The new model to based on the studies on the communal phenomenon in eastern and western UP since 2000 have added new and significant dimension to understand how communalism is being manufactured and institutionalized in everyday life.

The authors show that the Ramjanambhoomi-Barbi Majsid mobilization which provided the context for communal riots in the late 1980s and early 1990s was mostly based on 'history, mythology, fate, and culture and was planned as a large scale, highly visible, participative movement, using a *rath yatra* to appeal to mainly upper caste Hindus across UP and the country.' The main purpose and strategy of this mobilization was to foreground Hindutva as a 'powerful religious and rightwing political ideology and tool for building a Hindu nation.' However, after

the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 and the gradual weakening of the temple movement especially after 2004 national elections when the BJP lost power, there had been a new strategy centering on institutionalized everyday communalism which was different from the earlier Ramjanambhoomi phase of mobilization. This new strategy resulted in 'a combination of quiet nationalism, quiet communalism and low intensity incidents' and a consequent rise of communalism without communal riots'. According to the authors, "riots no longer promote communalism, rather it is the steady and long term work at the grassroots among the common people by the right wing forces that promotes the growth of constant, everyday, communal tensions and polarization, which only at times spills over into big and violent riots (Pai and Kumar 2018:276)."

The study takes into cognizance the shift in the location of riots from the earlier endemic sites such as Aligarh and Kanpur to new areas especially in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh which remained by and large free from the riots during the 1990s due to the Ramjanambhoomi -Barbi Majsid imbroglio. According to the scholars there is a change in the locations where riots have been taking place in Uttar Pradesh in the recent past. Since the 1960s and 1970s communal riots were endemic in urban areas of Uttar Pradesh such as Moradabad, Meerut, Aligarh, Kanpur etc and the riots mostly occurred due to economic competition between the Hindus and Muslims. Since 2000 riots have spread into new areas such as Muzzafarnagar, Shamli, Mau, Gorakhpur and the new series of violence have also new socio-economic contexts. It is observed that the new sites of everyday communal mobilization were carefully selected, "where it was felt that assertions, anxieties ad conflicts were emerging over issues such as a growing agrarian crisis and falling income in a once prosperous region, emergence of Mafia dons, rise of a class of frustrated, educated but unemployed youth, increasing cultural conflict over religious practices, decline in local industry due to globalization etc (Pai and Kumar 2018:275)."

Apart from spread to new location, the communal riots in the recent past have also spatially spread mostly from the urban areas to the rural areas. The form of construction of communalism have also been changing where instead of large scale and state wide mobilization there have been 'a series of low key, restrained and carefully calibrated communal incidents to avoid large scale riots.' According to the authors, "These small incidents were responsible for making Uttar Pradesh a tinder box and eventually sparked off major riots in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh. The new form of low-key mobilization has continued afterwards in UP and elsewhere in the country despite the BJP gaining a majority at the Centre-through strategies such as love jihad, conversions, attack on Christian churches, beef ban, the alleged exodus of Hinds from Kairana and cow vigilantism which has kept the communal pot boiling (Pai and Kumar 2018:29)."

The authors have also pointed out that the everyday communalism have also successfully transcended the upper caste norm of Hindutva mobilization of the 1990s

and has successfully introduced ideology of non-Brahmanical Hindutva to enlist the support of the subaltern segments of the Hindu society. It is observed that, 'In the 1990s for the dalits and backwards, the Hindu upper castes were the others to be challenged, today the attempt is to Hinduize the former and bring them closer to the latter and render the Muslim the alien for all sections of a united Hindu community (Pai and Kumar 2018:30). The politics of caste mobilization by the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party in UP could successfully stem the tide of BJP in the 1990s and early 2000s but the growing disappointment on the part of the backward and lower castes against these party's performance provided the space for the BJP to reconsolidate. The authors explain that the failure of the parties such as SP and BSP and the consequent rise of BJP were coterminous with the promotion of non-Brahmanical Hindutva strategy to rope in the subaltern caste into the Hindutva fold. According to the authors, "the promotion of this variety of Hindutva is visible not only in UP but in states in the Hindi heartland and others such as Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh (Pai and Kumar 2018: 281)." Rather than emphasizing on just the instrumental role of the new strategy the authors also point out that the mobilization of the low caste towards Hindutva became possible as 'affected by the process of modernity, these groups are attracted by the idea of being associated with an upper caste Hindu party.' According to the authors, "the process of subalternization of Hindutva is primarily interplay of the active agency, cultural and political aspirations of the Hindu subalterns and the democratic compulsions of the Hindutva discourse (Pai and Kumar 2018:282)."

