JUSTICE BEFORE RECONCILIATION

Negotiating a ‘New Normal’ in Post-riot Mumbai and Ahmedabad

Dipankar Gupta
Justice before Reconciliation
Social science research and popular discourse on 'religion and public life' have gradually moved away from binaries such as communal–secular, tradition–modern, or community–individual. It is now widely recognised that religion and cultural traditions do not simply disappear from public life with economic development. In countries like India, this shift has also been reinforced by the emerging social and political trends where issues relating to citizenship are raised through identity movements of historically deprived categories such as the Dalits, Adivasis, and religious minorities such as the Muslims, for inclusive and just development.

This 'positive' view of religion parallels changing attitudes in other parts of the world as well where there is growing interest on religious communities and faith-based organisations and their potential role in enhancing development and service delivery. While this has led to a renewed interest in the study of religion, rigorous social science research on 'religion and citizenship' is still; at a nascent stage.

This series attempts to fill the gap by bringing together scholarly writing on this important and rapidly expanding area of research in the social sciences.

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Editors: Gurpreet Mahajan & Surinder S. Jodhka
978-0-415-58566-8

Research for this book was funded by DFID, University of Birmingham (Religions and Development Research Programme) who do not necessarily share the views presented here.
Justice before Reconciliation

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DIPANKAR GUPTA
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<tr>
<td>ANHAD</td>
<td>Act Now for Harmony and Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSRC</td>
<td>Gujarat Sarvajanik Relief Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>International Institute for Development and Electoral Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Islamic Relief Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>JI</td>
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<td>JU</td>
<td>Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind</td>
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<td>RSS</td>
<td>Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEWA</td>
<td>Self Employed Women’s Association</td>
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<td>TJ</td>
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Acknowledgements

In 2007, Surinder Singh Jodhka and Gurharpal Singh, old friends, convinced me to work on how victims of ethnic violence cope with their tragedies over the long term. I had written about several ‘riots’ in the past but had never systematically enquired into the long-term effects of such violent episodes. I am therefore grateful to them for giving me the opportunity to conduct this research, which I found both enriching and humbling. I am painfully aware that much of our academic aspirations are built on tragedies of those less fortunate than us. Hopefully, this effort will redeem itself by joining with other more profound interventions on this subject to raise our collective sense of guilt when large sections of our fellow citizens are denied their basic rights and dignities.

Carole Rakodi has been a source of constant encouragement and advice through this period. She was meticulous in her scrutiny of earlier drafts and offered helpful suggestions and bibliographical advice in the hope that the eventual product would live up to her standards. I have clearly not fulfilled her expectations, but without her support this work would have been much poorer. Both Surinder Singh Jodhka and Gurharpal Singh kept up their pressure to make sure I delivered on time and met all their stated objectives. In addition, Surinder Jodhka took special care to make my task easier by attending to many administrative details.

This research would have been impossible to conduct but for the assistance of Kaustubh Deka, Dakxin Bajrange, Rashidaben and Anil Mhatre. They helped conduct interviews, find out addresses and collate a lot of the information. I am, however, most grateful to them for attending to many of my requests at very short notice. They have certainly done much more than I had expected them to do. In particular, I depended heavily on Kaustubh Deka’s memory for details, names and addresses, and the information base that Dakxin Bajrange, Rashidaben and Anil Mhatre could offer because of their activist commitments.

Amongst the many soul mates we met during our research, I must mention with gratitude Hanif Lakdawala, Gagan Sethi, Mukul Sinha, Indubhai Jani, Jayant Diwan, Julius Ribeiro and Satish Sahani. They helped in orienting and positioning this study by generously sharing with me their prodigious knowledge on the subject.
Ahmedabad

Source: Prepared by the author.

Note: Map not to scale.
Mumbai

Source: Prepared by the author.

Note: Map not to scale.
The immediate aftermath of an ethnic carnage is ruin and devastation; both moral and physical. It demands urgent attention for people who have died, some even dying, homes destroyed, jobs lost, children scared and out of school, and women threatened in every possible way. The victims need first security, second shelter, then jobs. Schools and psychological rehabilitation come later, the last probably never quite accomplished.

Naturally, most studies of inter-faith violence, both in India and elsewhere, focus on those aspects that are required urgently. The state, voluntary organisations, activists and intellectuals are justifiably involved with these pressing issues, but as peace returns, their attention gradually moves away. It is then assumed that 'normalcy' has been restored and the vigil can be called off, or that the situation is unchanged and waiting to explode again. The state is usually the first agency that proclaims that the status quo has been achieved; the activists and voluntary organisations are not convinced that easily. Yet, in most cases the victims do not face the same kind of violence again, sometimes never in their lifetime. Why don't they not then forget and bury the past? Or do they?

To pay heed to these issues necessarily demands an examination of what happens to those who faced sectarian violence well after the worst was over and the incident almost forgotten in the popular mind. How do they cope once the supports go away, as they must? What still lingers as unfinished? (see also Chandhoke et al. 2007; Das and Kleinman 2001; Mander 2009; Robinson 2005).

This book attempts such a task by looking at the long-term effects of ethnic violence in two settings: Mumbai post-1993 and the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, and Ahmedabad, post-Godhra in 2002. Of the two, more attention is paid to Ahmedabad because the Muslims in this city faced far greater
one-sided destruction than they did in Mumbai, and also because
the Gujarat government has been most unhelpful in providing
relief to the affected Muslim population. In Mumbai, the situation
was not as horrendous, though it was bloody enough. As we shall
try and show later, the context within which ethnic bloodshed takes
place has a lot to do with how victims cope with their tragedies
over the long term. In other words, to paraphrase Tolstoy rather
liberally, each tragedy is unique in itself. Simply stated, the toll
in terms of life and property in Gujarat 2002 was probably the
worst of its kind in post-Independence India. The official death toll
itself is 1,180, while human rights activists claim it to be closer
to 2,000. The number of people displaced on account of fear and
damaged property was close to 1,50,000 (Malekar 2010).

The Powder Keg of Normalcy

The popular view that ethnic violence periodically erupts as if
by the forces of nature is patently false; it, however, continues to
have many votaries. That people live in impermanent, negotiated
arrangements is true, but that does not mean that differences spill
out into the streets on their own accord without a limpid political
motive among a set of actors. Ethnic violence in India feeds on the
vast symbolic reserve of the Partition and the 60-year-long border
conflagrations with Pakistan. Ernest Renan (1990) had said very
presciently that all nation-states are built on a grief. India's grief
has for long been Pakistan, and this has been played to full
advantage by generations of ethnicists who exploit nation-state
sentiments to minoritise a given population within the country.
Thus, for a successful ethnic operation, innocent insiders must
be convincingly cast against seditious 'outsiders' who are out to
undermine the sovereignty of the nation-state. These outsiders
are like fifth columnists, who look like the rest, even pretend
loyalty to the country, but have a deep, dark and devious motive
that must be exposed. There is no reason, therefore, to yield
any quarter to them in terms of legal redress and constitutional
propriety because these 'outsiders' do not deserve such privileges.
In India, from the time of the Partition in 1947, Hindu ethnicists
have portrayed the Muslims who stayed back in India as agents of
Pakistan and, therefore, suspect from the start.

There are a number of such Hindu organisations, but the one
with the widest base and the most cogent ideological apparatus
is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The RSS began in pre-Partition in India but for a long time it attracted only the urban propertied and commercial classes. In recent years it has grown in strength and is now active in parts of rural and tribal India as well. The way violence erupted in Gujarat villages in 2002 would have been inexplicable but for the reach of the RSS in the countryside and its new-found ideological appeal amongst a section of the traditionally deprived. Since Independence the number of such Hindu sectarian organisations has grown, the most prominent among them being the Shiv Sena, the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Though they have their internal differences, they are widely believed to belong to one ‘saffron family’ or the Sangh Parivar. The list of family members is in fact longer, but what they all have in common is their hatred towards Pakistan, and by extension, of Muslims who have made India their home (see for example Golwalkar 1966: 123–24).

Such political tendencies towards ethnicity is true the world over. One can find it in advanced democracies as well. However, what needs to be underlined is that these sectarian- and ascription-based identities do not just erupt spewing lava on calm arcadian slopes. Nevertheless, the origins of such sentiments can only be plotted after the fact. Till then the assumption that the normal can be interrupted is hard to imagine, but once that happens it is difficult to believe how it lingered for so long. There could be dangers lurking down the road but the cows will come home, bringing under one roof, trust and goodwill. In this world boundaries are amicably patrolled, manners calibrated and expectations more or less taken for granted. Jurgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu are the foremost among contemporary thinkers who have put forward this position with great success.

Convincing though this argument might seem, a study of the long-term effects of ethnic violence raises issues that cannot be easily placed within its fold. The enormity of a religious clash, such as the one in Gujarat or Mumbai (let us also take the Sikh killings of 1984), leaves little doubt that social relations do not return to an untheorised lifeworld of the status quo ante, or establish a tension-free new one either. There is always a remainder of doubt and misrecognition in all interactions, howsoever repetitive they might be. But these usually feed harmless prejudices without a future. This is why communities, like the Hindus and Muslims, can
live side by side for long periods of time, without actually resorting
to violence. When political craft successfully welds these social
distances, we have an ethnic carnage of the kind that happened in
Gujarat in 2002.

Talcott Parsons had once said that the most intriguing aspect of
society is its ability to sit tight on a powder keg without obvious
signs of nervousness. This awareness of internalised tension is
missing in the works of Habermas's 'lifeworld' (1987) or in
Bourdieu's 'habitus' (1977). In both these cases, it appears as if
the 'normal' is prenegotiated, determined and unproblematically
lived through. But social relations are never like that; one state
of normalcy succeeds another with greater or gentler rapidity, but
in all cases there are underlying tensions.

It is only when the break with the once 'normal' happens
suddenly that attention turns to these built-in conflict predisposing
factors. When, in more fortunate circumstances, the normal shifts
ground in a more stately fashion, this transition is remarked upon
much later, sometimes after generations, by historians of the
*longue duree*. What, however, needs to be acknowledged is that
the 'untheorized' probably seems that way because any attempt
to make matters explicit might let the dogs out. This is why everyday
actions tiptoe around these 'untheorized' (in the Habermasian sense)
regions such as those that involve relations between communities,
genders, generations and class. But contrary to Habermas's
lifeworld, the untheorised includes potentially disruptive elements
which remain quiet for want of political attention.

The 'working normal' of everyday life, unlike Habermas's
'lifeworld' (1987), is replete with discontinuities and discord.
Yet, as these have been so sequestered in routine practice, social
relations can proceed without frequent interruptions of contrary
interpretations of meaning. Roberto Toscano refers to this aspect
by recalling Xavier Bougarel's work on ethnicity and traditions in
Bosnia. The 'idyllic image of inter-ethnic co-existence' needs to be
replaced by 'the awareness of the recurrent conflictuality that is
historically inherent in the cohabitation of different groups on the
same territory' (1998: 68). In other words, the 'good neighbour
policy' between groups works only after the limits of transgression
are mutually recognised so that 'familiarity and appeasement' can
proceed side by side (ibid.).

It is thus necessary to understand the internalisation of strained
conditions under which communities learn to live next to each
other in a ‘new normal’. As in the past, this ‘new normal’ too is mindful of distances, differences and tensions between groups, but bears the signs of fresh historical circumstances. Social relations that have been recently disrupted by political philippics may exhibit an overt sense of peace, but everybody is careful about keeping it that way. As Jackie Assayag (2004: 41) observes, the much talked of ‘coexistence’ between Hindus and Muslims is really an outcome of ‘antagonistic tolerance’ rather than warm feelings of brotherhood. Violence is under the surface, and socialisation is all about how to live with this presence of violence. Obviously, there is violence of the perpetrator and that which the victim suffers, and the two are not the same and they are both negotiating with violence from different vantage points. In a clinical sense, they are both implicated in violence though it is only one side that suffers the most. At the end of the day, a new normal emerges, and with it a new negotiated boundary between communities that may differ in significant ways from the earlier one that has already been disrupted.

The history of human relations is thus the movement from one tense, negotiated contract to another, from one contested normal to the next. This seems to be the fate of all hitherto existing societies. This aphorism holds true at every level, from the domestic to the community and the state. The periods in between are taken to be normal as the old negotiated boundaries are being more or less carefully, but not unselfconsciously, observed. When this normal breaks in a sudden, cataclysmic fashion then it is always because a group of social actors see a clear interest in doing so. This interest could spring from reasons of class, status or even primordial honour, as in religion, clan or caste. It is not as if these are unrelated sentiments, for while one of them may be the principal factor the others might well play supporting roles.

India has seen two kinds of sectarian violence: one based on caste and language, and the other on religious hatred. Sectarians of the first kind leverage mass bigotry by using the arguments of inequalitarian distribution and even moral economy. Ethnicists, such as those who were active in Mumbai in 1993 or Gujarat in 2002, on the other hand, find it politically rewarding to fuse religion with the nation-state. The nation-state is susceptible to such pressures as it builds on traditions, homogeneities, soil and blood. It is because ethnic activists see an immediate advantage in political terms that they choose to upset the existing normal
and hope for a new ‘normalcy’ under a fresh set of terms, conditions and negotiating spaces, which is greatly to their advantage (see Freitag 1996).

A clear snap with the past, or attempts to make that break, therefore must depend upon political mobilisation. Otherwise, the slow grinding of structures does its job without taxing the generosity of the existing normal beyond the breaking point. Like class wars, ethnic wars too don’t just happen. They are made to happen when one side, at least, finds it politically rewarding to turn in the knife (see Brass 1997). Otherwise, communities live next to each other in a negotiated and carefully observed peace where neither party takes too much liberty with the other, knowing full well that violence is but a skin scratch away. Sikh survivors in Delhi after the 1984 killings retrospectively aligned their sentiments to come to the conclusion that the violence against them was not fortuitous. Instead, they argued, it ‘was part of the larger vengeance that had been plotted against them to check their growing social, political and economic pre-eminence’ (Srinivasan 1990: 314). Right or wrong, that is how many victims tried to make sense of what happened to them.

Democracy, which at one level is a great arbiter of differences and a sentinel of liberal values, can also lend its format to foster long-standing popular prejudices, the many perennial peeves of everyday life. Insisting on legal equality between communities, such as between Hindus and Muslims, gives room to both sides to constantly bicker over rights and claims (see Tambiah 1997: 335). That this can be carried out under normal conditions with a reasonable degree of success is because both the dyadic units are symmetrically positioned by law as equal partners in tension. But when this law itself is undermined, as it has been when there are clear political interests in doing so (for example, Punjab 1984 and Gujarat 2002), then the language of politics gets disarticulated. For example, the majority community might feel that the law protects anti-nationals, and the minority might complain that the law does not restrain ethnic violence effectively. In either case, law is the first casualty. Activists on either side become incomprehensible to each other and this licenses violence, for nothing more can be said (see for example Lacan 1977). Democracy is that delicately positioned!
Inter-faith Relations: Alternative Scenarios

Multiple religious identities are perfectly capable of coexisting with one another as long as the power asymmetries between adherents of different faiths are so vast that there is no room for contest. After all, only equals fight; unequals may resent, but can go no further. In a Hindu fiefdom, no Muslim would dare raise the issue of cow slaughter; likewise, in a Muslim kingdom the spire of the Hindu temple cannot be taller than that of the mosque (Pandey 1990). In such cases, religious boundaries are meant specifically to cordon off people of different faiths so that they can perform their rituals without interference (see Barth 1969). In British India, for example, those who worked in colonial establishments came home to ‘purity’ after the day’s work in ‘ritually neutralized’ office spaces (Singer 1972).

Though there have been years of medieval peace, tradition has also known periods of great religious violence and intolerance. But once the victor and the vanquished were clearly demarcated, the same communities could live together in apparent harmony for centuries. In premodern times, once the victor had decisively conquered the vanquished, there was no room for community debates. The norms of the rulers held, and if any concession was made to the vanquished it was only after superior power was obsequiously acknowledged.

Medieval India is saturated with such instances. When Akbar captured Chittor in 1557–58, he cold-bloodedly killed 30,000 Hindu soldiers on the day the fort fell (Kolff 1990: 10). After that there was no Hindu–Muslim conflict for centuries in Rajasthan, and indeed in much of the Mughal Empire. After having demonstrated his power, Akbar then had Hindu texts translated into Persian and inaugurated the Din-i-Ilahi, primarily a combination of Hindu and Islamic theology. Likewise, the Turks took about a hundred years to capture Bengal, but after that there was peace among communities (Banerjee 1993: 25). This can also be seen in the relationship between Genghiz Khan and the Confucians/Buddhists of China, between Muslims and Christians in Cordoba and, indeed, between Hindus and Muslims in large parts of India. In such historical moments it is not surprising how adroitly the vanquished were able to adjust their secular interests to that of the ruling power, and how magnanimously the rulers were often
able to guarantee their subjects the freedom to religious observances provided there was no threat to their rule from below. In the medieval world, to be able to survive without religious persecution was a matter of privilege, but not of right (see Bayly 1985; Kolff 1990; Pandey 1990).

Modern day democracy and universal franchise obviously made a big difference to all of this. To be able to practice one’s tradition has now become a matter of right as all faiths and communities have been granted equal legal status. In the past, tolerance may have been shown to other religions, but this was a species of noblesse oblige. The religion of the ruling power was always the best and had the greatest temporal authority. Paradoxically, it is when religious equality is established in law that religious identities tend to get sharper, more frequently employed, and cause tensions almost on a quotidian basis (Oberoi 1994; Pandey 1990). Multicultural politics in many democratic states are examples of this phenomenon. There are lingering disputes regarding what kinds of clothes are appropriate for school-going children, or which days should be declared as mandatory public holidays, or which holy book should be used for taking oaths for judicial purposes. But all of these are less egregious manifestations of religious politics and can be resolved constitutionally if handled with sensitivity. Instances of such disputes are frequent in America and Europe and are too well known to be repeated here.

Despite the fact that all world religions are present in India, a large number of potentially volatile religious issues and differences have never been raised to the level of political disputes. School and army uniforms, public holidays, civil code, etc., bear the imprint of legality and constitutional correctness (see Shiva Rao 1966). This cannot take our attention away from the fact that India has all too often been seized by political campaigns that are based on religious hatred. It is this kind of sectarian political passion that this work concerns itself with.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s advocacy of the two-nation theory gives the impression that Hindus and Muslims are culturally unsuited to live together; it is as if cow-worshippers cannot get along with cow-eaters (Robinson 1979). Their cultures were thus programmed on what W. H. Auden once called, ‘incompatible diets’, and were hence incapable of reconciliation. It is true that cow-eaters and cow-worshippers have an in-built tension between them, but that need not grow into ethnic killings. Lives can
continue routinely as long as there are no obvious transgressions of the agreed-upon boundaries. As mentioned earlier, these zones are consciously in place and their relevance is observed in cautious habit. Christians too are beefeaters, but there is no political advantage in pitting the Hindus against them on this account. There is, however, power and pelf waiting if Muslims can be targeted successfully at the right time, or if it can be credibly stated that a certain community is siding with Pakistan or, as was the case with the killing of Sikhs in 1984, that it wanted another Partition along the lines of 1947.