Institutionalized everyday communalism became operational by taking recourse to petty, banal incidents to create communal blocks which lead to electoral dividends by the Hindu Right. This process continues to get fresh lease of life due to the active support of the institutions and machinery of the state which creates new social and cultural norms to enforce "the minority community to conform to the values and customs of the majority (Pai and Kumar 2018: 288)." The new socio-economic and cultural contexts which fuel the main ingredients of everyday communalism are mostly related to 'social jealousies, cultural aspirations, and economic anxieties' of the different groups of people.

The authors have also delineated the intricate relationship between institutionalized everyday communalism and electoral politics. This intricate relationship was clearly visible in the communal mobilization process especially in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh. According to the authors, "An initial stage of sustained, everyday grassroots mobilization over a period of time, which eventually is used to create a communal electoral campaign during an election, which the party hopes to win (Pai and Kumar 2018: 30)." Due to the continuous everyday institutionalized communalism there is the arrival of a new normal in the everyday relationships of Hindus and Muslims where it becomes almost impossible to revert back to the earlier relationship. The authors for their ethnographic studies had selected the districts of Mau and Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh in 2005 and 2007 and Muzzafarnagar and Shamli districts in

2013 in western Uttar Pradesh. The authors mostly emphasize the difference in terms of strategy, ideology and operational aspects of the construction of communal riots since 1980s and the new design since 2000. The selection of these locations and the time frame provided opportunity to, "Examine the contrasting context, methods and strategies through which communalism has taken route and Hindu-Muslim relations are constructed and reconstructed over time (Pai and Kumar 2018: 31)."

By using the model of institutionalized everyday communalism the authors have innovatively expanded the concept of institutionalized riot system developed by Paul Brass. According to the authors the central difference between their everyday communalism model and the concept of institutionalized riot system as developed by Paul Brass mostly depends on 'deliberate, planned, long term and continuous everyday grassroots communal mobilization by the local leaders belonging to the area.' According to them, "these leaders are recruited for the purpose, using small, mundane but provocative local incidents to gradually create animosity and social jealousies between Hindus and Muslims who have lived together for a long time (Pai and Kumar 2018: 26)." The model of everyday communalism has three concentric circles or layers where the innermost centre, 'consist of core BJP leaders providing leadership in terms of ideology, strategy and methods, of grassroots mobilization.' The second circle is manned by the local leaders, 'recruited for the purpose of institutionalizing communal tensions in inter-community relationships over a period of time.' According to the authors, "it is at this level that the work of institutionalizing everyday communalism is created out through agitations for cow protection, love jihad, beef politics, *ghar wapsi* and anti-conversion and random other agitations against people, art, events, etc (Pai and Kumar 2018: 27)." The third circle of this model is provided by the social media forums 'which provides support to the strategy of everyday communalism through constant propaganda and messages targeted at the host population of the region.'

(v)

In his book 'Colonial Origins of Ethnic Violence in India', Ajay Verghese contextualizes the origin of problem of ethnic and communal violence in India in the evolving colonial administrative apparatus specifically after the revolt of 1857. Verghese in his explanation and arguments tries to capture the limitations of the scholarly works emerging in the recent past specifically the arguments put forward by Paul Brass, Ashutush Varshney and Steven Wilkinson. These explanations according Verghese have two specific limitations. The first limitation is relating to the historic problem of Hindu-Muslim riots which had its origin in the pre-colonial past but these three theories mostly deal with the Hindu Muslim riots in the twentieth century and more specifically in the post-Independent period. The existing arguments do not clearly deal with the problem of the occurrence of Hindu—Muslim riots for hundreds of years before the introduction of the electoral system. Similarly the Hindu nationalists cannot be part of an explanation for the pre-colonial conflicts.

Verghese also points out that the existing research of ethnic violence in India has its narrow focus on religion.

Verghese in his research prioritizes the historical legacies of communal violence which are transmitted into contemporary politics and the historic role of institutions in this transmission into the post independent period. The book argues that "Historical legacies create cultures of conflict or cooperation that reinforced over time through institutions, drive patterns of ethnic violence in multi-ethnic states (Verghese 2016: 4)." In India, according to the author, 'the era of British colonialism structured long term ethnic conflict outcomes.' The author in his explanation of the colonial origin of ethnic violence in India gives primacy to the changing nature of colonial administration in India especially after the revolt of 1857. The British administrators mostly believed that the rebellion of 1857 was a religious uprising and in the post-1857 period, caste was devised as the central organizing principle of the emerging society. The rebellion of 1857 which shook the British Empire in India forced to abandon the project of complete integration of the Indian princely states with the Raj. Henceforth, princely states were no longer forcefully integrated and the policy of indirect rule was introduced to have control over the princely states.

After 1857 the British administrators introduced the Indian model of colonialism which combined both direct and indirect rule to prevent the occurrence of future rebellions. According to the author, the areas which were directly ruled by the Raj were organized and administered differently where "colonial rulers created disparate policies of ethnic stratification (Verghese 2016: 4)." The princely states which were indirectly ruled had their own autonomy where different rules of social stratification worked. Different conception and administrative mechanism to deal with ethnic diversity were followed in the British provinces and in the indirectly ruled princely states. In the British provinces caste became the central trope of administration whereas the princely rulers gave primacy of religion over caste identity. This resulted in the making of two different political cultures which subsequently emerged across the provinces and the princely states (Verghese 2016: 4). According to the author in the provinces, "British administrators implemented policies that benefitted high castes, discriminated against the low caste and tribals, and protected religious minorities. In the princely states, native kings did the opposite. Their policies benefitted their co-religionists, discriminated against non-religionists and protected low castes and tribes (Verghese 2016: 4)." These ethnic fault lines and differential political cultures came to be subsequently reinforced in the body politic after independence through the different institutions. In his explanation these institutions are not narrowly defined only in terms of rules, norms and procedures but also encompass the symbol systems, cognitive scripts and moral templates which provide meaning to human action (Verghese 2016: 6).

After independence the existing patterns of ethnic violence became embedded in the society through the continuity of the multiple social institutions. The book argues

that in the directly ruled British provinces there occurred mostly caste and tribal violence and in the erstwhile princely states religious violence against the minorities had been the recurring pattern. According to the author, "In the former provinces on the one hand, low caste and tribal groups continued to suffer under the weight of historic discrimination, and reform efforts have failed to minimize the violence. In the former princely states, on the other hand, it is mainly minority, religious groups that suffer from discriminatory legacies (Verghese 2016:5)."

The British administrators in the directly ruled areas or the provinces have introduced new administrative policies which favoured the high caste and discriminated against the low caste and the tribes specifically after 1857. At the same time the British also introduced the policy of religious neutrality which protected the minority Muslims. In the princely states where there was a continuity of pre-colonial political traditions, ethnic politics was organized differently. In the princely states the native kings mostly tried to gain legitimacy from religion. According to the author, "In these areas politics was organized around the centrality of religious legitimation, laws, shrines, customs and rituals. Religion was inherently central to the princely states, but the British also reinforced this ethnic categories….to highlight the divide between modern provinces and backward princely states (Verghese 2016: 203)." In the princely states the dominant religious groups were favoured whereas there was discrimination against the religious minorities which resulted in recurring religious violence but the princely states did not witness violence along caste line. It is observed that, "Across India's provinces and princely states, different conceptions of ethnicity led to different political cultures, then different policies of ethnic stratification led to different fault lines of ethnic violence (Verghese 2016: 204)."