Contemporaneous Religious Majoritarianism:
Marginalising Tradition

Ethnic politics when sponsored by the majority community may be called ‘majoritarianism’. Majoritarianism refers to that kind of political activism in which the majority community in a nation-state attacks a minority community in the name of protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. In India, majoritarianism is expressed primarily in religious terms for the Hindus enjoy a clear numerical preponderance as they constitute 81 per cent of the population. Muslims account for about 13 per cent, and the rest is made up of Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, etc. Majoritarianism does not work on linguistic lines on a national scale because there are as many as 18 major languages that are constitutionally recognised in this country. However, antimigrant linguistic majoritarianism can feature within states as it did with the Shiv Sena in Mumbai. These animosities remain localised and do not spread across the country. In 1961, the Indian Census recognised as many as 1,652 spoken languages nationwide, making any attempt towards linguistic majoritarianism difficult to cobble. Nor can caste mobilise majoritarian sentiments without uneasy coalitions as there are more than 3,000 castes, and nobody can tell the exact number. Thus, majoritarianism in India is best expressed along religious lines.

It is not as if the distinctions that religious majoritarianism play upon must necessarily be sanctioned by a hoary and ancient past. Once an issue emerges, then of course a retrospective history of antagonism is not difficult to manufacture. Even though such phenomena happen much too frequently, they have little to do with religious doctrines in their entirety. In other words, religious
activists do not necessarily draw from the scriptural aspects of their faith, but depend heavily on certain ostensible practices that clearly separate faiths at the most obvious level. Once this is done, then the observances of other communities become ideological points for political mobilisation. Hindu majoritarians, for example, would identify certain practices as anti-Hindu first, and then by extension, anti-national. The issue of cow worship, or militant jehad, receives very little space, if at all, in Hindu and Islamic sacerdotal texts respectively. Yet they can become the sole motivating factor for many ethnicists. In terms of everyday expressions of religious identity, the dependence on politico-religious virtuosos is a necessary feature. It is they who propagate the distance between Hindus and Muslims to their political advantage. For Hindu majoritarians, what is best in India is on account of Hinduism, and, as a corollary, whatever evil visits this country is on account of Pakistan. Without the involvement of these virtuosos, it would be difficult to work up the required stridency for mass activism. At this point, it is worth recalling what Lord Acton (1985: 38) had to say on the subject:

Fanaticism displays itself in the masses, but the masses were rarely fanaticised, and the crimes ascribed to it were commonly due to the calculations of dispassionate politicians. When the king of France undertook to kill all the Protestants... (i)t was nowhere the spontaneous act of the population....

This implies that when majoritarianism erupts in the form of a ‘riot’, this does not happen in of the heat of the moment. This is not only valid for contemporary times but also, as the quote indicates, when the king of France was out to exterminate Protestants from his domain. Before a riot takes place, rioters must be confident that the power equation between them and their intended victims remains asymmetrically in their favour from start to finish. Rioters are not ready to risk their personal selves for they seek gratification only in ‘self-indulgent violence’. Most rioters are ready to kill for a cause but not to die for one. Thus, both Brass (1991, 1997) and Horowitz (2002) believe that without administrative support, ethnic rioters rarely take to the streets. Rioters, therefore, use tradition very superficially. What really prompts them to activism is not so much the defence of tradition as an assurance that they can expect selfindulgent violence to be gratified. Loot is one reward, but, in addition, the attraction
of asserting masculinity in a risk-free situation is also very tempting. This aspect of ethnic mobilisation should not be lost sight of. It was clearly evident in the Gujarat carnage, in the Shiv Sena's excesses and in the attacks against Sikhs following Indira Gandhi's assassination.

Majoritarian movements have often been misunderstood in the belief that tradition has complete sway over the minds of most people, particularly in less advanced societies (see Dirks 2001 for an extensive critique). The closer one looks at these mass mobilisations and acts of violence, the clearer it becomes that tradition has very little to do with them. Neither Mumbai's Shiv Sena nor Sikh extremism in Punjab drew on tradition in any significant sense. There is no trace of traditional rivalry between Maharashtrians and South Indians, neither in Mumbai nor elsewhere in India. Yet the Shiv Sena used this cleavage effectively in Mumbai in the 1960s and 1970s to assert Maharashtrian culture over the rest. Likewise, the Sikhs were considered for the past three centuries to be the sword-arm of Hinduism. Suddenly, in a few short years, they were transformed into killers of Hindus and wreckers of the Indian nation-state. Hindu–Muslim antagonisms seem to have a historic pedigree, but here again the situation is highly variable. In Kashmir, for example, the Hindus and Muslims were opposed to each other not as religious communities, but rather on class lines. When the Kashmir valley was under princely rule, big landlords and officials of the court were usually Hindus. In fact, the Muslims of Kashmir, till recently, were extremely suspicious of Sunni orthodoxy, such as found across the border in Pakistan. That all this has changed significantly in Kashmir has more to do with the politics of territorial aggrandisement on the part of both India and Pakistan than with religion (see Akbar 1985).

If ethnicists were to be genuinely influenced by their traditional texts and sacred lore, they would find greater areas of agreement between themselves and their hated other, than with elements of hostility and discord. Contrary to Barth (1969), I believe that most religions have identical value standards. To believe that a wide discrepancy in these standards causes alienation and distance between communities (ibid.: 19) is clearly misplaced. When ascriptive political mobilisations get off the ground, they give the superficial impression of being charged by tradition; but very often these movements are fired by prejudices of recent vintage which popular memory has selectively highlighted and ‘created something new’ (Juergensmeyer 1994: 201). In fact, at the most
climactic phase of mobilisation, the demonising of the other takes place on a very parsimonious principle. It is not the wealth of tradition that is recalled, but a sharp and angular diacritic seems to make all the difference. It is, therefore, not surprising that leaders of these movements are usually not recognised religious virtuosos. They are instead professional politicians who use religious orthodoxy for political gains.

Bal Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena, makes no bones about the fact that Hindu tradition must answer the Muslim challenge. He stridently calls for retaliation as a way of reasserting Hindu pride (Gupta 1982: 138–39). He does not think it necessary for Shiv Sainiks to be familiar with sacerdotal texts. Indeed, this is the case with RSS members too. Though many RSS activists take a degree of pride in knowing smatterings of Sanskrit, they are really very poorly versed in Hindu tradition and philosophy. In pre-Partition Punjab, Arya Samaj (another neo-Hindu organisation) activists often shied away from public debates with the more orthodox Sanatani Hindus, for the latter insisted that these verbal duels be conducted in Sanskrit. The fact that the RSS uniform is a white shirt and a pair of khaki shorts with canvas running-shoes reveals their distance from traditional Hinduism. If anything, their outfit is a caricatured imitation of what the Baden-Powell inspired western boy scouts wear.

In the case of Sikh secessionism in the 1980s, its ideological leader, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, never managed to get elected as the head of the Sikh Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC) (the legally recognised organising authority of Sikh religious shrines, and with it of Sikh orthodoxy). In spite of the fact that the Congress Party strongly supported his candidature in the late 1970s, he just did not make the grade. When I met the ‘moderate’ Sikh leader Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal in early 1985, he very categorically asserted that till Operation Blue Star in 1984, when the army entered the Golden Temple to flush out the militants) killed Bhindranwale and made him a martyr, the man’s claim to religious leadership was very questionable.

The Challenges of Liberal Democracy: Going Beyond the Nation-State

Democratic politics requires the careful nurturing of the principle of fraternity that does not spring to life easily. It is constantly
undermined by the principle of majoritarianism which speaks in the
name of the 'people' and not for the cause of 'citizens'. Fraternity
has to toil hard against the universal anthropological failing to
spontaneously differentiate between communities and cultures. This
is what allows majoritarianism to strike out in the name of
numbers ostensibly to protect the nation-state's sovereignty. In
such renditions of democracy, it is the 'people', bound by culture
and tradition, who must be vigilant against minorities as they
are their 'natural' enemies. The notions of fraternity, and with
that, of citizenship, are given a wide berth. Unfortunately, the
anthropological failing alluded to survives even after a liberal
constitution is established by law. Democracies, therefore, have to
be perpetually on their guard. Practicing democracy is not easy,
and has never been. It is the farthest from being a 'natural' social
arrangement, yet its gains are enormous. This is why nurturing
and extending democracy constitutes one of the most important
challenges of our time.

In majoritarian attacks on minorities, the nation-state, along
with its territory and sovereignty, becomes a critical variable.
These majoritarian activists claim that no legality or niceties of
democracy should prevent them from setting right the targeted
minorities who are not authentically of the soil and are therefore
enemies of the nation-state. The minorities are clearly incapable
of being true citizens. They are either already traitors, or traitors
in the making.

Let me exemplify this with the Indian case. Independence
from British colonialism in 1947 became a bloody affair because
of the Partition and the emergence of Pakistan. The trauma of
leaving what was always home and becoming a refugee, over and
above the frenzy of killings that took place alongside, aided Hindu
nationalists in post-Independence India. Hindu organisations like
the RSS and the Jana Sangh (post-1980 the Bharatiya Janata Party
[BJP]) found it convenient to portray the Muslims who stayed
behind in India as agents of Pakistan. To this day, the memory
of the Partition is invoked in the many riots that have targeted
Muslims in India. In order to comprehend the overall appeal of
Hindu majoritarianism, it is necessary to factor in Pakistan and the
significance of territory in any imagination of the nation-state.

The majoritarian alternative would advocate a return to the
original condition of the nation-state and keep reviving fears
and prejudices of the past that are part of a country's collective memory. Ancient enemies will be recalled and memories of grief and purported injustices kept alive. In contemporary nation-states this is best done by portraying the religious other as those who owe loyalty to enemies in other lands. Their supposed extraterritorial loyalties justify the suspension of democratic and legal rights to them as they are not full members of the nation-state anyway. As we said earlier, this would be an example of an ethnic conflict where the nation-state is thematised by a majority population acting in the name of the 'people' — the authentic Indians. It should be borne in mind that Hindu chauvinists consider Muslims and Christians as less Indian because their religions originated outside Indian soil. But one should not push this distinction too hard, for when Hindu ethnicists attacked Sikhs in 1984, such a distinction could not be upheld. In such cases, not all religious minorities are threatened but only those against whom, at a particular juncture, a case can be made that they have extraterritorial loyalties. It is in the interest of these ethnicists to minoritise sections within the nation-state by pillorying them as traitors. The task of building a nation-state project on the ideals of citizenship is often delayed because ethnicists gain the upper hand by playing on memory and anxiety.

For majoritarians it is the nation-state and memories that are linked to the nation-state that constitute 'first-order recall'. Everything else must serve this cause or be silent. It is therefore necessary to appreciate how ethnic movements thematise the blood, soil and history-powered versions of the nation-state and, to that extent, subvert the cause of citizenship that is intersubjective in character. India provides many examples of this, Gujarat 2002 being the latest; one might also cite the violence in Mumbai in 1993 and the anti-Sikh carnages nationwide in 1984. Religious conflict that arraigns the antagonists as majority and minority in a democratic society necessarily impoverishes the notion of citizenship and valorises that of the 'people'.

Those religions that symbolically flag march national unity believe that 'ethnic cleansing' is the best way of eradicating the impurities that have entered the body politic of the nation-state. Most, if not all, nation-states are prone to this kind of politics, and India is certainly no exception. Majoritarians allow limited room for compromise and negotiations for, in their view, any space given to minorities literally takes away from the territorial grandeur of
the Indian nation-state. Such religiously inclined ethnic movements are, in the final analysis, an indicator of nervousness regarding the durability of the nation-state and of its territorial possessions.

The tension clearly is between citizens and people. If it is the pure nationalist route, then the gross aggregate of being a people means more than citizenship. In a liberal democracy, it is not the people but the citizens who take precedence. A nation-state is, therefore, faced with an option — to be liberal democratic or plain nationalist. Either it delves into memories of blood and soil or it moves on to a different plane and constructs a national identity based on citizenship. But such considerations of citizenship are outcomes of deliberate reflective justice and do not emerge spontaneously. Citizenship requires consideration and care and cannot be left to spontaneous tendencies within nationalist streams. For citizenship to realise itself, it is necessary to move beyond mere passion and sentiments that were all very useful in setting up the nation-state and dismantling ancien régimes. After this job is done, it is necessary now to deliberately embrace reflexive justice. That is how the transition to liberal democratic structures of governance can be effected where the citizen as an individual has inviolable rights that are culture-blind (Rawls 1971: 42–8; see also Gupta 2000: 160–85).

The tempting alternative that ethnicists easily opt for is to harp on the nation-state and the passions that brought it about, and relegate issues of citizenship from active consideration. This allows them to plot the dividing lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ with great ease when ethnic attacks are launched. History and myth, in equal measure, bolster popular imaginations of who are the true and rightful people of the nation-state, and who are the pretenders waiting to stab the country in the back. No doubt, Partition has had a dominant role to play in all of this, but there are others who argue that the Partition itself is an outcome of the colonial policy to divide and rule India.

One of the reasons why the nation-state does not figure significantly in studies of ethnicity is because of the general opinion that political unities in countries like India are highly forced and artificial. If, however, the formation of nation-states was to be examined in a comparative perspective, it would immediately become apparent that there is no privileged route to their formation — there is no ‘yellow brick road’. Each nation-state is a unique combination and has come into being in its own special way.
As Renan characteristically demonstrated, every defeat that Italy suffered contributed to the making of Italy, while every victory that Turkey accomplished spelled doom for Turkey (1990: 11). Nor is it that Italy was united by language. Therefore, instead of asking how a nation-state comes into being, it is much better to be clear on what a nation-state does once it has emerged. Thus, like the philosophers of the Indian Samkhya tradition, it is often wise to understand a phenomenon in terms of its effects and not its causes.

What every durable nation-state has succeeded in doing is to make its territory inviolable, and almost sacred. In the case of India, this sacralising sentiment was an outcome of the bloodshed that accompanied the Partition of 1947. Before India became independent, leaders of the national movement were rather unclear about what India's territorial lineaments were going to be. Many of them even argued that the right to secession should not be taken away even after India became independent. But once Partition happened, any further talk on the right to secession was taboo. Indescribable brutalities of the Partition seared the territorial holdings of India in popular consciousness like never before. From then on phrases like 'not an inch of ground' and 'not a blade of grass' will we ever cede to the enemy became quite common in nationalist discourses in India. Once again Renan is of immediate relevance. Renan (1990: 19) believed that it is grief more than joy that binds nationalist sentiments. Every nation-state would be blessed if it had a grief of its own. India's grief is Pakistan, and Pakistan's grief is India. A grief of this sort thrives on memory and pushes back the demands for secular citizenship.

Here are three instances — from Sikh extremism in Punjab to Shiv Sena in Mumbai to the 2002 carnage in Gujarat — which allow a many-sided view of what constitutes the politics of majoritarianism in India.

From Sword-Arm to Ethnic Enemies:
The Minoritisation of Sikhs

It is not as if any one religious community is a natural target for majoritarians. The manner in which the Sikhs were minoritised after Indira Gandhi's assassination demonstrates that religious identities and enemies are constantly constructed and no community can really be beyond the reach of majoritarian prejudice.
It was often argued, as mentioned earlier, that cow-worshippers and beefeaters are bound to clash in order to explain Hindu–Muslim antagonisms in India (see Robinson 1979). Further, as Islam is not an Indic religion, it could easily be portrayed in negative colours. Many anti-Christian activists in India also refer to the fact that missionaries have come from other countries, bringing a faith that was not born on Indian soil and should therefore be treated with utmost suspicion.

This line of reasoning does not hold in the case of the Sikhs. Sikhs do not eat beef, and Sikhism emerged from the heart of India. Indeed, before 1982, it was almost inconceivable that Sikhs could be seen as enemies of the nation-state and as Hindu-killers and bloodthirsty terrorists. Yet, this is how they were imaged in the minds of a large number of people throughout the country, particularly after Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984. Yet, from the time of the ninth Sikh Guru in the 16th century, for over 300 uninterrupted years, Sikhs were seen as the sword-arm of Hinduism (see Oberoi 1994). This fact was consolidated during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule in the late 18th century — the high water mark of Sikh dominance in pre-modern India — when he included a number of Hindu rituals in Sikhism (McLeod 1989: 30–40, 68). Sikh valour too has been immortalised in numerous accounts in various vernacular texts, not to mention the stirring poem on the Gurus (particularly Guru Gobind Singh) by India's most famous poet and Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore. Further, the Sikh was in many ways held up as a kind of role model. To be a Sikh was to be economically prosperous, independent and enterprising (Fox 1984: 480–4).

The sociological question then is: how did this demonisation of Sikhs take place so swiftly in the 1980s? The career graph of the Sikh-dominated Akali Dal party of Punjab was hardly uniform between 1969–1980, nor can we say that this party represented Sikhs in general. But Sikhs in Punjab nursed some common grievances with regard to water distribution with neighbouring states, as also on the question of drawing its territorial boundaries with Haryana — a state immediately contiguous to it. But their principal grievance was the fact that Punjab had to share its capital with Haryana. This was certainly an anomaly. When the unilingual Bombay Presidency was bifurcated to form Maharashtra and Gujarat, Gujarat got a separate capital and Maharashtra
got to keep Mumbai. This was justified on the grounds that Mumbai has always been a Maharashtrian-speaking area, since Maharashtra has a rightful claim over it. In which case, said the Akali leaders, Chandigarh, by the same logic, should be the capital of Punjab and that Haryana should seek its own capital elsewhere (see ‘Anandpur Sahib Resolution’, reproduced in Gupta 1997: 212–18).

Sikhs in general believe even today that their case for Chandigarh is transparently just. That this demand has been repeatedly rebuffed by the Congress Party at the Centre was cause of much resentment in Punjab. Instead of addressing this issue clearly, the Congress took a different tack. In 1980, when it returned to power at the all-India level and even in Punjab, Congress’ strategy was to divide the Sikhs and make inroads into the SGPC which runs the Sikh religious establishments all over Punjab with chapters in different parts of the country. The SGPC has enormously well-endowed coffers that naturally attract the attention of all political parties. The Congress deeply resented the uninterrupted control the Akalis had on the SGPC and decided to end this monopoly. In pursuance of this policy, they picked up a hitherto unknown, but belligerent, Sikh virtuoso from an obscure hermitage, and propped him up as their candidate. This man was Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (see Juergensmeyer 2000: 88–89; see also Jeffrey 1986).

At around the same time the Congress also started proclaiming that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was a secessionist document. This characterisation did not really cause any ripples across the country. For that to happen, it needed Bhindranwale to assume the persona of the genie out of the bottle. With the help he received from the Congress from the late 1970s (till he turned against his masters in 1983), he managed to put the established and moderate Akali Dal on the back foot. Bhindranwale demanded that Sikhs return to their pristine ways, observe the various injunctions that their holy books place on them, abjure from drinking and smoking, pray regularly and, above all, uphold Sikh dignity. His single most remarkable diacritic however was that, in a highly suggestive fashion, which was both contumely and convoluted, he made the claim for a Sikh homeland.