This central argument of the book which gives a new interpretation of British Indian history is based on extensive qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative research is based on archival material and interviews where both British and princely sources are taken into account. In view of India's enormous diversity, case studies which help in controlled historical comparisons were selected from northern, southern and eastern India. Controlled historical comparisons had been defined as "the study of two or more instances of a well-specified phenomenon that resembled each other in every respect but one (Verghese 2016: 11)." The author picked up Jaipur and Ajmer districts of Rajasthan for his first controlled historical comparison. According to the author, "These two cases are remarkably similar except that during the colonial period Jaipur was a princely state and Ajmer was a British Province…. in Jaipur on the one hand Hindu kings implemented policies that were discriminatory toward the Muslim minority (Verghese 2016: 11)."

In the second controlled historical comparison the author studies the South Indian state of Kerala where the northern Malabar region of Kerala is compared with the Southern Travancore region. The Malabar region of Kerala was under the direct control of the British whereas Travancore was a princely state. Though Kerala had

remained mostly a peaceful state and in the post-independence period had emerged as a developmental success story there had been ethnic tensions and occasional violence which were different in the Malabar and in the Travancore region. In Malabar, which was ruled directly by the British, there had been the growth of caste politics and conflict whereas in the princely state of Travancore, there had been a legacy of communal violence involving Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

The author tries to establish through archival sources that the British administration emphasized the centrality of caste and tribal identities. In Ajmer in the early 19th century the British administrators codified the untouchables and due to the impact of the census operations the caste identities got prominence over religion in Ajmer. Similarly in Malabar, the British agrarian policies promoted political mobilization of the local caste and the adivasis in the region. In both of these directly administered British provinces the challenge of religion was minimized and the minority Muslim population got protection due to the policy of religious neutrality practiced by the British. According to the author Muslims were recruited in substantial numbers in the administrative apparatus and the policy of religious neutrality "led to the religious divide slowly receding over time" (Verghese 2016: 205). Though the Muslims in Malabar in the early part of the 20th century were involved in uprisings against the British "the vast majority of the rebels were actually recent low caste converts and the history of this region since the advent of colonialism included repeat episodes of inter caste tensions and violence (Verghese 2016: 205)."

Comparatively the trajectory of ethnic and religious divide had been different in the princely states of Jaipur and Travancore where the centrality of religion was always emphasized by the respective rulers. In both these princely states the primacy of religion led to favourable dispensation for the Hindu majority population against the rights of the minorities- Muslims in Jaipur and Christians in Travancore. Jaipur had been continuously reported in the newspapers to be inflicted by recurring communal violence since the early 20th century. In both these princely states the administration introduced protective policies for the lower castes and the adivasis. The Meena tribe was acknowledged to be the rulers of Jaipur in the medieval period and consequently the ceremonial position in the kingdom and a certain allotment of government jobs was introduced by the Jaipur state. Similarly "the Raja's of Travancore also pushed aggressively for low caste uplift after the mid 19th century, opening the doors of Hindu temples to untouchables before any other region of India (Verghese 2016: 205)."

The author through his comparative studies of the four cases outlines the difference in terms of ethnic policies of the British administration which emphasized the centrality of caste and simultaneously protected religious minorities. On the contrary the princely rulers in their administrative policy of ethnic stratification emphasized the centrality of religion, discriminating against the religious minorities whereas the lower caste and the adivasis were protected. Consequently in these areas, 'religious

violence increased but caste and tribal violence was minimized.' According to the author, "These four cases drawn from such different geographical regions of India-regions with sharply contrasting cultural and historical attributes highlight that bifurcated colonial rule created clear fault lines of ethnic conflict." The author to validate his argument also studies the princely state of Bastar presently located in the state of Chattisgharh which does not fit to this theory proposed in the book. Through archival evidence the author shows that Bastar was nominally a princely state which witnessed continuous colonial interference and this according to the author constitutes the original cause of tribal violence in the kingdom. Through archival research the author shows that the tribal revolt which started in Bastar in the 19th century was the consequence of continuous British interference in the administration of the princely state. He states that, "Bastar is the exception that proves the rule; where the British were in power, tribal rebellion soon followed (Verghese 2016: 206)." In the post-independence period these colonial patterns of ethnic violence which were the result of the different salience given to different ethnic arrangements continued in the post-independent period. In Ajmer and Malabar 'respondents detailed that conflicts still revolves around caste and tribal identities'. In Jaipur and Travancore, however, respondents highlighted the central role of religion in fomenting political violence (Verghese2016: 206). The author argues that after the Babri Majsid demolition in 1992 riots broke out in Jaipur and Travancore but similar communal violence didn't occur in Ajmer or Malabar. The colonial patterns of violence continued in the post-independence period as they became embedded in both formal and informal institutions of the post-Colonial state. The political parties, political symbols and the mode of mobilizations mostly continued the religious divide in Jaipur and Travancore. Moreover, the same patterns of violence also continued in the post-independent period as the governments of independent India failed to implement effective reforms.

The author traces the origin of conflict to the British administrative policies to unravel the post colonial communal problems in India but does not delve into the functioning of the communal organizations and the political parties, the electoral dimension and the role of the state agencies in the making of communal riots.

(vi)

In his book " Communalism , Caste and Hindu Nationalism : The Violence in Gujrat" Ornit Shani contextualizes the development of communal politics in Gujarat since 1970s in the broad framework of caste politics in Gujarat which led to anti-reservation movements by the upper caste but in due course of time the riots transformed into communal riots in between Hindus and Muslims. In the background of emerging caste politics in Gujarat since 1970s Shani explains the problems arising out of the decline of the vibrant textile mills of Gujarat. The closer of the mills was expected to make a common platform for the huge numbers of workers for emergence of class conflict. But instead of conflict in the class line caste and communal conflicts started

to emerge in the industrial cities of Gujarat. According to Shani the structure and mechanisms of industrial relations in the textile industries and the division of labour within the mills and the labour unions emerged as constraints for a full fledged labour struggle. Moreover the changing economic structure and the new economic policy since 1990s continuously resulted in decline in the power of the workers and unions. Some of the workers also alleged that the Textile Labour Association was working as an agent of the mill workers when the textile mills were gradually closed down by the owners. According to Shani this led to the downward mobility of the workers which had ramifications in the caste and class identities of the people across society. The deindustrialization which happened in 1980s in Gujarat led to the decline of the socio-economic status of the upper caste groups as well as the upward mobility of the backward sectors of society.

Shani shows that the reservation policies which were aimed at the scheduled castes and backward castes gradually developed conflictual relations among the different sections of the Hindus in Gujarat. Reservations in the educational and service sector worked as successful instruments for creating opportunities for the lower and the backward castes. According to Shani, " The access of lower and backward castes to higher social echelons through reservations was perceived as potentially undermining the superior status of upper castes. Reservation policies therefore generated uncertainties within the Hindu moral order and resulted in the growth of tensions within forward and backward caste Hindus (Shani 2007: 52)."

The caste disputes which emerged in Gujarat due to the policies of reservation for the backward caste gradually transformed into tensions between Hindus and Muslims which resulted in the consolidation Hindutva forces in Gujarat. According to him the policy makers, politicians, and the judiciary in their articulations regarding the reservation policies 'addressed issues of equality on the basis of caste and class considerations as if they were synonymous with religious rights of minorities.' And in this process 'they constituted a link between in caste, class and communalism to develop and deepened communal rivalries.'