While doing this Bhindranwale also portrayed the Akalis as soft and ineffective Sikhs (shades of Thackeray’s characterisation of the RSS; see Gupta 1982: 134, 139). That the Akalis had not yet
been able to wrest Chandigarh for Punjab was easily the best evidence Bhindranwale had to prove the impotence of the moderate Sikh leader Sant Longowal, and of the traditional Akali leadership. This prompted a good deal of infighting among Akalis which worsened as Khalistani militants began to roam the Punjab countryside, killing people at will and at random. Forced into a corner, the Akalis failed to call Bhindranwale’s bluff and remained pinned and wriggling in an awkwardly angular position, while Bhindranwale kept growing in stature, feeding off Akali ineptitude.

Hindus in the Punjab were getting restive with the militancy that was gaining prominence in the countryside as well as in cities of this prosperous north-western state. The Congress argument that Sikhs in general, moderate and militant alike, wanted another partition was slowly beginning to gain credibility. The Congress portrayal of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution as a secessionist document gradually gained ground. Interestingly enough, very few had in fact read the Resolution even as they condemned it; in fact, it was far from seditious or secessionist. It began by saying that Punjab is an integral part of India. Nevertheless, in the context of growing militancy on the part of Bhindranwale and his followers, as well as the inability of the moderate Akalis to take on the secessionists frontally, the Congress interpretation of the Resolution gained credibility. Arms began to flow into the Golden Temple, and there were occasional shoot-outs both inside, and immediately outside, the holy precincts. Bhindranwale established his headquarters in the Akal Takht (which adjoins the sanctum sanctorum), and the control of the militants was plainly visible to everybody (see Singh 1985 for more details).

It must also be said that the administration was very ineffective in reining in this militancy. There were police and service personnel everywhere as well as armed men in unmarked police vehicles, but had very little actual impact. In fact, many Sikhs have argued quite convincingly that it was often difficult to separate policemen from terrorists. My own experience in Punjab during those years leads me to believe that the law enforcement machinery was acting politically and not administratively. But from the outside, the inability of the moderate Sikh leadership to counter Bhindranwale, and the spiralling militancy in Punjab, made the Congress position on Anandpur Sahib Resolution very plausible to millions in the country.
All this came to a climax when the army attacked the Golden Temple to flush out Bhindranwale in the burning summer of 1984 (Chakravarti and Haksar 1987; see also Madan 1991: 621–22). This operation certainly succeeded in killing Bhindranwale — the genie out of the bottle — but it also created deep resentment in the Sikh community. A large majority felt that there were other ways of apprehending Bhindranwale. Many of them argued (some were retired service officers) that a siege around the temple would have been a much better option than running tanks onto the premises and demolishing important structures such as the Akal Takht and pockmarking the Golden Temple with bullets. This angry Sikh response was seen to confirm their partisanship with Bhindranwale, and misperceptions played upon misperceptions to create the image that Sikhs were essentially in favour of another partition. Once Indira Gandhi was assassinated, this fear of Sikh secessionism grew rapidly nationwide, and Rajiv Gandhi, her successor, capitalised on it to win a huge electoral victory in 1985 (see Kapur 1987: 226–42).

My fieldwork in Punjab at the time convinced me that only a small number of Sikhs actually supported Bhindranwale. A large majority, on the other hand, were deeply hurt at the way the Golden Temple was ransacked in 1984, and they were most bitter about the fact that so many Sikhs were killed after Indira Gandhi’s assassination, and not a single person was brought to book on this account. The complicity of several key Congress figures in orchestrating the violence against Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere in 1984 has been compellingly documented in the 1984 booklet issued by the Peoples’ Union for Democratic Rights and Peoples’ Union for Civil Liberties (1984), which was entitled Who are the Guilty?, and its contents became widely known in all of Punjab within a few weeks of its publication.

Shiv Sena: The Minoritisation of Muslims

Ethnic mobilisations that use religion to thematise the nation-state find it much easier to survive than when they call on issues that are more localised in character. When the Shiv Sena came into existence in 1966, its animus was principally directed at those South Indians who had migrated to Mumbai. At that point, the Shiv Sena argued that Maharashtrian ‘sons of the soil’ were being
robbed of their jobs by these South Indians. In 1967, the Shiv Sena found itself somewhat isolated from mainstream politics as no national party would align with it for fear of losing support in South India. Sensing this, Bal Thackeray quickly changed his position in 1967. He declared that South Indians were still Indians, but communists and Muslims were not to be trusted as they owed allegiance to Russia and Pakistan, respectively. In his characteristic style, he derided Left parties in India by saying that when it rains in Moscow they open their umbrellas in Mumbai (see, for detailed analysis Gupta 1982).

When the Shiv Sena changed tack from targeting the South Indians and moving on to Muslims, it gave itself a kind of national legitimacy it lacked in the past. Had it stuck to its original plan of attacking just the South Indians, it would have had some residual influence in Mumbai but would not be the major political player on the national stage, as it is today. By taking on a majoritarian religious identity, the Shiv Sena has benefited enormously. Interestingly, the Shiv Sena's single-minded Hindutva started at a time when the traditional Congress Party that had ruled India for decades was beginning to renege on its secular agenda. It had incited religious tensions among Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab and caste wars in Karnataka and Gujarat. Without taking into account this larger national context, the Shiv Sena's success as a Hindu party cannot be fully comprehended.

The Mumbai violence of 1993 gave the Shiv Sena yet another opportunity to strike. Mumbai riots began on 6 December 1992, on the day the Babri Masjid was demolished in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh (UP). The dispute over this masjid (or mosque) began over a hundred years ago, but had lost much of its vigour over the decades. It was raised again in the late 1980s during the prime ministership of Rajiv Gandhi by the RSS and BJP; they argued that this mosque was built by the Mughal Emperor Babar on the birthplace of the Hindu God, Lord Rama. Hindu sectarians wanted the mosque destroyed, and the Muslim population was naturally opposed to this. When activists of the 'saffron family' brought down the mosque in December 1992, Muslims were incensed in large parts of India. In Mumbai their reaction was perhaps the most violent. It was an expression of pure anger, and Muslims in Mumbai sought revenge and went on the rampage attacking Hindu homes, temples and places of business. Where Hindus were in a minority, they took
refuge in the homes of their relatives and friends who lived in 'safe' areas. Police action was almost immediate and soon Hindus found it easier to go back, barring a few cases. No camps were set up anywhere to accommodate these Hindus who fled their homes in the first week of December 1992. I still do not have a clear idea as to which organisations prompted the Muslims of Mumbai to come out as they did, but it is unlikely that this was an act of pure spontaneity. Nevertheless, as these attacks against Hindus found no supporters in the state apparatus, it was put down quickly and soon things began to 'normal'.

Or so it seemed!

Within a month the Shiv Sena and other Hindu activists grouped into killer squads, and a fresh round of killings began, and this time the victims were Muslims. The pretext in this case was that Muslims had killed two Hindu leaders, and their deaths had to be avenged. There were also rumours of Hindu and Jain temples being attacked. The attacks were aimed primarily at Muslims who lived among Hindus and were therefore a minority in those localities. Very rarely were any forays made into large parts of Mumbai where Muslims were in a majority.

In some places, such as the area around Dharavi's 90 Foot Road (near Garib Nagar), Muslims hit back, but such instances were very rare and not comparable to the scale at which Hindu sectarians mounted their offensive. Muslims who were attacked or felt threatened that an attack was imminent took refuge in Muslim-majority areas. In Behrampada, Muslim slums were subjected to bombs and inflammmable missiles thrown by Hindus who lived in adjoining apartment buildings. Soon the reaction to the December riots started by the Muslims became a bloodbath. Hindu rioters knew they had the tacit support of the police and went on a rampage (see Ansari 1997: xv; Tripathi 1997: 22; Engineer 1993).

The Srikrishna Enquiry Committee that was set up after the riots estimated that in all about 900 people lost their lives during this period, of which the majority, that is 575, were Muslims. All of this prompted migration of Muslims from mixed neighbourhoods. It is estimated that this ethnic violence drove up property prices in Muslim-dominated areas. There was a clear, if perverse, correlation between real-estate prices and the severity of the tragedy.
Gujarat 2002: State-Sponsored Ethnicity

The involvement of the government machinery in the 1984 killing of Sikhs (see Chakravarti and Haksar 1987) has been a most embarrassing chapter in the history of the Congress and returns to haunt this organisation every time it claims to put forward its secular credentials. Even so, it must be acknowledged that the administrative support the rioters had in the killings of Muslims in Ahmedabad, Godhra, Baroda and other northern districts of Gujarat was truly unprecedented. The bloodshed continued unabated for nearly a month, and even after it gradually subsided, the ruling Hindu BJP government in Gujarat saw it fit to call an election in order to capitalise on the hate sentiment that had been generated against the Muslims.

In the last week of February 2002, it is alleged that Muslim hotheads set fire to a railway compartment in Godhra, killing about 59 activists of the RSS and other related organisations, who were returning from Ayodhya after performing voluntary labour (kar seva) for the erection of a Ram Temple at the site of the fallen Babri Masjid. Whether there was provocation is hard to determine. *Jan Morcha* reported on 25 February 2002 that Hindu activists heading to Ayodhya on the Sabarmati Express (the same train that was attacked in Godhra on its return journey to Ahmedabad) committed acts of atrocity against Muslims at various railway stations en route, including harassing women and shaving the beards of Muslim men. Praveen Swami filed a similar report, but much lengthier and with greater detail, pointing out repeated humiliations Muslim passengers encountered from Hindu kar sevaks heading out to Ayodhya on the Sabarmati Express in and around Godhra station (Swami 2002).

It also needs to be mentioned that the charge that some Muslims set fire to the compartment has not been conclusively established. The Banerjee Commission set up to investigate this matter concluded that the fire in the train compartment was ‘an accident’ (see Mander 2009: 114–16). But capitalising on emotions in the aftermath of the Godhra incident, Hindu retaliatory organisations in Gujarat were let loose. The state’s Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, justified the attacks against Muslims saying that, ‘for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction’. There was widespread rioting in many regions of Gujarat, though the carnage was worst
in the triangular conurbation of Ahmedabad, Baroda and Godhra. Muslim homes and establishments were carefully chosen for destruction. The state police stood by and did nothing to help. Naroda Patiya in Ahmedabad in fact adjoins the State Reserve Police Camp. Many Muslims ran there for help, but the police shut the gates on them. Most of the dreadful killings of Naroda Patiya happened in the open fields, just in front of the police camp and in full police presence. It is difficult to convey in words the extent of brutality that was unleashed on Muslims in Gujarat during these weeks (see Communalism Combat 2002).

Modi justified the killings not simply by paraphrasing Newton, but he also added in his election speeches that if he lost the battle of the ballot in Gujarat, there would be celebrations in Pakistan. The Muslims, according to Modi’s demonology, were not just agents of Pakistan, but they were also rapidly multiplying in numbers so that the family planning-oriented Hindus would ultimately be numerically overwhelmed. Soon, Modi argued, Muslims would no longer be a minority in India. This would be the ultimate victory for Pakistan. Incidentally, this is a common Hindutva complaint — shared widely by the RSS, the VHP and the Shiv Sena too (Gupta 1982: 139).

Ahmedabad has been prone to ethnic violence and has, indeed, a rather grisly record. Between 1971–2000, there were riots nearly every year. Some were major, others were minor, but when a life is lost and a home burnt, a single statistic is also tragic (Chandhoke 2009). The worst carnage of all was the Gujarat riots of 2002, when the killings of Muslims in Ahmedabad’s Naroda Patiya were so brutal that they attained metaphorical status. The systematic nature of the attacks made the horror harder to imagine. The devastation was carefully and cold-bloodedly planned; Hindu homes standing next to Muslim ones remained untouched. This presented a kind of hideous gap-toothed smouldering scene when I went to this area soon after the 2002 riots. It is easy to believe, once this scene is witnessed, that the homes of Muslims were marked for destruction (Chatterjee 2009; Plate 1.1).

The Muslim residents of Naroda Patiya were surrounded from all corners. On one side were the Sindhis, on the other the equally hostile members of the Thakore community, and a little further down the road were the more militant Patels. The Muslims in this area were thus isolated by Hindus all around them and found no
help from these quarters, not even, as we just mentioned, from the State Reserve Police Camp. That not a single person from this camp came out to save the Muslims indicates the level of state connivance of the massacres. Mounting evidence of state sponsorship in minority killings in India has now sedimented into an indisputable fact in academic literature (see also Brass 1997; Horowitz 2002).

The Gujarat killings had just about stopped when in September Narendra Modi made an inflammatory speech in which there was no attempt to conceal where the heart of his government lay. He began by condemning the Muslims for producing babies recklessly. ‘What should we do’, he asked, ‘Run relief camps for them? Do we want to open baby producing centres? The Muslims say we are five [alluding to the Muslim code that allows up to taking four wives] and we will produce 25 children. .... They [the Muslims] can line up a large number of children who fix tyre punctures. In order to progress, every child in Gujarat needs education, good manner and employment. That is the economy we need. For this, we have to teach a lesson to those who are increasing the population at an alarming rate’ (see Communalism Combat 2002).

Plate 1.1: Property destroyed in the ethnic violence in Paladi, Ahmedabad.

Source: All photographs by the author.
In Gujarat the violence against Muslims raged for nearly three months. This would have been impossible without administrative encouragement. Praveen Togadia, the VHP leader, Gordhan Zadaphia, Home Minister of Gujarat, and Mayaben Kodnani, a BJP MLA, have been repeatedly named for encouraging the killers from their high positions of office. Mayaben Kodnani was recently (April 2009) charged by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the Supreme Court (to investigate the 2002 Gujarat massacres) for her activities during the violence in Naroda Patiya in particular. One of the items of evidence that has been produced against her is a record of all the phone calls she made on that day from the vicinity of Naroda Patiya to Hindu activists who were involved in the lootings and killings. Targets were carefully selected and then their homes were torched, and in many instances the victims were pulled out and killed (see also Breman’s account of earlier riots in Gujarat in Breman 1999: 267–68). The violence in Delhi against Sikhs went on for nearly a week though civil rights activists made repeated requests to the government to declare martial law (see Chakravarti and Haksar 1987; also Who are the Guilty?). In Gujarat too, prominent social figures, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and even important political figures begged for government intervention, both Central and State. But that did not happen for nearly three months. We need to recall that the government at the Centre was also led by the BJP in 2002. This was probably the longest drawn-out carnage in India after the Partition.

There is then little mystery as to why ethnic riots take place. The timing and ferocity of their occurrence and staging may vary, but without political support, violent attacks on minorities are hard to indulge in and even more difficult to sustain. Sadly, the lasting outcome of such attacks by the majority Hindu community in effect derecognises the claims to citizenship by the minority Muslim population in the country.

Citizenship Derecognised: The Validation of a Self-fulfilling Prophecy

When I visited the villages of Punjab along the border areas in Amritsar and Taran Taran in the late 1980s, I came across some curious incidents that held up my work for a fairly long period
of time. I just could not make sense of why there was such a vast discrepancy between what the Sikhs said they did, what they did and what I observed around me. That an overwhelming number of Sikhs were deeply hurt and disappointed by the Congress was clear. They resented the manner in which the country as a whole now suspected them of harbouring anti-national sentiments, and they blamed the ruling party for this popular misrepresentation. It was also clear that while they did not support the secessionist cause of the militants, they admired the militants for upholding Sikh pride. This last aspect was quite confusing.

More confusing was what several Sikhs in Taran Taran district told me quite categorically: that at five in the afternoon everybody goes home for that is when police and the militants start firing at each other. Yet they showed no signs of panic and wandered around quite calmly after that dreaded hour. Similarly, it was not possible to substantiate the widespread belief across the length and breadth of Punjab that there were hardly any Sikh youth left in the villages of Punjab as most of them had gone underground or had been killed. Most of those who made such statements so convincingly in the remote districts of Punjab were in fact surrounded by their sons and nephews. It is true that many Sikh families, especially in villages, had suffered deeply during these years. Many of their young had gone missing, and perhaps even killed in fake ‘encounter deaths’, but it was not on the scale at which this was being talked about in most places in Punjab.

Yet Sikhs were also keen that the Indian state accept the injustices that were done to them and were very receptive when elections were announced in Punjab in 1984. They defied the call of the terrorists to boycott the elections and nearly 66.5 per cent of the electorate came out to vote. Their impressive presence under very tense conditions clearly demonstrated that they wanted to be reintegrated as citizens. It needs to be recalled that this massive voter turn-out was only a little more than a year after the fateful Operation Blue Star in the Golden Temple and the mass killing of Sikhs following Indira Gandhi’s assassination. If extremism struck a sympathetic cord with Sikhs after these elections, it was primarily because of the lack of a sympathetic healing touch from the government in the Centre. Even so, by 1992, the general Sikh population began to grow tired of and frightened by the
mercurial character of Sikh militants and their excessive ways (Jodhka 2005: 227). As the militants stepped up their pressure, the lawlessness in Punjab hurt Sikhs more than any other community. By the early 1990s most Sikhs were willing to forget the past and move on provided they were given a helping hand from the Centre. This fact is clearly indicated in the way they welcomed V. P. Singh when he toured Punjab after he was elected as Prime Minister in 1989.

Between 1984 and 1992, it was not uncommon to hear a number of Sikhs who were themselves not secessionists speak in admiring tones of the militant secessionists. While this can be quite confusing, it is worth placing on record that most of them had experienced thieving and murderous gunmen who thrived in Punjab in those very troublesome, lawless years, and had not come across a real militant. In popular parlance, they separated the bad sort from the militants. They called the former looteras and kharkoos, and the militants were affectionately called the mundas, or boys. The looteras were depicted as shabby scoundrels who brandished clumsy muskets, but the proud mundas were elegant figures with AK-47 automatic weapons; this confident distinction notwithstanding, they were only really familiar with kharkoos — the gun-wielders of the wrong sort.

Such statements would give an impression from a distance that Sikhs had turned irrevocably secessionists. Such a view does not take into account that the overt sympathy with the terrorists was vicarious and ‘hands-off’ in nature. It was primarily an outcome of Sikh hurt at being spurned by the Centre which made them stand up as minorities in the Indian nation-state. Had the Punjab problem not been resolved when it was, secessionism could well have become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Fortunately, the state acted after long years of dithering and came down hard on the terrorists without yielding any quarter to them (see Gupta 1997). That this was accomplished so swiftly was ultimately because the majority of Sikhs never actually sought secession. At the same time, there are many, particularly among Sikhs outside Punjab, who still want justice for the violence they faced after Indira Gandhi’s assassination. That demand continues to harbour ill-will which is very different in nature from sentiments that arise from secessionism denied.
In my view, Punjab is a convincing instance of not just how conspiracy can go wrong, but also how on account of majoritarian plots to gain political advantage, a minority community can be pushed into playing the role that is being thrust upon them. Sikhs in Punjab did not want secession, but the manner in which the government (and the popular press) kept insisting that they did gave rise to a body of opinion in Punjab that sympathised with Sikh extremists vicariously. They did not accept the politics of separatism, but admired the ‘heroics’ of those who did. Had the tension continued, perhaps a large number of Sikhs would have sought secessionism too. When citizenship is substantively denied over a period of time, then the deprived minority population may well begin to spurn the status of citizenship and seek an alternate identity, and another nation-state. This feeling may fade away after passions have cooled, but it may return should the violence resume. Repeated violations will eventually lead to a deep estrangement, which may not be recognised in law, but would be a reality in hearts and minds.

**Citizens versus People: Liberal Constitution against Popular Memory**

In moments of majoritarian-led ethnic riots, the first instinct of the minoritised community is to insist on the tenets of citizenship. They are not interested in going back into the folds of their community, or into the pristine ways of the past, as much as asking for their rights as citizens. Both in the aftermath of Sikh killings in 1984 and the Gujarat bloodbath of Muslims in 2002, the aggrieved minorities wanted the law to be upheld and the guilty punished. I was told very often during my interviews with Sikhs and Muslims who were affected during these gory episodes in the late 1980s and early 1990s that nothing would make them feel more Indian than when the guilty are punished according to the law of the land. *They did not want retribution but justice.*

Hindus, on both these occasions, predictably argued that the minorities, in each case, deserved no consideration as they were determined to undermine the integrity of India. What upset and angered Sikhs most after the 1984 killings, and this is widely recognised, was that not a single killer was brought to book despite
evidence against many of them. This is sadly true of Gujarat as well, with the Chief Minister not just absolving the killers but going ahead and launching a campaign to assert Gujarati pride.

The majoritarians clearly believe that the constitution and the law are not enough to contain enemies of the nation-state. Thus, their activism is in the name of the 'people'. It is also to be noted that when the law fails to perform its role, then it is very likely that the marginalised become an encysted population and refer back to their respective cultural spokespersons (see Demerath 2001: 122–24, 167–69). This is how majoritarians give credibility to religious virtuosos among minorities. It is almost as if virtuosos of one community need the other to give resonance to their voice. In the Indian case, on account of the Partition, as mentioned earlier, religion is the major divisive factor in majoritarian mobilisations.

Democracy has to always be on guard. It is constantly threatened by impulses that predate it. It does its best to contain such tendencies by putting in place a constitution that protects the individual as a citizen as no other identity is a safe guarantor against whimsical prejudice. Democracy very self-consciously distances itself from community and religious affiliations as they have been the sources of major civic discord in the past. Nation-states are not always democratic by temperament, though there cannot be democracy without a nation-state. However, as nation-states begin as nations, the history of blood and soil, and the primeval grief that gave birth to it, is always on recall. This facilitates the lapse from citizen to ‘people’ status, which logically entails the marginalisation of targeted minority communities. Interestingly, under these circumstances, in the Indian case particularly, minorities respond by demanding that the state respect their citizenship status and protect them from majoritarian passions.

Liberal democracy is thus constantly challenged by memory that it does its best to forget in order to move ahead. But as popular constructions of reality tend to naturalise cultural differences, democracy can never quite rest. John Rawls (1971: 127) had persuasively argued that liberal democracy works best in a situation of moderate scarcity, and this has implications beyond merely the issue of economic wellbeing. When the middle class is weak and has a shallow history, as in India, then the machinery
for law enforcement is constantly impeded by considerations of patron–client type relationships where the individual does not really count as a significant social and political marker. When Rawls argued that the veil of difference should compel people to think of policies as if they were the worst off (Rawls 1971: 60, 124, 199), I think we can easily include within this frame of reference those who are vulnerable to cultural marginalisation as well. While this might work well in a hypothetical situation, as Rawls himself acknowledged, liberal democracy and the valuation of citizenship become viable only when law enforcement that makes no concession to the sentiments of ‘people’ takes place.

**Agency or Structure: The Why and How of an Ethnic Carnage**

In India, majoritarian Hindu politics was never roused into action because of economic grievances, or simply on account of anger boiling over (Breman 1999: 268). Ethnicity thrives when it successfully portrays the insider as an outsider. In India, Hindu ethnicists have cast Muslims as Pakistanis though they actually opted to live in India. Class factors may make their presence felt once the ethnic movement takes off, but they do not initiate these rites of violence. Stanley Tambiah (1997) argues that ethnicists want to claim a larger slice of the state’s resources. According to him, the ‘present plethora of ethnic conflicts … coincides with an increasing shrinking of economic horizons…’ (ibid.: 340). Some others have been more specific and linked ethnic hostilities to ‘business rivalries’ (Banu 1989: 128), overcrowding, urbanisation (Ghosh 1987: 31), as well as the real-estate–underworld nexus (Tripathi 1997: 20).

This is not to say that these other factors are not insignificant as cohorts of ethnic carnages, but they do not cause it in most cases. Economic interests usually come into play once ethnic wars begin. Veena Das’s study of Sikh victims in Delhi shows how those in block A/4 of Sultanpuri faced the wrath of Chamars from an adjoining block as they wanted to settle old scores with the Sikhs (Das 1990: 14; Srinivasan 1990: 317). But, in all fairness, the Chamars did not start the fire. Also, it needs to be acknowledged that if the absence of trade unionism in Gujarat probably allowed
communal ideologies to grow unchecked and unchallenged (Shah 1970), this does not actually amount to a ‘penny envy’ argument. This also holds true for the Shiv Sena which grew in the heart of Mumbai which, for a long time, was the trade union capital of India. The absence of Left wing activism in such instances is more an outcome of ideological impoverishment and not an economic one; the minorities were not threatening the majority community in the job market.

The element of class warfare, or class hatred, therefore, was clearly not the motivating factor behind ethnic killings of Muslims in Gujarat and Mumbai, or of Sikhs in Delhi. Though several members of the land mafia may have benefited in Mumbai after the riots of 1993, it was not as if the Hindu mobs were responding to a class, or economic, imperative. They were seized by an ethnic passion to teach the enemies of their nation-state a lesson. In their eyes, the fifth columnists in the country were enjoying their generosity and had to be told where to get off.

There are a few aspects that are specific to Gujarat (Gujarati exceptionalism?) that one needs to pay attention to. Reading Ghanshyam Shah (1970) and Jan Breman (1999) on Gujarat encourages the opinion that Gandhi’s advocacy of trusteeship and his systematic decimation of Left trade unions of the cotton textile mills (see Patel 1988) was largely responsible for the entrenchment of Hindu and other community identities in Ahmedabad. Without a strong Left wing trade union, there was very little chance of an alternative secular identity emerging among the underclass of Gujarat. In Mumbai, though the Shiv Sena came out swinging against Left unions in the late 1960s, it must be admitted that the communists gave them a stiff fight for over 10 years. No such resistance could be plotted in Gujarat.

Also, Gujarat is probably the only place in India where the dominant agrarian class characterises itself as a member of a Baniya, or merchant, caste (Shah and Shroff 1975). The Patidars of northern Gujarat initially considered themselves to be Kshatriyas, or members of the warrior castes, but have since changed their minds and now prefer to be called Baniyas. They have also found obliging genealogists to document this claim with mythical connections (ibid.). These Patidars have had one foot in the village and one in the city from as early as the 1920s, if not earlier. The Maharaja of Baroda encouraged education among the landed
people of his state, and the Patidars took full advantage of it. The northern Patidars (or Kadva Patels) are today to be found all over the world, in Africa, America and in the United Kingdom. They are a prosperous class of merchants and professionals, but they continue to keep their ties in the villages active. If Hindu passions are strong in rural Gujarat, it is possible that this class of semi-urban and semi-rural Patels is the conduit through which the RSS and other majoritarian ideologies gain a foothold in rural Gujarat.

As mentioned earlier, ethnic conflicts are not inspired by considerations of economic advantage. Even so, this aspect may work its way in once spaces open up on account of the vulnerability of victims. In Mumbai, places like Dongri or Pratiksha Nagar in the Antop Hill area are mixed neighbourhoods. Unfortunately for the Muslims, the Shiv Sena is also strong in these localities. This is what made them helpless against majoritarian Hindu attacks in 1993 (Punwani 2003: 239; Sebastian 1993: 2256; see also S. K. Das 2005), and forced many Muslims to look for homes where members of their community were in a majority. This is said to have doubled the price of property in Milatnagar and Andheri, from ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 2,500 per square foot (Tripathi 1997: 8). Likewise, after the 2002 riots in Gujarat, the numbers of Muslims rose dramatically in Juhapura. According to Chandhoke (2009), about 46 per cent of the Muslims in Ahmedabad’s urban agglomeration are concentrated here.

What gets ethnic violence going, if timed properly, is political, or to be more specific, electoral advantage. After the Mumbai riots of 1993, the Shiv Sena and BJP coalition romped home in Maharashtra. Likewise, Narendra Modi capitalised on the post-Godhra massacres of Muslims of 2002. After the 1984 killings of Sikhs, the Congress came to power in the parliamentary elections with a massive majority. The relationship between ethnic carnages and successes in elections is too close to be overlooked. I examined the Sikh killings in Punjab (Gupta 1997) and the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat (Gupta 2002), and it was quite clear that these were instances where social forensic and not social science was called for. There was little social science skill necessary to figure out who were the killers. It required instead a close criminal investigation of who did what to whom and for how much (see Gupta 2002; PUDR and PUCL 1984; Ray and Chakravarti 1968). What was also abundantly clear is that the perpetrators of these massacres were happy to kill but not to die for a cause. These
killers and looters had nothing to fear. Their lives and property were not at risk as the government and the administration of the day stood by and protected them (Mander 2004: 101–3).

For example, S. K. Bapat, who was Police Commissioner of Mumbai at the time of the riots, presented a 70-page affidavit to the Srikrishna Committee set up to enquire into the riots. In this document, there was no mention of the Shiv Sena's active participation in the killings of Muslims in Mumbai. Instead, Bapat implied that Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) was busy fomenting disaffection for India among the Muslims in the country. Whenever proof was presented to him of a Shiv Sainik's involvement, he argued his way out by saying that there was no reason to suspect the organisation as a whole merely because of a few wayward individuals (Punwani 2003: 246). This, however, did not convince Justice Srikrishna, and he indicted the police for their inefficiency and their failure to help Muslim victims.

On the other hand, in Gujarat the role of the police and the state in aiding and abetting Hindu sectarians was never in doubt. The National Human Rights Commission and the Citizens of Justice and Peace have kept up the campaign to nail Gujarat state officials for their complicity in the 2002 violence. The Supreme Court in Delhi too has taken serious cognisance of the matter, and an SIT has been set up to report to it directly (see Mail Today, 2 May 2009). During those dreadful days of 2002, there were a few outstanding police officers in Gujarat, like Himanshu Bhatt and Rahul Sharma, but they proved ineffective beyond a point. There is some satisfaction however in accomplishing one's duties well. Rahul Sharma has reportedly said, ‘I don't think any other job would have allowed me to save so many lives’ (Dugger 2002).

Poor but Pure: The Myth of Rural India

Gujarat also exposes the hollowness of the claim that riots are purely an urban affair. What Gujarat brought into sharp focus was that the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes could easily be mobilised to kill for the Hindu cause. Being poor does not necessarily make one pure. Gujarat also disproved the romantic belief that the countryside is riot-proof. The villages of Gujarat saw widespread killings, and it did not matter how many generations had lived cheek by jowl when it came to expressing strong ethnic loyalty with the Hindu majoritarian version of the nation-state.
Rich and poor Muslims died at the hands of Hindus, of high and low castes, and, in many instances, tribal Bhils also joined the Hindutva hate brigades. Many villages in Gujarat bore the suffix ‘Hindu Rashtra’ before their names, particularly between the districts of Bharuch and Vadodara. In some predominantly Hindu villages, such as Nidral (Sanand Taluka, near Ahmedabad), one may even be asked to prove that one is not a Muslim in order to gain entry.

India’s villages have never been isolated republics, as many anthropologists have noted. Yet, the extent of urban influences in rural India has not been fully appreciated. Today, according to official Census figures, about 30 per cent of India lives in urban surroundings. But if one were to add to this all those who live in the village but work outside it, then the percentage would go up very significantly. According to the National Sample Survey, between 1987–88 and 1993–94, the number of rural people working in urban India has doubled. At the same time, agricultural growth in value terms is not very buoyant. In 1999–2000 it was only 1.3 per cent, and in 2000–1 it fell as low as –0.2 per cent. Agricultural growth was a little above 1 per cent in 2008–9. Further, about 80 per cent of landholdings are below 5 acres and roughly 63 per cent are below 2.5 acres (Mujumdar 2002; Pradhan et al. 2000; see also Chadha 2003). Most of the farms now qualify as family farms, and there is, therefore, very little scope for sustained employment in the village for the landless. Even those who have land find the going very difficult. Thus, the need to have a foothold in the city is most pressing in rural households in India today. At some point quantity does yield to quality.

All of this encourages one to believe that what happened in Gujarat villages could easily happen in other rural regions of India as well. The village today has become even less self-sustaining than it used to be. The terms of trade have consistently gone against agriculture over the past several decades, and the rate of growth in agriculture is the lowest among all the sectors of the Indian economy. This forces villagers to look to cities and towns as alternatives to their dead-end lives in agriculture. Consequently, the country dweller is in close proximity to urban ideologies, such as those of Hindutva. Hindutva creates an alternative community and a project of belonging that uprooted and alienated villagers may find extremely attractive. This is especially so as the
secular project of building citizenship has been let down by the Congress since the mid-1970s.

If villages were tranquil in the past it was because there was hardly ever any scope for the underprivileged to dispute their position of inferiority and subjugation. A medieval peace characterised the countryside, but this peace was based less on tolerance or on natural goodwill and more on the fact that the ruling castes and classes held undisputed power in the villages. This is now changing. Not only is the village less and less viable as an economic unit, villagers are also going in and out of their rural surroundings and bringing back other points of view from the city with much greater frequency than ever before. Further, the anthropological truism that human beings want to belong has not been met successfully by alternative secular identities. When villagers look beyond their villages, as they are frequently compelled to do today, there is very little by way of an alternative commitment to a secular and developmentalist ethos. For this, the Congress Party should also be held responsible. It withdrew the Nehruvian agenda of secularism, self-reliance and non-alignment without putting another one in its place. In such situations it is likely that religious and other ascriptive identities will have an advantage.

The tribals of north Gujarat, particularly the Bhil, constitute no more than 5 to 6 per cent of the population of the state. From my interviews with experts in Gujarat, the general opinion seems to be that from 1980 onwards the Bhil have steadily come under the influence of the RSS and its allied organisations. The ‘Ramayana Bhils’, as they are derisively called by many secularists in Gujarat, have been moving closer to Hindu forces from the mid-1980s. In 1987 many of them were reported to have attacked Muslims in Virpur village. Interestingly, the tribals of south Gujarat, such as the Chaudhuries, Gamits and Dhodiyas, are not known for any special links with the RSS or other Hindu parties. Why the northern Bhil should be so prone to Hindutva persuasions is something that I do not understand fully. In the 2002 violence in Gujarat, violence against Muslims was very high in Bhil areas of the state, such as Sabarkantha and Panchmahals — too high to be overlooked as freak occurrences. Neither could it be said that only rich Muslims were attacked by Bhil tribals. It is true that there are prosperous Muslim Bohras and Memons, but it were mostly poor Muslims who lost their lives. They were generally small cultivators, petty
shopkeepers, day labourers etc. That some well-to-do Muslims were also killed does not give these killings a class character. There is just no excuse!

Gujarat also lays to rest another romantic assumption. This concerns the supposed ‘heroic’ qualities of the working class and of the ‘lower’ castes. Even though Jan Breman (1999) carefully skirts around the class character of the Hindu mobs, it is clear even from his article that those who attacked poor Muslims came from poor neighbourhoods themselves and many of them were dalits (ibid.: 268–69). A large number of these Hindu sectarians had a working class past but were now not fully employed as nearly all the old mills of Ahmedabad had closed down (ibid.: 265). It is generally believed that the urban underclass, particularly if not gainfully employed, is seriously tempted by lucre and lust that majoritarian politicians find easy to satisfy (ibid.).

Notes

1. The romanticisation of Sikh militants is not a very unique phenomenon. Similar processes have occurred elsewhere as well. For example, in Greece, young men who have had to leave the village on account of honour and vendetta killings take to the mountains and join a band of klephts. Many of them are unmarried men who are imagined as being in the prime of their physical powers and characterised by the quality of leventis, or being handsome, narrow hipped and quick on one’s feet (see Campbell 1992: 137).
A Contested Normal: What Happens Afterwards?

The big questions then are:

1. What happens after these killings?
2. How is a new normalcy restored?
3. Through which agencies is this established?
4. What are the practices that herald the coming of another ‘normal’ with its own set of negotiated boundaries and concealed tensions?

Some of these questions will be addressed in this chapter, keeping in mind the aftermath of the killings in Gujarat in 2002 and in Mumbai, a near decade earlier, in 1993. There is an important caveat that needs attention before we proceed.

Any depiction of the ‘new’ normal is like the unfolding of a story that is not yet complete. This is particularly true of Gujarat where the wounds are still very fresh and victims continue to feel vulnerable. The actually existing ‘new’ normal may still be awkwardly positioned which is why when one attempts to depict it one needs to stay within the framework of liberal democracy, for then at least one has a measuring rod. This allows us to weigh the effect of contrary tendencies in, and their possible impact on, the emergent ‘new’ normal as it strives to realise substantive citizenship. Here differences have a better chance of survival than they had in the earlier rounds. Alternatively, one could lapse into the standards of a medieval peace where the winner takes all and the vanquished waits for centuries and many lifetimes to avenge the defeat. But repairing the lives of citizens can never mean a return to the past, or to an unproblematised status quo ante. Nor can we dismiss the ethnic carnage as a bad dream and blithely start again from where we left off.
Without taking in such considerations, it would be difficult to establish a perspective on how rehabilitation can be realistically achieved so that the new contested normal can be a live and, on the whole, a peaceful and just reality. It is from this perspective that we shall view how victims began repositioning themselves once the dust settled on the killings of Gujarat and Maharashtra: or, in other words, when the phase of relief is over and that of rehabilitation and repair is on. I will pay greater attention to Gujarat, and this will be for three reasons.

**Getting the Context Right: Why Mumbai and Ahmedabad?**

First, in Gujarat the ethnic violence was clearly encouraged, if not sponsored, by the state. This left little room for Muslims to manoeuvre as they had to contend with the might of the entire administrative apparatus. It has already been shown how Chief Minister Modi himself issued inflammatory statements during the killings, which led to ethnic violence in nearly all of Gujarat in 2002. In contrast, Mumbai went up in flames in 1993, but all of Maharashtra did not burn.