The politics of reservation and empowering of the minorities formed the winning strategy of the ruling Congress party which was known as the KHAM strategy till the 1980's. KHAM stood for the Khatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and the Muslims and these segments constituted 55% of this population. The caste groups in this electoral alliance were 'either entitled to or being considered for reservation'. According to Shani the different segments of KHAM block 'were identified on the basis of class by employing categories of class and religion'. This successful electoral strategy which combined the backward and the minorities together had the potential to challenge the existing the social and political dominant order and hegemony of the upper castes. Especially the Patels perceived to be excluded from the centres of the emerging new power arrangement which generated concerns and anxieties across the upper castes who were not included within the reservation policies. Just after the

election of 1980 when Congress swept the elections in Gujrat through their wining electoral strategy, the frustration of the upper caste due to the politics of reservations and gradual consolidation of political mileage by the lower and backward castes led to eruption of anti-reservation riots in which the lower caste and the dalits were primarily targeted.

This also resulted in skepticism about the politics of secularism as it was gradually being perceived that the politics of redistribution was connected with the benefit of the lower and backward castes and the minorities. According to Shani this historical conjunction between caste conflict and communalism gradually developed in Ahmedabad leading to the consolidation of right wing Hindu politics. Anti-reservation riots again recurred in Ahmedabad in 1985 after the electoral success of Congress again on the basis on KHAM alliance but very soon this anti-reservation riot transformed into a communal conflagration into Hindus and Muslims. This unexpected turn in events of emerging tensions between the Hindus due to reservation policies gradually sliding towards communal rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims have been explained by Shani. The riot of 1985 in Ahmedabad which started as class conflict and ended as Hindu Muslim riot also 'marked the beginning of the political shift in Gujarat from Congress rule to the rise of the BJP which further strengthen the upper caste position (Shani 2007: 132).'

Shani examines the interconnectedness of caste, class, communalism and the state taking into account the political rivalries and economic pressures within the context of changing social structures at multiple levels in Gujrat. In her study Shani critically studies the high politics where the political parties and their ideologues fight for electoral strategies to gain power. In the next level she investigates the changing patterns of social and economic dynamics where the politics of caste and religion interplay. In the third level she contextualizes the workings of individuals and groups in their everyday life in the 1980s.

During the riot of 1985 there was a strategy to win back the dalits within the politics of the Hindu right. This conscious attempt to rope in the dalits and other backward classes gradually led to the strengthening of the social base of the Hindu right in Gujarat which also signaled the erosion of KHAM politics and the transition of political power from Congress to BJP. According to Shani, "Rather than addressing the cultural clash among the Hindus, upper castes transformed it to a conflict with the Muslims. In their aspirations to restore their position, as well as the Dalits, within the Hindu order to its former state, upper caste substituted Muslims for Dalits. In the circumstances of the 1980s the fault lines in society were thus redefined along the lines of religion (Shani 2007: 195).' The Mandal Commission report which envisaged reservation for the backward caste mostly among the Hindus and some Muslim groups as well became the bone of contention as the Central Government led by V.P. Sing accepted the report for implementation in 1989. The process of transformation of conflict from caste to religion became more apparent as the upper caste apprehended

of their more restricted entry within the government services after 1989. In the 1990s most of the non-BJP parties at least politically articulated their demands to extend the policy of reservation the Muslims which helped the BJP to overtly accuse these parties of vote bank politics by minority appeasement. According to Shani the riot of Gujarat in 2002 exposed the already strongly entrenched Hindutva politics which started from the early 1980s.

According to Shani the communal riot in Gujarat in 1969 did not lead to the growth and consolidation of Hindu right forces in Gujarat but the riot of 1985 which started as an anti-reservation movement ended as an Hindu Muslim riot promoting the consolidation of Hindu Right in Gujarat and also the reemergence of dominance of the upper caste in the political structure.

Conclusion

Rather than being confined to the existing pool of knowledge on communal conflict, the above mentioned scholars have opened up new understanding regarding the endemic problem faced by India. Their thrust on localized specifications and characteristics, rather than on general explanations based on macro understanding, have enriched our perspectives on riots which happen due to interplay of multiple factors working simultaneously, the textures of which can be unraveled empirically by meticulous fieldwork and ethnography at the ground level only.

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