Second, Muslims in Gujarat were much more vulnerable than their coreligionists in Mumbai. As shown later, in Mumbai there were a large number of affluent Muslims, secular citizens, upright officials and concerned politicians who acted as buffers between the killers and their victims. Over time, Mumbai’s Muslims were able to reassert themselves, economically and politically. They were much more confident of their surroundings than their hapless and unprotected coreligionists in Gujarat.

This leads us to the third reason. FBOs played a much smaller role in providing succour to victims in Mumbai as compared to those in Gujarat. In Mumbai help came from several quarters, but in Gujarat it was the FBOs that bore the brunt of the relief and rehabilitation effort. Undoubtedly, the Muslims in Gujarat were socially more isolated in their grief than the Muslims in Mumbai.

Mumbai is then the backdrop against which the events in Ahmedabad can be placed to bring out the following issues with greater clarity.
1. How do victims fare when the state is directly involved in the violence?
2. What difference does it make to the victims when there is a significant elite presence from among them in the city?
3. When civic organisations, political parties and officials are not directed by the state to commit violence, what avenues open up for the victims? Conversely, what would happen if the situation had been otherwise?
4. Finally, under what circumstances are FBOs an important resource for relief, repair and rehabilitation?

Methodology

This study was conducted in 2008–9. The interviews quoted here were gathered during this period. Most of the interviews were conducted by me, but I was assisted by a researcher based in Delhi and by two activists in Ahmedabad and one in Mumbai. They did a lot of the preparatory work and also interviewed 70 Muslims in Mumbai and Ahmedabad each to elicit responses on how they coped economically after the violence in both these cities. This was done with an interview schedule. Besides name and address, which were important for avoiding repetition, the questions they were asked related to matters pertaining to their economic condition after the violence: how long did it take to find a job once the killings stopped? Are they better or worse off after the riots? Is their place of work nearer or further from where it used to be before the carnage? Apart from this, some general information was also solicited about their aims, ambitions, fears, etc., but all of this was in a more conversational mode.

The original intention was to talk to the head of the household, or the main bread-earner; but on several occasions (23 instances in Mumbai and 18 in Ahmedabad), this was not possible for a number of reasons. In such cases there was no alternative but to address the questions to the senior most adult present in the house.

The 70 interviewees were not chosen by any clear-cut method. In Mumbai we went to a number of newly established homes in the suburbs of Mumbra and Oshiwara, over and above taking a smattering of samples from slum residents in places like Tulsiwadi, Dharavi, Khoja Chawl and Behrampada. In Ahmedabad, these interview schedules sought responses from the residents of camps set up by FBOs. It was not possible to do a stratified random
sampling in a study of this kind where some people are not willing to talk and others more than happy to. Also, it was impossible to get background information of people in advance, which is why a preordered selection was not feasible. Our interview schedule and interactions were largely based on whoever was most readily available. This was most true in Ahmedabad. In Mumbra and Oshiwara, an attempt was made to meet people of different neighbourhoods to get an idea of economic difference, but it could not be done very systematically.

Interestingly, nobody felt the need to keep their names confidential. As there were so many who live identical lives and probably bear the same names, the respondents did not demand anonymity. At any rate, it is impossible to trace a person just by the name. In some other cases, the personalities are so well known, and their intentions so widely publicised, that to keep their names hidden would take away from the value of the study. For the record, they did not ask for anonymity either.

While in Ahmedabad there were settlement townships built by FBOs which formed some kind of physical nucleus to this study, in Mumbai this was not possible. No doubt Mumbra and Oshiwara are new Muslim 'ghettos', but not all those who have gone there were necessarily victims of ethnic violence.

Both in Mumbai and in Ahmedabad, it was difficult to get people to talk about the past and how they have coped with their tragedies. Often, the questions that were posed brought tears to their eyes, and some women wept inconsolably. This made us, as a team, wonder why we were inflicting this pain on them? Was it just for ourselves? Why should this study justify the opening of old wounds? Then there were also times when we felt like imposters. When victims spoke to us, they sometimes thought that we were from some government agency that would deliver them some tangible benefits. We found it difficult to tell them that we had no such powers. The way they looked at us then made us feel a little shaken and small. In due course of time, we were reassured on at least one front: we were not opening wounds, they were already open. By talking to us they felt better, and by talking to them we felt we could give greater depth to received knowledge on what it is to be a victim of an ethnic carnage. Hopefully, this effort will go some way in strengthening the resolve of those who are at the forefront fighting for justice and help add votaries to their cause.
If this work can help in some measure, to salve the victims and close their wounds, then our research would be legitimised.

There was little hesitation on the part of officials of the FBOs when they were approached. In all instances they gave a great deal of their time, but were unwilling to disclose financial details. This may not always be on account of wanting to keep things secret; the possibility that their books were not in order must also be entertained.

Most of the time our respondents were not alone. While we did not hold any focused group discussion, for we had so many foci and the conversation was so freewheeling, it was interesting how certain issues emerged and gained salience. Group responses also help, for not only do people often contradict each other, but if they are in agreement on any issue, that sentiment is also roundly expressed.

Refuge First: Mumbai and Ahmedabad

As far as can be ascertained, except for the early days of the killings against Muslims, when many of them congregated in various mosques, no proper camp was established anywhere in the city for the long-term stay of those who had to abandon their homes. Musafirkhana, which is where Haj pilgrims congregate before they leave for Mecca, became a spontaneous, on-the-spot camp and housed up to 7,000 people. A few other camps too came up, such as the one in the school at Umar Razab Road. Gradually, most Muslim victims slowly went back to their old homes while there were some who preferred to look for shelter in Muslim-majority neighbourhoods; a few even stayed with friends and relatives in 'safe' areas. One way or the other, refugee camps were quickly wound up.

According to Akhmal Hussein, a riot survivor from Parel, apart from where he lived, other places like Lalbaug, Delisle Road, Bawla Nagar Compound and Shivaji Nagar Basti were practically emptied of Muslims when the violence started. But the overwhelming majority of them slowly came back. Quite a sizable number perhaps sold their properties over the years and went elsewhere. Some of them felt unsafe as they noticed that their homes were marked by Hindu activists well before the storm broke. I heard this being said in a number of places, especially in Jogeshwari, Andheri and even Lower Parel. These are low-income group areas,
not elite by any standards. In these parts of the city, white-collar employees and petty businessmen live in close proximity of slums and chawls (tenement houses that have individual rooms but a common bathroom and water facilities).

It is difficult to confirm this 15 years after the violence, but what is interesting nevertheless is that such recalls indicate the conviction with which many Muslims blame the administration. Even after such a long passage of time they hold the administration responsible for not taking proper action to quell the violent mobs, which, they believe, were well orchestrated. Then there are those like Altaf Tyrewalla who lives in a Muslim-dominant area of Byculla and is happy to be there for he feels safe in his surroundings. Muslims in places like Borivali and Kandivali are also confident of being able to protect themselves and did not leave their homes during the violence of 1993. This is not to say that dislocations did not take place; they did, but the scale was not so high as to merit long stays in refugee camps, as was the case in Gujarat.

It is not as if the search for shelter happened smoothly; far from it. The Public Works Department (PWD) provided some relief and built about 862 houses; but as more than 75,000 people were affected, this was clearly not enough (Tripathi 1997: 29). The panchanammas (official claims) for losses were not properly filed as three agencies were involved, viz., revenue, police and the Bombay Municipal Corporation, and each had different figures (ibid.: 67). The amount of money given for reconstruction was also very meagre, a paltry sum of ₹15,000 if the entire property was lost, and ₹4,000 for damages that had to be meticulously accounted for (ibid.).

Though the carnage in Mumbai was nowhere as bad as that in Gujarat, in this metropolis Muslims needed help to process claims for compensation and to get their damaged homes built. In this several NGOs and concerned citizens played a very positive role, and their contributions are still remembered by Muslims after all these years. In particular, I heard praises for Jayant Diwan (a Gandhian and head of Sarvodaya Mandal in Mumbai); Dr Usha Mehta, a renowned freedom fighter and a prominent political personality; Dr G. G. Parikh, also a freedom fighter and currently active in tribal areas; and Susobha Barve, one of the founders of the Aman Committee in Mumbai. Certain NGOs also
worked very hard for the victims: Nirmala Niketan in particular was repeatedly mentioned in our discussions. A few government officers like Satish Tripathi, IAS, the then Labour Commissioner in Mumbai, and Sanjay Pandey, IPS, who was posted in many of the riot areas of Mumbai in 1992–93, also received commendation from Muslim victims in Mumbai for making relief supplies promptly available.

Notwithstanding such civil and official help, many Muslims feared for their lives when the violence broke in Mumbai. For example, in the Tulsiwadi slum, a mixed neighbourhood, a large number of people left their homes and ran to Muslim-majority areas of Mumbai, or even to their ancestral villages in faraway Uttar Pradesh. Naseem told me in some detail how she made her escape with her children, and how her elder son was badly beaten by mobs when he tried to return home.

With my children I jumped over the wall which opens out in the field past where there are some Hindu homes. They let me escape for they were trying to help. I somehow got to the railway station, but then I left my children there and came back for my son was badly hurt and I heard he was lying near our house. I did not get to see him. Somehow he was taken to a hospital and saved. I could not go home to Muzaffarnagar without knowing where my oldest boy was. He is alright now but cannot work well with his hands.

Interestingly, Naseema has now returned to Tulsiwadi. Her home has been repaired. The slum continues to house both Hindus and Muslims, though they are usually segregated in different lanes. She does not fear their presence that much, but when she recalls those days her eyes go moist (Plate 2.1).

In Gujarat the situation was much worse as the violence raged for almost three months and was aided and abetted by the state. There were at least 1,74,000 refugees in camps. If one were to take into account those who went elsewhere, then the total number of ousted people seeking shelter would go up to about 2,50,000 (see PUDR 2002 in Vardarajan 2002: 309). This is not surprising as it is estimated that 10,472 houses were damaged or destroyed (Malekar 2010). The Shah Alam relief camp in Ahmedabad stretched itself to breaking point to give refuge to about 2,200 families, or roughly 10,000 inmates, for about three months (ibid.: 308). A full week after the killings in Gujarat, the government came out with a policy resolution on 6 March 2002, which in fact
Plate 2.1: Victims standing in front of what were once their homes before the violence destroyed what they had. The boards display their house numbers.
gave the intended impression to administrators that the state need not set up any relief camps (Malekar 2010: 310).

The government of Gujarat also made it clear that those FBO camps in existence had to be wound up by 31 May, and only those camps would get some relief that fulfilled certain conditions. The conditions laid down by the government were quite stringent. Only those camps would receive state support which were organised by a registered society or trust with at least 100 inmates, clean lavatories and kitchens, drinking water and medical care (Malekar 2010: 311). One wonders why the camp should want any relief at all if all these conditions were fulfilled in advance? Once the camps passed this eligibility test, then each inmate would be given 500 grams of cereal, 50 grams of pulses, some edible oil, sugar, milk and a dole of ₹ 5 per person, per day (ibid.: 312).

Relief Work in Mumbai and Ahmedabad: Islamic Organisations and NGOs

In Mumbai the role of Islamic organisations in providing relief to the victims of the ethnic violence of 1993 was not very significant. Aslam Ghazi, senior Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) official in Mumbai, said that they did help people in several areas in Mumbai, such as in Tulsiwadi, but could not do it openly as the government had banned the organisation in those days fearing that it would foment violence in the wake of the Babri Masjid episode in 1992. He showed me a few photographs of people holding up boards with their home address on it against the backdrop of a ruined dwelling. These pictures were largely from Tulsiwadi.

Many of those who sought refuge from Pratiksha Nagar and managed to come to Byculla said that if they are alive today it is only because of the courage and dedication of Maulana Ziauddin Bukhari. According to Murtaza Khairul, now a resident of Khoja Chawl, but earlier in Pratiskha Nagar,

Maulana Bukhari came again and again to us to where we were hiding in Pratikshanagar with an army truck. He had influenced an army personnel to come to our rescue, and it is his efforts that saved so many of us or we would surely have been dead.

Residents of Behramapada slum also recall the help given to them by Sheikh Jilani, a simple cleric from the neighbourhood mosque, who again acted on his own and not as a member of
any FBO. Besides such random reports and individual efforts, there is no information on Islamic organisations coming to the aid of Muslim victims of Mumbai in a sustained fashion. In Khoja Chawl, we met two residents who said that the JI had given them some cooking utensils, but, by their own admission, this was of little solace as they had lost so much in the violence.

The Gujarat story is very different. The single greatest contribution to relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat came from Islamic FBOs. Other non-faith based NGOs also contributed, but not as much by comparison. Yet there is so little written up about the enormous work done by these FBOs in Ahmedabad, and indeed, in many other parts of Gujarat.

Interestingly, there is a vast discrepancy between field data and published/Internet information. This is something that future scholars ought to be warned about. If one were to go by what is available on the Internet, or in published books, pamphlets and easily available NGO annual reports, one would think that most of the relief work was done by NGOs and other voluntary organisations. Information on the contribution of Islamic organisations is practically non-existent in these sources, while much was written about unity marches that were held by tiny NGOs, some very evanescent ones, with the intention of shoring up minority confidence and creating greater inter-faith amity. Even a procession that was held as late as 27 September 2002 by some NGOs received press coverage. It had a catchy slogan: ‘Mil ke Chalo’ (Let us Walk Together), and it was led by well-known public figures. Another march that was only conceived, but not actually delivered on the ground, by a group of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), with only 30 delegates, also found Internet space.¹

This is particularly alarming as the actual work of relief and rehabilitation during this crisis in Gujarat was primarily done by Islamic organisations. It is only when one visits Gujarat and meets victims that the role of FBOs comes to light. Fortunately, I had some premonition of this during my first trip to Gujarat in 2002, and with a lot of help from friends, I was able to get some ‘corrective’ data on who helped whom and how.

When I went to Ahmedabad soon after the killings of 2002, I met a large number of NGO activists who were already busy writing out attractive reports detailing the work they had done to provide relief and rehabilitation to the Muslim victims of the carnage.
On reading these reports closely I found that their contribution was not very substantial — they had set up a tent here, distributed some milk powder there, did some hand-holding somewhere else and so on. When I brought this to the notice of some NGOs, they had no answer. One of the activists, however, braved a response and said that as these ethnic killings occurred towards the end of the financial year, they had little money left for relief work.

Around that time, I saw a few volunteers who were from the Gujarat Sarvajanik Relief Committee (GSRC) and who looked very ‘Islamic’. When I enquired about them from these NGO activists, they brushed them aside and called them ‘Mullah-types’. Punwani (2003) writes about a similar reaction in Mumbai when Muslims took up relief work. There too they were branded as fundamentalists (ibid.: 254), but those like Fazal Sha’d of Mumbai’s Aman Committee (which was set up by citizens after the violence began) or the prominent businessman Faridbhai Battatawala can hardly be categorised as such (ibid.: 246, 256), nor could someone like Shakeel Ahmed who led the Nirbhay Bandh in Mumbai (Robinson 2005: 214).

When the killings began in Gujarat on 28 February 2002, Muslims in places like Naroda Patiya and Gomtipur had nowhere to go but to relief camps that were almost immediately set up by a number of FBOs. In Ahmedabad, the JI sponsored Islamic Relief Committee (IRC) and the GSRC, an arm of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JU), shouldered much of this burden. These organisations came up after the devastating earthquake in Bhuj, Gujarat, in 2001. Most importantly, the Shah Alam Mosque was the site for about the largest camp housing over 10,000 people. This camp ran for about six months, and throughout this period its maintenance and upkeep was almost entirely the responsibility of a few Islamic FBOs.

Many NGOs helped in these camps, but their assistance was directed towards providing psychological and social support rather than housing, shelter and running a commissariat for food and rations. They ran classes for little children, provided trauma counselling, helped find ancillary jobs and so on. In this connection one must mention the contributions of Geet Sethi of Jan Vikas Trust, Palomi Mistry of Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Action (DISHA) (which was active in north Gujarat), Act Now for Plarmony and Democracy (ANHAD), Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), CARE, Action Aid, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (for legal assistance) and Prashant
A Contested Normal

(a Jesuit organisation run by Father Cedric Prakash). But when it came to recall of the victims, except Jan Vikas Trust and sometimes Prashant and ANHAD, NGOs were rarely mentioned. This is probably because the scale of the devastation was so great that the best that most NGOs could contribute was but a small fraction of what was required. For example, SEWA, by their own account, provided economic opportunities in terms of rolling bidis (crude-rolled tobacco for smoking), making incense sticks, paper bags or mattresses, to just about, 1,238 women, and no more (SEWA 2002). The other NGOs did provide some relief material, but organisations like ANHAD concentrated on providing legal help to victims by assisting them in filing cases and compensation claims.

The bulk of the funds and human resources for food, housing and water came largely, though not exclusively, from FBOs, most prominently the IRC and the GSRC. We also heard of the work done by another Muslim front organisation called United Economic Forum that was based in Hyderabad. They too sent a large number of volunteers to help Muslim victims in Gujarat. But we need to underline here that given the scale of devastation, the government of Gujarat did not set up a single camp.

Hundreds of camps were started across the state of Gujarat, and nearly all of them by organisations or trusts that were Islamic in terms of membership, though they may not have had a specifically religious charter (Hyderabad has a similar story after the 1985 riots there; see Alam 1993: 155). In addition to the various FBOs, some NGOs too made feeble attempts to start schools in these relief camps.

Mohammad Shafi Madni, the Ameer-e-Halqa of the IRC, said when I met him in 2008:

The other NGOs contributed about 10%–15% of the relief work. But they were of greater assistance in the legal arena where there were hundreds of problems. It was important to help the camp refugees with processing their claims for compensation as Modi’s government did not relent and kept up its hostile and unfriendly attitude towards the Muslim victims.

It is not surprising then that after observing the work of the Gujarat government for several years, the National Commission for Minorities had no option but to publicly express deep disappointment on this matter on Christmas Day of 2006. In fact, the central government gave ₹ 150 crore as relief fund, but Modi’s
administration sent back as much as ₹ 19.1 crore as unused fund.\(^3\)

Given the dire straits the victims were in, the fact that Modi found even the paltry sum of ₹ 150 crore excessive demonstrates his brazen disregard for the plight of the Muslims in Gujarat.

Muslim FBOs established camps wherever there were a large number of Muslim inhabitants, or around mosques, dargahs and even Muslim graveyards. Muslim-majority localities in Ahmedabad like Juhapura, Bapu Nagar, Gomtipur and Navrangpura naturally attracted thousands of refugees and became Muslim citadels. The biggest camp was however around Shah Alam Dargah, followed probably by the one in Daryakhan Gummat. Some of the Muslims we met said that they would feel safe only in those areas which were dominated by Muslims. This was because they were threatened not just by outsiders, but in many cases by their Hindu neighbours as well.

In terms of rebuilding homes, it is not clear how many were constructed with the help of government grants, how many through individual effort, and how many with the assistance of Islamic FBOs. After 31 May 2002, the government of Gujarat insisted on shutting down all the camps, arguing that the situation had by then returned to normal. These camps lingered on for a few more days, but soon they all closed down.

Rehabilitation Next: The Role of FBOs in Finding a Home

According to information received, when the camps closed down many Muslims were afraid to return to their homes. This was true across the affected areas of Gujarat, particularly where the Muslims felt acutely threatened. It is here that they experienced the brutalities of their neighbours the most, both of caste Hindus and tribals. For example, in Delol village, Muslims were warned by the other villagers not to come back. The Muslims who returned to their homes in Palana village of Kheda district were told that they would be denied access to water for irrigation and that no one would employ them in their fields as agricultural labourers (see also PUDR 2002 in Vardarajan 2002: 327, 334–35). In 2002, I saw signs in Bamangaon (on the road from Vadodara to Bharuch) and in Nidral (Sanand Taluka, Ahmedabad district) that said
that these villages are part of 'Hindu Rashtra'. These signs were intended to keep Muslims from entering the village, and it had the desired effect. I cannot confirm this, but a number of Muslim refugees in Ahmedabad claim that when some of their relatives returned to their villages in Mehsana, Gandhinagar, Panchmahals and Dahod districts from the relief camps of Ahmedabad, they faced economic sanctions against them from the Hindus. In the light of my experience in Bamangaon and Nidral, I find statements like these very credible. Apart from these livelihood deprivations, Muslims had to also promise that they would lower the volume of the muezzin's call to prayer. This has been a long-standing complaint of Hindu activists in Mumbai and elsewhere in India.

It might be recalled that in Gujarat villages the attacks against Muslims were also conducted by tribals, particularly the Bhil (Kannabiran 2002). It is said that these Bhil usually worked for small Muslim traders and owed money to Muslim moneylenders. This apparently provided the justification for their attacks. These so-called 'Ramayana Bhils' have a fairly long association with the VHP. This can be gauged from the fact that as far back as 1987, a group of Bhils attacked Muslims in Virpur village along with VHP activists. Muslims from villages where there was a sizable Bhil presence, as in areas around Chotta Udaipur, were very reluctant to go back to their homes as they too felt more isolated than their counterparts in the cities. In all, the ANHAD study suggests about 20 per cent of Muslim refugees in Ahmedabad from rural areas went back to their village homes in the first year.

A survey conducted in Ahmedabad's refugee camps in 2002 very tellingly demonstrates that as many as 99 per cent of refugees did not want to return to their earlier homes: about 80 per cent said that they were plain scared of facing their killers again, and nearly 18 per cent said that they had no confidence that the police force would give them protection. Only about 2 per cent said that they did not have the wherewithal to build another home. Over 40 per cent said that nobody came to help them and they had to fend for themselves all the way to the camp (Raza and Singh 2008: 26 and ff; see also Lakshminarayana et al. 2002: 22, 24). The fear that Muslim refugees have in returning to areas where they are in a minority was also felt by many Muslims in Mumbai, particularly those from Ghatkopar (Punwani 2003: 248), but it was not nearly as intense. Even so,
there is a clear tendency towards aggressive Muslim ghettoisation in Mumbai post-1993. There are areas now where Muslims are in sizable numbers such as in Mumbra, Meera Road, Masjid Bandar or sections of Dharavi. From my conversations with the residents of these areas, it is clear that much of the initiative for this was taken by individual Muslims with practically no support either from the state or from FBOs.

What needs to be noted is that in Mumbai the FBOs were of little consequence, except for the occasional help that JI gave to a few people in the city. But in Ahmedabad, and in other parts of Gujarat, FBOs had a huge presence among the Muslims after the riots — the toofan (lit. hurricane, figuratively the carnage). This is probably because there was nobody else who came forward in Gujarat unlike the situation in Mumbai. FBOs just filled the huge vacuum. In Mumbai, resettlement areas such as Mumbra, Oshiwara or Mira Road were established without the aid of any FBO. The one Muslim cleric who is mentioned repeatedly is Maulana Bukhari who saved dozens of lives in Pratiksha Nagar. Apart from that there is no trace of JI, JU or Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) in contemporary memories of Mumbai Muslims. As an aside one might add that the Muslim-majority slum in Mumbai's Behrampada had pucca (brick and mortar) houses since about 1977. But as an elderly resident said with a smile, 'No Jamaat organisation helped us in making our houses pucca. If anyone did it was the actor Sunil Dutt'.

In Gujarat, on the other hand, FBOs built homes, repaired many and continued to interact with Muslim victims of the 2002 violence well after the violence ceased. This is particularly true in the case of the many refugee colonies that were constructed by FBOs, particularly the IRC and GSRC. The process of selecting who would get a place in the colonies made by JI or JU or TJ was not very clear. Obviously, Muslim refugees applied and the selection was based on an evaluation of need assessment and perceived fear. In all cases, the FBO collected the amount that the refugees had received as compensation from the government for the damage done to their homes. However, it is hard to say whether or not the FBOs substantiated this amount with some of their own, as there are conflicting claims on this. Some residents complained that they were not given their money’s worth, while the FBOs claimed that they subsidised these homes to a significant extent. In all, there are 121 such resettlement colonies across Gujarat, and as many as 58 of them are in Ahmedabad alone (Malekar 2010).
Though FBOs helped these victims, quite paradoxically the relations between the two seem to have soured somewhat over the years. If we take into account those whose homes were repaired by FBOs, they found fault with the construction and darkly hinted at the possibility of these organisations making money. When it came to refugee colonies built by FBOs, relations were even more strained. For example, the residents of the colony in Ramola, Ahmedabad, said they were made out to be victims so that the clerics could entract money from visiting Muslims from other countries.

This, however, does not take away from the fact that in Ahmedabad Islamic FBOs contributed extensively towards relief and rehabilitation, from money and material to providing homes. The GSRC also built water tanks in places like Madni Nagar (see Ohn 2007: 29–30) where the Muslim population increased phenomenally after the carnage. Elsewhere, Muslim organisations built homes and conducted surveys for future construction work. The IRC believed that, as far as possible, the victims should return to their old neighbourhoods. According to Madni (of IRC), the GSRC of the JU did not agree with them on this issue, but the Committee refutes this charge. Both the JI and the JU argue that the best option for the victims is to summon up courage and return home. However, each organisation claims that the other suggests just the opposite. Mohammad Shafi Madni (who heads JI) said that the JU was wrong in asking people to leave and go elsewhere, for instance to resettlement colonies. On the contrary, Professor Ansari, General Secretary of JU claims that it was in fact the JI that was handing out such advice.

From our interviews with members of the IRC, we were given to understand that this organisation constructed about 600 houses for affected Muslim families in all of Gujarat. They also said that along with homes for the Muslims, they built some for those Hindus whose property was accidentally destroyed during the riots. This, argued Madni, was a way of buying peace and goodwill for the Muslims who had to return to mixed neighbourhoods. In one of the villages they began their reconstruction work by first repairing and rebuilding the homes of eight Hindu sutars (weavers) whose homes were also destroyed during the post-Godhra killings in Gujarat (Plate 2.2).
Those Muslim refugees, whether from villages or from towns, who refused to go back to their earlier homes had to find accommodation in either a different Muslim-majority area or, as in a small number of cases, move to colonies set up by various charitable trusts — Islamic once again. From what I could tell from my visits to Ahmedabad, these camps are usually situated in very inhospitable places. Vatva Rehabilitation Camp becomes an island when it rains as it is in a low-lying area. Another camp, tellingly named ‘Citizen Nagar’, is built at the base of the largest rubbish dump/landfill in Ahmedabad. This dump heap is about 200 feet high and two miles long, if not more. When it rains all the filth comes down to the homes making a bad situation intolerably ugly. The subsoil water is so highly polluted that occasionally the rice they boil turns red in colour. The stench, the flies and the garbage make it even difficult to breathe or open one’s mouth to talk (see for a detailed analysis Chandhoke et al. 2007).

Without a doubt, FBOs played the most important role in financing the construction of these refugee, or resettlement, colonies. The IRC set up at least 11 such colonies with nearly a thousand

Plate 2.2: Occasionally when the IRC builds a house or a shop destroyed in the violence, it places its stamp on the construction. This is a re-built shop in Ahmedabad’s Naroda Patiya.
units and the GRSC constructed six such projects, benefiting over 700 families. In Naroda Patiya alone they claim to have rebuilt over 550 homes. When they repaired the homes of victims, they used the money the government gave these families as compensation for this purpose and used it to make the place habitable again to the extent possible. During the construction period the victims were still in camps or with relatives and friends. Surely, all of this is highly commendable, especially in light of the hostile atmosphere in Gujarat and the antagonistic attitude of the state government (Plates 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5).

In resettlement colonies such as Citizen Nagar, Yes Complex and Faizal Park, set up by the IRC, the occupants were charged ₹10,000 per unit before they could move in; the money, in all cases, is from the compensation received from the government as mentioned earlier. These are single-room units built on plots not exceeding 24 feet by 12 feet. Each dwelling has a small kitchen space tucked in, and the residents have to use common toilet and bath facilities. In this sense, they resemble the Mumbai chawls described earlier. They have separate electricity metres which they have to pay for, as also a monthly charge for drawing water from a borewell dug in the precincts by the respective FBOs. This is also true for the units built by GSRC in Ramola. In 2009, those in Citizen Nagar benefited from the activism of students and faculty of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad and now have tankers bringing them water everyday. The residents, however, are not given any ownership papers, nor can they transfer occupancy rights to anybody else. The structure still belongs to the Trust and the residents are assured that they will never be displaced from there. This is a huge consolation for those who chose to live in these resettlement colonies, having done so out of fear of returning to their old neighbourhoods where they were so victimised. It must be mentioned here that part of Citizen Nagar was constructed by Dorabji Yatimkhana Trust. The ownership rights of these 30 houses have been handed over, with no strings attached, to the occupants of the units.

The management of these FBOs have a different point of view. They believe that it is essential to keep a check on how the units they have constructed in the residential colonies are used. They do
Justice before Reconciliation

Plate 2.3: The plaque at the entrance of Citizen Nagar says it all.

not want them to be sold later to the highest bidder by the original occupants, or to be let out on rent. These homes are given to those who have suffered huge losses, and not for monetary gain, either for the organisation or for those who live in them. This is why they
Plate 2.4: Citizen Nagar constructed by Islamic Relief Committee. Note the mound of rubbish that looks like a hill in the background.
argue that the ownership rights should vest with the FBOs that made these units possible.

Tablighi Jamaat is not quite as active in establishing resettlement colonies, though they have built a few, such as the one in Modassa. They are more interested in making sure that Muslims follow the right path and continuously exhort among the faithful the true spirit of Islam. There is no overt rivalry, or hostility, between the JI, JU and TJ, but there is no question of any merger between them either. Each FBO constructs and manages its own refugee colonies separately. This is because their parent organisations have differing views on a number of themes, including relationships with political parties.

Staking Claims on the State: Handling the Administrative Machinery

After the camps were closed down, the pressure to get back on one’s feet and begin a routine life became a paramount concern. But that was hard to establish. The quotidian world had to be recreated, and new alignments and equations had to be arrived at.
An important starting point in this process was the interaction with the official administrative machinery with which the victims had little to do in the immediate aftermath of the killings.

Rehabilitation efforts were of greater significance in Gujarat than in Mumbai for reasons already explained. But like Maharashtra, here too the rules and regulations for getting relief were cumbersome. Apart from the ex-gratia payment of ₹ 2,00,000 to the next of kin of those killed in both Gujarat and Maharashtra, the Gujarat government fixed a small amount ranging from ₹ 5,000 to ₹ 50,000 as to the permanently disabled. Later government notifications brought down these payments by fixing a scale of disability: for 10 per cent disability it was ₹ 2,000, between 10 to 30 per cent the amount was fixed at ₹ 3,000, slowly sliding up to permanent disability when the victim would get ₹ 50,000 (PUDR 2002 quoted in Vardarajan 2002). Not only was the amount niggardly, it was also very difficult for a person to certify the extent of his or her disability. In the absence of standard rules, it became very hard for victims to get any compensation at all. In addition, victims living in camps found it extremely trying to file First Information Reports (FIRs) as they had to be lodged in the police station under whose jurisdiction the crime is said to have been committed. This ruled out the legal status of practically every FIR.

In this onerous job of filing claims from the government, the Muslim organisations were once again at the forefront. But here one could see the presence of other NGOs too. ANHAD, Antarik Vishtapith Heet Rakshah Samiti, Prashant, Unnati, CARE (Ahmed 2004) and Oxfam (Multi-Disciplinary Team 2002), and several other such organisations, worked with the victims on this issue. A number of NGOs also came under one umbrella, such as the Citizens’ Initiative, to ease, to the extent possible, the situation in these camps. The work of the volunteers from the Ahmedabad-based NGO, Aman Pathik, was also commended by many survivors, as well as by members of the JI. In addition, there were many non-Muslims, without any formal organisational links, who also came in substantial numbers to help victims get compensation and redressal from state authorities (see Mander 2004: 58–62). Together, these stories make for a very stirring account of humanity and courage.
Winning Trust: The Case of the Mohalla Committee

In Mumbai the Mohalla (neighbourhood) Committee set up by F. T. Khorakiwala (a noted Muslim businessman of Mumbai, once Sheriff of this metropolis and whose name is associated with the iconic department store, Akbarally, in Mumbai’s prestigious Fort area), with the assistance of Nirmala Niketan, also helped victims to get compensation from the government (Tripathi 1997: 57). This idea grew over time and several such Mohalla Committees came up in different parts of Mumbai. Gradually many folded up because they did not have the organisational grid to sustain themselves. This aspect of rehabilitation unfairly receives scant attention, but it played an important role in bringing the victims closer to the state, as well as to neighbours, friends, well-wishers and secular organisations. Together they helped instil a greater sense of confidence in the victims and fashion a ‘new’ normal around which their everyday lives could be plotted. This was the secondary benefit of working to help victims get their legitimate dues from the state government.

Winning the trust of the victims is not an easy matter. Even as they work with volunteers and other activists to file their claims, they are always wary for they have been so terribly brutalised. The story of Altaf Tyrewalla as narrated by Rowena Robinson (2005: 195) is illustrative in this context. Altaf was an ordinary citizen of Mumbai. He was lucky not to have been physically hurt by the riots, nor was his property damaged. Yet he was very moved by the events in Mumbai and reached out to help the victims of the riots. The first time he went to the homes of the deceased, he was turned back. The next time he went with the District Collector and helped to process applications for scholarships. He was able to follow this up with assisting the victims make compensation cases, filling forms for ration cards and so on. As Robinson concludes, ‘it was trust constructed gradually on the basis of these myriad tiny actions that alone could build the larger projects of political discernment across communities’ (ibid.). It must be added that Altaf did not see his work as a form of religious engagement. For him it was something he would do happily for victims regardless of the community they came from (ibid.: 197). Once again we must guard ourselves from assuming that if someone of a certain
faith helps a coreligionist, then this sympathy is entirely for reasons of community.

Julius Ribeiro, former police chief of Mumbai, had a similar story to tell. According to Ribeiro, Muslims did not initially want to participate in these peace committees because they had no faith in them. Amin Khandwani, an influential Muslim from Mahim, refused to endorse the Mohalla Committee for he had lost faith in the secular character of Mumbai society. He told Ribeiro that before he could attend any of the Committee meetings, he would have to convince the women in his family and in his neighbourhood as they were the most incensed by the way they were attacked during the Mumbai riots. This is where Sushobha Barve did a marvellous job, Ribeiro said, in convincing the women to come forward and help the Mohalla Committees.

The Mohalla Committee was set up police station (thana) wise and spread out in about 23 sensitive areas of Mumbai, like Nagpada, Dindaushi, Nirmal Nagar and Jogeshwari. The idea was that this Committee would meet in the police station, and the Station House Officer (SHO) would be the presiding authority. This would bring about a greater rapport between policemen and Muslims in each thana and establish cordial relations between them. This, Ribeiro believed, was important as the widespread belief among Muslims was that policemen by and large behaved in a partisan fashion during the violence in Mumbai and favoured Hindu organisations like the Shiv Sena. It was often remarked in those days that once a policeman stepped out of his uniform he became a Shiv Sainik. This is why the efforts of Ribeiro, Satish Sahani and Sushobha Barve are so commendable.

To make these Mohalla Committees relevant to the daily lives of its members, issues such as water, electricity and other civic amenities were also taken up. Sadly, not many Hindus came regularly, but the Muslims did because they wanted to establish a rapport with the police. According to Ribeiro,

Once Muslims realized the worth of Mohalla Committees they were quite keen to make them a success. Quite rightly, they realized that this was an effective way to keep in touch with the police whom they need from time to time for a variety of reasons. It need not always be riots and looting. We too thought that interactions with Muslims
Ribeiro and his colleagues repeatedly met these families, and it was after a number of such interactions that the Mohalla Committees got off the ground. Ribeiro said that:

the affected Muslim families were first of all very angry that they were attacked and exosed the way they were; but in addition they had also lost faith in the civic administration of Mumbai and in the civility of the people. Can you blame them?

When one compares Mumbai with Gujarat on the question of providing help to the victims to deal with the administrative machinery, a few interesting points of contrast emerge. In Mumbai, there were many agencies within the government that were sympathetic to the victims. The first Mohalla Committee was set up by Khorakiwala and was soon supported by Julius Ribeiro who in turn said that he was encouraged by the then Director General of Police of Mumbai, Satish Sahani. Sahani, however, believes that Mohalla Committees received legitimacy in Mumbai because of people like Ribeiro and Sushbha Barve. Soon several such Committees came up all over the city. True, as Sahani, ruefully noted, many Committees did not last for very long, and the ones that continued were not very active, but the fact that they did come up at all is noteworthy. They made it somewhat easier for victims to interact with the state bureaucracy in the early days when the trauma of the riots was fresh in their memory and the wounds were still wide open.

In Gujarat, on the other hand, not only was there no administrative support, there was downright hostility. The state machinery was self-consciously, by design and diktat, unhelpful to those victims who made claims on the government for relief. This can be easily judged from the way Chief Minister Modi undermined the setting up of camps for the riot victims. Even administrative officials who tried to help were undermined by the state authorities. According to Gagan Sethi of Jan Sangharsh Manch, when P. G. J. Namboodir, the retired Director General of Police, offered to assist civil rights' activists in delivering justice to Bilkis Bano who was brutally raped in the 2002 riots, he was shunned by his fellow officers.
and eventually left Ahmedabad and moved to Kerala in disgust. This case was eventually resolved in favour of Bilkis Bano, and it is to the credit of NGOs that it was successfully accomplished in a Mumbai court in 2005. But as Gagan Sethi observed, it cost about ₹30 lakh (₹300,000) to cover court fees and travel charges for justice to be delivered. Hence, his rueful remark: ‘How can poor people afford the due process of the law?’

A large number of NGOs did what they could to assist in this regard, but the major work in this field too was done by Muslim organisations. While the VHP activists went to jails to feed those few Hindus who were picked up for rioting, it was the Jamaats that fed the Muslims in prison (Mander 2004: 62). Both the Jamaat-i-Islam-i-Hind (JI) and Jamait-i-Ulema-i-Hind (JU), through their front organisations, did the best they could in the face of such obvious hostility from the state. They had to counter many obstacles that the government set up on a number of fronts. Eventually, this compelled them to rely primarily on their own resources. This indeed was a very heavy burden, so great that it forced the NGOs out of the reckoning, leaving primarily the FBOs to pick up the pieces. As mentioned earlier, many FBO activists admitted that several non-Muslim NGOs assisted in these efforts, but there was so much that had to be done.

A number of Muslim youth, not attached to any particular organisation, also showed great resolve and came out to lend a hand and support the victims. Though very few of them have kept up relations with those whom they once helped, they are gratefully remembered by a number of victims. This was more true of Mumbai than of Ahmedabad. Several residents of Tulsiwadi in Mumbai seem to have been the beneficiaries of such assistance from people unknown to them. They knew they were Muslims from their names, but not much more. In Gujarat such accounts are fewer, but it was interesting that some of them were recounted by residents of Naroda Patiya, the worst affected neighbourhood of Ahmedabad. Given the hostility of the state, it required courage on the part of these young volunteers for they were without any organisational support. Both the IRC and GSRC representatives in Gujarat also accepted that several Muslim youth, not formally linked with them, freely offered their services during those difficult days.
It is widely acknowledged by all organisations working in Gujarat and elsewhere that it is very important to get the children to school, women to feel secure and the able-bodied back to work as quickly as possible after ethnic displacements. Muslim organisations again helped the most in finding placements for those who had become unemployed. This task was enormously difficult as many of them were refused jobs by their earlier employers. In some cases, victims had to start all over again as they had now moved to a new locality. Many Muslims who were self-employed and ran stores had to be funded to start life again. From push-carts, tools and implements to small loans, Islamic organisations did as much as they could to help the victims, and so did a number of NGOs (some have already been mentioned). Fortunately, after a period of time, many contractors began hiring their old Muslim hands once again. As a Muslim artisan told me,

The job had to be done, a lot of time had passed since the killings, their passionate hatred of us had also dimmed, so it was alright now to put me back in their employ again.

This is the story of many others who were also in a similar predicament. More of this is discussed later.

The situation with children also needed urgent attention. Their schooling had suffered not only by the disturbances that surrounded them, but later by a fear that would not leave them.

In many of the relief camps, schools were run by the management or Trust, but these were not along formal lines. Later, when the camps closed down, it was found that some Muslim children were afraid to go back to their regular schools. In a few instances the Islamic Relief Committee was able to establish schools in affected areas of Ahmedabad, but clearly not on a large scale. I went to one such school in Naroda Patiya in Ahmedabad. It was housed in a small two-storied structure in the very heart of the neighbourhood that saw the maximum devastation of Muslim lives and property. I was told by many residents of Citizen Nagar that in the early years of its formation, SEWA offered to pay the school fees of some of the children in the locality who were now going to a new school. I did not get a clear answer to the question as to what happened to children who had nowhere else to go but to their old schools.
Obviously, neither Islamic organisations nor NGOs could set up enough schools to meet the demand to have them nearer home. Further, I was told by an official of IRC that there was no point in setting up schools that were not going to be recognised by the government. Hence, they needed permission to build such schools, and this permission took a long time in coming; in some cases, they complained, the order never came.

In answer to my persistent questioning on how the school problem was resolved for the many who did not live in Muslim areas, the answer I generally got was that over a period of time, children slowly mustered up enough courage to shuffle their way back to their old schools. Obviously, this process of going to school began in those places where Muslims were in a majority. In these neighbourhoods it was easier for parents to send their children to school as they would remain within Muslim-majority areas and would, therefore, be more secure. Even so, according to activist Indulal Jani, a poor Muslim area like Juhapura does not have a high school. Further, according to him, of the 81 re-settlement colonies he has surveyed, 68 of them had no schools at all (see Malekar 2010). In Naroda Patiya, the organisers of the Ekra School set up by the IRC believe that they to an extent helped to break the psychology of fear. Alongside, it was also necessary to stem the tide of Muslim school dropouts as many children were afraid to go to school and their parents too were often too scared to send them, particularly when it was some distance away. In one case at least, the IRC helped set up a coaching class in Patalvada with the help of an educated youth in order to retain the interest in education of those who had missed school during their days in the camp.

In Mumbai, getting back to school was not really a problem for Muslim children. As the scale at which violence occurred against them was much lower than was the case in Ahmedabad, and as Mumbai is a vast and sprawling metropolis that prizes anonymity, Muslim children took public transport to school not too long after the violence ceased. This was in stark contrast to the situation in Ahmedabad where even today parents are often scared to send their children to a school which is some distance away from their homes. It is true that in the weeks after the riots children stayed home, the girls longer than the boys, but it did not
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last long. Immediately after the killings, it seemed as if girls, at least, would remain cloistered at home. But now even a cursory visit to Mumbai’s Muslim-dominated localities would show that girl children have returned to schools and, according to Census figures, their numbers seem to be increasing.

Women victims of the violence were worst affected for a number of reasons. Those who were raped often denied the fact for fear of being ostracised by the community (Kannabiran 2002; Lakshminarayana et al. 2002: 4), even though they bore every other form of humiliation and deprivation they were subjected to during the Mumbai riots. It is probably for this reason that the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 1998: 24) believes that a concern for women should be built into the rehabilitation process. Olakh, an NGO, goes so far as to make it a policy not to employ men in their organisation (see Ahmed 2004: 97).

Most of the NGOs and FBOs felt that an important way by which women could get back some of their confidence was to work with them on a number of everyday issues, from health to psychological counselling, to training them in certain crafts and so on (ibid.: 100; Plate 2.6).

Women felt more betrayed than men at the treachery of their neighbours who had come out to kill them and loot their belongings. This is probably because women spend a lot of time at home as housewives and hence their interactions with those who live around them is more intense (see also Lakshminarayana et al. 2002: 3). In the Gujarat violence about 500 women became widows and some of them were forced to head their households — a job they were not traditionally accustomed to. Widows, as Ramphele (2000: 99–100) argued, were always in a 'liminal stage', and they were monitored closely in a way that widowers never are. In addition, widows face a lot of opposition from their dead husband’s relatives on a number of issues, including why she alone should get compensation after the husband’s death (Robinson 2005: 147). It is for all these reasons that women survivors are most prone to ‘post-traumatic disorders’ (Lakshminarayana et al., 2002: 2–4), and more young girl survivors than boys stay home and drop out of schools. The normal world of a woman is disturbed on every front, including the most intimate interactions at home. Many men divorce their wives if they have been sexually attacked,
Plate 2.6: Widows of Naroda Patiya and Vatava, Ahmedabad.
and the family ceases any longer to act as a unit and a cementing force for many of them (Lakshminarayana et al. 2002: 18). They fear there is no safe place for them any more (ibid.: 22).

These traumatised women can be helped by sensitive counselling that appreciates the many changes that they are going through, both at the physical and mental level. A woman needs support on all fronts, from housing to education, to health, to security and legal help (Lakshminarayana et al. 2002: 19). This is why Gagan Sethi argues that the judgement on the Bilkis Bano case was so important. Group activities such as prayer meetings, recreational activities cooking classes, livelihood assistance, all add up to gradually repair a ravaged woman’s life. These exercises should begin in the refugee camp itself and should not wait till the victims are moved to their homes, new or old (ibid.: 33–8). These small things of life are very significant, and one should not lose sight of them even as efforts for compensation, building homes, getting claims filed and, most of all, justice continue.

Notes

4. For the record, the late Sunil Dutt was not just an actor, but also a Congress MP from Mumbai.
5. Winning trust through what may seem insignificant everyday activities is a tactic that Rashtrasevikas (lit. female national volunteers) of the RSS employ to win adherents to their fold. Tanika Sarkar (1993) details the many little things these women activists do in their localities to persuade people to join their organisation. They drop in for tea, organise blood banks and help the women become economically more self-reliant (ibid.: 33).

Javeed Alam documents similarly how the Majlis-e-Ittehad-u-Muslimeen won the trust of Muslim victims of Hyderabad violence in the mid-1980s ‘by providing at a minimal level things which in a society like India one looks to the state to provide’ (Alam 1993: 169).
Ethnic tensions give rise to considerations of development for two reasons. First, it is often assumed that victims of ethnic violence are attacked for economic advantage. The only way to counter this is to raise the living standards of the victimisers so that they are no longer attracted by this economic drive. The second is a little more complex. As ethnic killings hurt normal economic activity, those who are economically the most vulnerable suffer the most. Therefore, in Ahmedabad for example, the Muslims face not just the wrath of Hindu activists but also tremendous insecurity of jobs and livelihoods. They are the weakest, from every point of view.

In order to examine this issue closely, it must first be corrected that victims of ethnic riots are not always an economically disadvantaged community (the Sikhs, for example). Second, ethnic violence does not erupt; it is not for economic reasons. However, once tension and killings grip the area, there are definite economic consequences, but it is not clear who the winners are. The losers are, of course, the victims. How then do they cope with this loss?

In this chapter these two concerns, viz., the question of economic drives behind ethnic riots and how victims cope with their economic downturn will be examined. Of the two, more space will be devoted to the second issue as it has greater relevance for understanding both rehabilitation and the search for a ‘new normal’, which are central queries of this study.

Concerns of development conjure multiple images. There are the ‘hard’ issues of economic growth and industrial infrastructure, but there are also ‘soft’ issues that are perhaps equally, if not
more, important. The most eminent among these is the need to enhance citizenship bonds irrespective of ascriptive differences. When discussing development in the context of ethnicity, and that too in the Indian context, such soft issues gain salience. We are compelled to ask how minority rights of citizens can be both protected and promoted, and what threatens them the most. To get a measure of this it is necessary to examine how the affected minority community, in this case the Muslims of Mumbai and Ahmedabad, copes with the economic losses they suffered during the ethnic carnages against them in the recent past. Once we have an understanding of this, it is possible to think in terms of setting in place policies that address the soft issues of development, particularly in relation to minority uplift and betterment. While at this, we might recall the plight of the Sikhs, who were also once an embattled minority, though our emphasis in this chapter is primarily devoted to Muslim victims of Mumbai 1993 and Ahmedabad 2002.

**Economic Rivalry or Ethnicisation: Can Muslims Compete?**

To set the stage for this one needs to be clear if 'soft' development issues, such as those of citizenship and minority rights, are threatened in India by the 'hard' issues of scarce economic resource allocation and competition over growth investments. Such an exercise does not presume that only economic issues matter, but as they are an important aspect of development they must be examined closely.

In no major ethnic violence in post-Independence India have Muslims or Sikhs been attacked because Hindus want their jobs, or feel economically threatened by them. It is often believed that developmental blockages cause ethnic riots, but is this really the case in India? Stanley Tambiah argues that ethnic wars occur because of disputes over the claims to the state's resources. In his opinion the 'present plethora of ethnic conflicts ... coincides with an increasing shrinking of economic horizons ...' (1997: 340). Horowitz's (2002: 145) depiction of the rivalry between communities in Burma, or between Sinhalese and Tamils, or the Afro-Guyanese and East Indians could perhaps exemplify this argument, but India does not afford any convincing evidence in this regard. This is not, however, to say that some Indian scholars have not
made claims of this sort. Some have cited conflicting business interests (Banu 1989: 128), others settling old professional rivalries (Das 1990: 14; Srinivasan 1990: 317), not to mention urban overcrowding leading to real-estate speculations (Ghosh 1987: 31), and of course, the builder–underworld nexus (Tripathi 1997: 20). But none of these carry conviction. Why? For the simple reason that the majority community has never coveted the jobs or businesses of the minority communities they have looted and destroyed, not in Ahmedabad, not in Mumbai, not in Assam and not even in Delhi.

At one level it sounds very persuasive that as aspirations rise, competition becomes fierce and what better way of meeting this challenge than to cast one's opponent in religious/ethnic terms and then attack them? In different ways this point of view has a large number of subscribers. Toft (2003) and Carment (2007) believe that material benefits are essential to attract participation in ethnic violence. Brass (1991: 15, 42, 47) spells out this position by arguing that elite mobilisation and conflict build on the sense of Relative Deprivation to heighten antagonism between warring ethnic groups led by their respective elite. Sergenti and Thomas (2005) hold that economic imbalances surcharge ethnic prejudices and they cumulatively lead to sectarian violence.

Plausible though these arguments may sound, the Muslim victims of ethnic riots in India are nowhere near economic equals of Hindus. Nor are Hindu interests in any way diminished by Muslim campaigns for a larger share of the development cake. Nor even can we sustain Juergensmeyer’s (2000: 193) claim that the opposition between the rural interests of Sikhs and the urban interests of Hindu Khatris stoked the fires of secessionism in Punjab in the 1980s. While rural Sinhalese may resent urban Tamil affluence (Horowitz 2002: 145) leading to violent tensions in Sri Lanka, the Indian case is different. It was not as if in Punjab demands of irrigation versus industry pitted Sikhs against Hindus. A large number of Sikhs live in cities, and that is where they were hurt most by Hindu mobs. Rural Punjab was relatively tranquil.

There is no doubt that Hindu activists object to free mixing of the sexes and are votaries of traditional rituals and beliefs, yet they are not against the fruits of modernisation or industrialisation, as Juergensmeyer (2000: 228) seems to suggest. Interestingly, Muslims have never been attacked because their women are
‘forward’, ‘bold’ or job-seeking, nor because they are more adept at leveraging modernity. The Hindus of Gujarat were prosperous in 2002 when ethnic attacks against Muslims took place, and they continue to be so even today. This also puts paid to any straight correlation between economic collapse and ethnic violence in India, though it might make sense in other places (Horowitz 2002: 133; Testas 2002: 161–83). This also leads us to be sceptical of Saideman and Steinberg when they assert that the greater the government’s interference the higher the chances of identity politics (Science Today 2008). By 2002, Gujarat and India had economically liberalised and all available statistics suggest that the state, nationally and regionally, was seriously ‘rolling back’.

We should at this point be careful to separate ethnicity from nationalism and return to matters of definition, but this time in the context of economic interests and motivations. Ethnicity draws its ideological strength from the conviction that there are specific communities within that are intent on partitioning and seceding from the nation-state (see for example, Toft 2003: 39–42). This is why in no mainstream ethnic charter do the sectarians have a clear economic axe to grind. Nationalism historically precedes ethnicity for the claims it makes are on the basis of a defined territory from which aliens have to be expelled, nearly always for economic reasons. Nationalism is when the hitherto dominated hit back at the dominants who come from a different cultural and historical stock and who are economically more powerful. On the other hand, in ethnic clashes in India, it is the strong attacking the weak. When the Hindu majority kill and loot the weak minorities, they are spurred by the belief that they are protecting the nation-state and its territories from outsiders who masquerade as insiders. In the case of the Indian national movement, it is possible to say that rural and urban middle class interests provided the leadership and ideology for the movement (Chandra 1984: 39, 43, 319). But when it comes to ethnic clashes such material interests cannot be discerned, not even in a ‘surrogate’ fashion (Demerath 2001: 176–77).

India does not provide the necessary evidence to sustain the argument that material interests instigate ethnic wars. As mentioned earlier, Muslim victims are nearly always the very poor. Nobody wants their jobs and nobody gains economically by chasing them out of the neighbourhood. It is however another matter that
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real-estate speculators and commercial operators, some probably part of the underworld, take advantage of ethnic unrest. For example, Majid Khan, ironically a Mumbai-based Muslim builder and also a politically influential person, is said to have links with veteran Shiv Sena leader, Madhukar Sarpotdar, and the two have ambitions of taking over parts of Behrempada slum in Mumbai. I was told by many Muslim residents of Behrampada how hard they had to work to keep Majid Khan and his M. K. Builders out. The matter went to court and they were able to keep these builders at bay, but for how long? The threat apparently has not gone away completely and may surface again. But these builders did not cause the bloodshed, they merely fed off it. This adds to the hardship of the Muslim community.

To get a better understanding of the underclass status of most (but not all) Indian Muslims, a glance at some macro-level figures might help.

Muslims are generally self-employed, or merchants and traders, or just very poor labourers and craftsmen. While 39.4 per cent of Muslims fall in the category ‘own account worker in household enterprises’, the proportion for the general population is only 30.7 per cent and for other minorities 31.4 per cent (Sachar 2006; Tables 5.3 and 5.4: 111–12). Further, while 76.9 per cent of Hindus fall in the informal sector, the proportion is a much higher 92.1 per cent for Muslims (ibid. Table 5.5: 113; see also Table 5.9: 117). The informal sector includes a whole range of activities such as rolling bidis, weaving carpets, making incense sticks, embroidering cushions, running stores and so on. If one were to go to Dharavi or Khoja Chawl or Mohammed Ali Road in Mumbai one would find only small shopkeepers and petty entrepreneurs from the Muslim community. Likewise, Muslims tend to be loom and carpet-weavers in large parts of the country — from Uttar Pradesh to Maharashtra. Many of them pursue this line of occupation in Mumbai too. I met several such people in Mumbai’s Tulsiwadi area where a number of Muslims ran away to their villages in north India to escape the violence in their neighbourhood.

When we come to salaried employees, once again only 23 per cent of Muslims fall in this category as against 35.5 per cent for Hindus (Sachar 2006, Appendix Table 5.2: 320). Development investments do not benefit them, other than very indirectly, as they are small traders, run roadside enterprises, work as mechanics and
as artisans, not always independently. Funds for developmental purposes never help such people directly, and, in that sense, they appear to be beyond the horizon of planners and economic experts. Anybody who works in these informal sectors is neglected, and there is nothing special about being Muslim. Further, Muslims are proportionately better represented in urban India than in the villages. Only 40 per cent of Muslims are engaged in agriculture, while the proportion of Hindus is over 58 per cent (Sachar 2006: 98–99). Muslim farmers do not constitute a special economic category of any significance. If some benefit were to be given to agriculture, Muslim cultivators too would benefit. But Muslims are not big landowners, nor substantial owner-cultivators anywhere in Gujarat. If anything, they have economic recognition as traders, and it is par for the course for this occupation to be as inoffensive and undemanding as possible (Plate 3.1).

Plate 3.1: Home-based work in Gomtipur, Ahmedabad.

Competition over scarce resources as part of ‘development dialectics’ is therefore not a very convincing argument to explain ethnic violence. When not in business, where they remain low key, they are mostly unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in the informal sector. One reason for this is that Indian Muslims are primarily from the poorer social economic category and this is
what denies them education which in turn disqualifies them from holding proper jobs in the organised and formal sectors. Muslims are then not a presence in India’s labour aristocracy which is why there is little economic incentive for the lower Hindu classes to see them as competitors. So, regardless of which end of the economic spectrum one views the Muslims from in India, they are passive bystanders and often victims of the development discourse, but they never set the tone and trend.

This should not be taken to mean that there are no qualified Muslims in India. There are many Muslims who are educated and have been to university, but even so their presence in government and in organised industry is disproportionately lower than their population strength in the country as a whole. A mere 5.8 per cent of Muslims are to be found in the formal sector, while in the case of Hindus the figure is much higher at 12.3 per cent. The same trend holds for government jobs as well (Sachar 2006, Table 5.5: 113). It has been widely reported that there are proportionately fewer Muslims in the police, army and the administrative services; and likewise their proportionate numbers are low in private limited and public sector companies. The National Sample Survey (61st Round) points out that whereas 35.3 per cent Hindus are in the government sector, only 23.7 per cent of Muslims find jobs there. This feature, as we have mentioned earlier, can also be seen in government and private limited companies (ibid.: 320).

Why should Muslims shy away from organised sector employment? The answers are not very clear. It has often been suggested that after Partition the most qualified Muslims left for Pakistan. But this does not explain why qualified Muslims are hard to find in the organised sector. After all, there are Muslim graduates from universities like Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University.

Another way of appreciating this phenomenon is to look at the mode of remuneration. A higher proportion of Muslims than of Hindus is paid on a daily or piece-rate basis. Only about 81 per cent Muslims working for a salary get their wages regularly by the month in comparison to 90.4 per cent of Hindus. Not surprisingly then, percentage-wise more Muslims get paid by the week or by the day unlike in the case of Hindus (Sachar 2006, Table 5.13: 120). Further, 35.3 per cent Hindus are in salaried employment in
organised private and public sector non-agricultural occupations, but the figure for Muslims is only 23.7 per cent (Sachar 2006, Appendix Table 5.2: 320). These numbers can be rounded off by looking at the statistics regarding the percentage of Muslims in manufactories. Once again, almost double the percentage of Muslims, as compared to Hindus, can be found in small manufacturing units (ibid.: 342). For example, 41 per cent of all male workers in the tobacco industry are Muslims, and above 30 per cent of those working in the garment industry are also Muslims (ibid.: 9). One must remember while looking at these figures that Muslims form only 13 per cent of the population. A tentative suggestion in this regard is that state and administrative authorities, as well as private sector family firms, are biased against them. Even if that may not be completely true, Muslims perceive this bias, and this stops them from even trying to seek positions in the formal sectors of the economy. I have heard many Muslims say this, but it is hard to ascertain the veracity of such statements.

I should think that the all-India figures on Muslims with regard to occupations suggest also that though they are largely among the poorer sections of the population, they are however better represented than other religious groups in micro to small businesses and in self-employed enterprises. The National Sample Survey (61st Round) figures are quite useful in this regard, but the question that needs to be asked is whether this outcome is the result of bias against them in the organised sectors of employment.

To return to the main points illustrated so far, at the all-India level 92.1 per cent Muslims work in the informal sector as against 76.9 per cent for Hindus. In the formal sector accordingly only 7.9 per cent Muslims find work, which is indeed very low. Even in rural India, 94.2 per cent of Muslims are in the informal sector (Sachar, 2006, Table 5.5: 113). As Muslims are also under-represented in agriculture, their dependence on manufactories and small and informal enterprises is that much greater (ibid. Table 5.9: 117). Again, 16.8 per cent of Muslims are in retail and wholesale trade as compared to 8.1 per cent Hindus (ibid.: 117). In all such jobs, skill levels are very low, and what is basically being sold is cheap labour. Quite in keeping with this trend, a greater percentage of Muslims than Hindus lack a fixed place of work (ibid.: 115).
These all-India figures are more or less representative of Gujarat and Maharashtra. It cannot be said on the basis of employment why Muslims have been so ferociously, and repeatedly, attacked in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. It is not as if there are more Muslims in the unorganised sector in Gujarat or Maharashtra, as compared to the rest of the country, to justify such cruel injustices against them in these states. What comes through is that it is not the economy or the structure of employment that can account for the vulnerability of Muslims in certain parts of the country. The responsibility must, therefore, lie with politics. This is why any attempt to explain such ethnic riots in terms of economic tensions is not just wrong but perhaps also lends a modicum of respectability to Hindu rioters.

By the same token, as Hindus and Muslims are to be found in nearly the same proportions in different jobs in most parts of the country, economic profiles cannot explain why ethnic tensions are stronger in one place and not the other. Once again, political considerations and calculations stoke such mobilisations, and it should also be borne in mind that not all conspiracies of this order succeed. However, when they do, it is almost as if it was waiting to happen. That is why in most post-factum explanations it is made to appear as if the two communities, viz., the Hindus and the Muslims, are ordained to be locked in eternal and unequal battles in India.

Where Money Matters: How Rich Muslims Respond

Interestingly, when discussing victims of ethnic violence it is so easy to overlook the fact that there are rich Muslims too who were affected. Not only are some Muslims rich and others poor, but between the two there is a cultural divide that is generally ignored. Most poor Muslims in Mumbai or Ahmedabad are not native to the place or even the province. The affluent Muslims, on the other hand, are Bohra, Khoja and Memon who have their business and cultural roots in west India stretching from Maharashtra to Gujarat (Engineer 1989; Shani 2007: 28–29). They also consider themselves to be converts to Islam from Hindu upper castes (Shani 2007: 29), and often address the poorer Muslims by the term mianbhai (Yadav 1999: 190; Islamic Voice 2003). In the Naroda Patiya area which saw the worst carnage in Ahmedabad in 2002, the victims were nearly all migrants, the bulk of them from Karnataka.
Contrary to Ahmedabad, in Mumbai a large number of rich Muslims extended help to their poorer coreligionist. As was mentioned earlier, important Muslim businessmen like Khorakiwala, Wahid Ali and Zakulla Siddiqi played leading roles in initiating the Aman (or peace) Committees in Mumbai after the 1993 unrest in the city. Other prosperous Muslims also contributed in a number of ways of the welfare of the riot-affected. Among them mention may also be made of Khairul Islam, Mohammed Ali, Dudhwala and Feroze Mithaiwala. Interestingly, even political leaders like Nawab Mallik, Gulzar Sheikh and S. R. Jamkhanwala lent their weight and influence to help, often rescue, Muslims from their embattled homes. As has already been noted, the only religious personality who figured repeatedly in the recounting of the horrific days in 1993 was Maulana Bukhari who, at tremendous personal risk, rescued many Muslims from Pratiksha Nagar in Mumbai. But these were firefighting operations to help Muslims return to their earlier status, and it is not as if they were being placed on a development trajectory.

Sadly, there are no comparable stories of this kind in Gujarat. At least they do not readily come to the surface as they do in Mumbai. Well-to-do Gujarati Muslims in Ahmedabad do not have the presence that the Muslim elite have in Mumbai. There are no significant Muslim political leaders in Gujarat, not even in Ahmedabad. Being a Congress Party member did not help save the life of Ahsan Jaffry who was burnt to death in his apartment in Ahmedabad’s Gulberg Society. Finally, the way in which the state government of Gujarat sponsored the killings and looting of Muslims left even the well off Muslims numb and fearful.

The Muslims who suffered the least were those in government services. They returned to work almost instantly after the riots were over. They were the ones who were practically unhurt by the events. Khalid Quereshi, a government municipal worker in Mumbai, said that his Hindu office colleagues and friends provided him and his family with shelter when the rioting took place. But this category of Muslim government employees is, once again, fairly sizable only in Mumbai. In this metropolis one comes across a large number of Muslims employed by the city’s municipal corporation. In our limited sweep of affected Muslims in Ahmedabad, we did not come across a single person who worked in a government office.
There must be many who do, but the fact that we did not encounter them is as a significant observation. In addition, the disappearance of the once prosperous textile mills of Ahmedabad has also taken away the prospects of a regular wage for the many Muslims and Hindus who worked there (see Breman 1997; Shah 1970).

Rich Muslims in Ahmedabad worked their way back into business, though, as some of them said, not always at the same level of affluence. According to the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the total economic loss the state suffered during the 2002 rioting was to the tune of ₹ 2000 crore (1 crore is equal to 10 million), and the bulk of it actually hurt only Muslims. The Concerned Citizens' Tribunal (2002) estimated that over 1,150 restaurants and hotels operated by Muslims in Gujarat were looted leading to a loss of ₹ 600 crore. Muslims who had invested in the transportation sector lost over ₹ 800 crore. Likewise, prosperous Muslim merchants who ran expensive showrooms and large factories faced losses of over ₹ 400 crore as their enterprises were burnt and looted. Many Muslim shop-owners and restaurateurs gave their establishments Hindu names, like Ashish Restaurant or Tulsi Restaurant, or had Hindu sleeping partners, but a large number of them were attacked nevertheless (ibid.). Obviously, much of the violence had been well planned. If we are at this point referring only to economic losses in Gujarat it is because in the 1993 upheavals in Mumbai, nearly all well-to-do Muslims successfully protected their lives and property.

Naturally, the coping methods that the rich and poor resort to are quite different. Rich Muslims borrow money from friends and relations to get back to business and some others migrate to other states, as did the Cheliya Muslims of Gujarat (Engineer 2003; Lakdawala 2002). It is not as if migration of Muslim business happened only in Gujarat. In Mumbai too several entrepreneurs and well-to-do merchants left the city for the suburbs. As far as we know, no Muslim businessman left Maharashtra, but there could be some.

A large number of Muslim entrepreneurs and merchants of Ahmedabad also have recourse to informal sources of credit in areas where they are numerically quite sizable. This fund is made up of contributions from these Muslim commercial classes and has
been used in the past for emergency relief when business plans go wrong among their partners. After 2002, I have been told that some of this money is also being used to help those business people whose establishments suffered during the violence. Interestingly, the management of this money is done at an informal level, and very little information about it seeps out to the general public. Nor is this fund linked to the mosque or to any overtly faith-based organisation. In addition, there is the very substantial Aga Khan Foundation whose resources are earmarked for the Ismailis.

Mumbai Muslims are more assertive than their counterparts in Ahmedabad, not only because Maharashtra is not ruled by the BJP or Narendra Modi, but because of the population demography and commercial topography of the city. In Mumbai there are areas like Gosht Bazaar and Khoja Chawl in Byculla or Bhendi Bazaar and Mohammad Ali Road where practically every tea vendor, draper, mechanic and bookseller is a Muslim. Their stores were untouched because they were in a predominantly Muslim locality. Even those who worked in these units, as daily, casual or permanent workers, found their jobs waiting for them once the rioting subsided in the city.

The closest we come to this in Ahmedabad is Relief Road and Sarangpur (attached to Gomtipur). But these areas are not quite as Muslim-dominated as those parts of Mumbai mentioned here. In Relief Road and in Sarangpur there are an equal number of Muslim and non-Muslim (primarily Sindhi) shop owners. Juhapura, which is heavily Muslim in population, is probably the poorest area in Ahmedabad’s urban agglomeration area and outside the Ahmedabad Municipal Council (see Chandhoke 2009). To make the city’s morphology more prone to sectarian influences, Ahmedabad’s residential map was traditionally along community lines. There were, therefore, neighbourhoods (or ‘Pols’, as they are locally called) which were either upper caste, or Scheduled Caste or Muslim populated (ibid.). While this gave the localities a multicastrate and multireligious character, it kept Hindus and Muslims and Scheduled Castes apart in carefully demarcated neighbourhoods. This is why, in times of ethnic violence, targeting of the other becomes easy. It is necessary to record that some of the bloodiest attacks on Muslims in Ahmedabad were launched from scheduled caste ‘Pols’ of this city.
Any Job will Do: How the Poor Cope

Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat, disparagingly characterised Muslims as a class of ‘tyre puncture repairers’. In his view this was all that the Muslims were good for, besides, as he put it, ‘producing children’. He went on to say that Gujarat needed skilled people and high-level technicians if it wanted to develop. Obviously, on this front, Modi felt that Muslims did not have the necessary skills that Gujarat could use to press forward (see Punwani 2003: 246).

Ironically, it may be their relative backwardness that perhaps allows Muslims to recover economically after ethnic violence, well before they are on even keel on other fronts. According to Nawab Malik (now Minister in Maharashtra cabinet):

After a riot we Muslims may be out of a job for some time. Hindus may frighten us into moving away to some other place. But in the end the same Hindus come to us for our services. We are not that weak. We are the ones who dominate the world of mechanics. From cars to air conditioners to television sets, one has to come to Muslims for repairs. This is why after a while we economically re-settle ourselves without anyone’s help.

So once a riot is over, with a bit of luck Muslims can reclaim their backward spots in the economy and allow development to bypass them as usual.

Regardless of what Chief Minister Modi may think of the developmental potential of poor Muslims, members of this community feel that it is their poverty that makes them extra-vulnerable when ethnic killings occur. Had they been better educated and better positioned they would not have been so brutally attacked; and if, after that, such violence were to happen, it would probably surface with greater ease. There is good enough reason to believe this, for in most such bloody events the poorer one is the more helpless one becomes at the hands of ethnics. One does not have to look far for evidence of this as the overwhelming number of victims in all ethnic violence come from the poorest section of the minoritised community — whether Sikh or Muslim.

No doubt, several better-off people were also attacked; the killings in Gulbarga Housing Society in Ahmedabad is a gruesome case in point. But when one counts the dead and the jobless post-carnage,
it is the poor who suffered the most. They lost their jobs, their shanty establishments, their trade tools, as well as the Hindu networks that linked them commercially to the city. It is another matter that these instances of loss do not add up to much in pure monetary terms, but when one is that poor, every bit counts. The segregated and dispersed manner in which their economic interests have suffered make it all the more difficult to tot up an impressive figure. Further, the fact that it was the poor Muslims who died during the violence also puts the economic factors in the shade. All of this should hardly be a surprise!

Surprisingly for me, within a year nearly all Muslim victims found work again. It needs to be added here that in getting employment or returning to their past employer, not much help came their way either from FBOs or from NGOs, or from the state, barring a few exceptions. For example, in Akbar Nagar in Ahmedabad seven women (out of over 150 families) said they had received sewing machines from NGOs like Aman Samuday and SEWA. This helped them to bring in a second income, however meagre. But on the whole, the role of such NGOs was very marginal, and to expect any more would be unrealistic.

We asked about 70 families each in both Mumbai and Ahmedabad to get an idea of what kind of job they found after the violence was over. On a subject like this it is not easy to get all the answers in copy book questionnaire form, but the overall figures are interesting. While 72 per cent of families interviewed in Mumbai said that they were worse off, when going through their economic status we found that about half (48 per cent) had actually retained the same job after the riots were over. Another 52 per cent approximately changed their jobs, either because they moved away from their earlier place of work or because their employer did not want them any more. These people may have suffered in real economic terms. Thus, while 72 per cent complain that they are economically worse off than before, it is not always because they have suffered on account of a change in their sources of income.

In Ahmedabad close to 80 per cent of the affected families we met complain that they are economically worse off after the 2002 riots. In fact, a VHP pamphlet (2002) admonished Hindus not to employ Muslims (see Oxfam and Bangalore Initiative
for Peace 2002; see also Press Release of Oxfam and Bangalore Initiative for Peace and Relief Press, 28 February 2002). The percentage of those who retained their earlier job is lower than the figure in Mumbai; only about 40 per cent reported that they retained their earlier job, which is a very low figure, but still much higher than I had anticipated. As many as 60 per cent, therefore, had to look elsewhere for employment. The fact that 10 of the 16 families we interviewed in Gomtipur area of Ahmedabad had to search for new employers gives us a feel of the gravity of the situation. Gomtipur, incidentally, is where in the shadow of the Shah Alam Mosque, Gujarat's largest refugee camp, was situated. But even here most of them found work within about four months of the riots. Such an outcome was not expected in the days and weeks following the violence in Gujarat. The initial period was, of course, very difficult, much worse than what we perceived was the situation in Mumbai; even so, a large number of Muslims slowly trickled into jobs, though not always to one to their satisfaction.

Women in Ahmedabad got a fair amount of slack by increasing their participation in cottage industries (such as making incense sticks), or by working from their homes as embroiderers on orders from more prosperous suppliers. At least, this is what about 63 per cent of the women we met from affected families gave us to understand. It was not possible to ascertain in the same fashion whether or not this was the case in Mumbai too. This is because the Mumbai violence took place a long time ago and the recall is not very clear. Very often the relevant family members had left, or even died a natural death. But if one were to hazard a guess, it might not be wide off the mark to suggest that men and women took whatever work came their way, and this was true of both Mumbai and Ahmedabad. On occasion, widows too took up some occupation, in most cases a home-based one. We also came across families in Ahmedabad's Naroda Patiya, Akbarpur and Citizen Nagar where from one bread-earner there are now two or more. Post-riots, some women were forced to learn sewing or embroidering to make a little money, and they kept this up even after their husbands and sons found jobs later. The recent recession has hurt them badly for many orders have been cancelled. We heard this lament everywhere, in Naroda Patiya as well as in resettlement colonies such as Yes...
Colony, Citizen Nagar and Faizal Park. Clearly, such instances can be multiplied severalfold.

In Mumbai there has also been a steady migration of Muslims to distant locations such as Mumbra and Oshiwara in search of security. Such residential areas came up through the initiatives of private real-estate developers and they house Muslims from different economic backgrounds. Over time, these neighbourhoods have become almost exclusively Muslim localities — or, what may be termed, ghettos. Many, though not all, have comfortable homes. As is to be expected, when the new residences are miles away from the older ones, jobs are bound to change as well. All the Muslim families we met in Oshiwara had taken on new jobs. Many of them continued to work in an allied occupation, if not the same, but their work site was now different. A tailor remained a tailor, a barber a barber, a person who ran a paint store was now a hardware dealer, a labourer was now a daily wage worker in a factory, a motor mechanic now a scooter rickshaw driver and so on.

While these altered occupations bore a strong resemblance to the jobs the riot-affected Muslims had left behind when they moved to Oshiwara, there were about 35 per cent cases where this was not the case. A tailor joined a share broker’s firm as an assistant; a man who ran a cigarette store is now a painter; a person who earlier worked in clothes fabrication is now in building and construction. In these distant locales Muslims took to completely different jobs requiring different skill sets which they adroitly learnt on the job.

The story in Ahmedabad is decidedly grimmer even though the new Muslim resettlement colonies are not as far away from Ahmedabad city as those such as Mumbra or Oshiwara are from Mumbai. In places like Citizen Nagar or Ramola in Ahmedabad, an overwhelming number of Muslims have had to change jobs for a number of reasons, the most important being that they did not want to return to their old homes again. This is particularly true of those who once lived in Naroda Patiya, where the killings were the most brutal. As many of them have moved to resettlement colonies (many from Naroda Patiya are now in Citizen Nagar), they have had to look for new jobs, but it was almost always in a related field. Some even switched from wage employment to microenterprise and back again. Often it was a bit of both on
different days with the women pitching in when the men found work with an employer, even if it was for a short period of time. Some figured that the distance to their old jobs was not worth the expense as they could find similar ones nearer to their new homes. But there were others who were forced out of their jobs because their earlier employers had found replacements in the months they were away from work. Hiding with friends, relations and in resettlement camps does not qualify as leave of absence.

From Poverty to Poverty: Establishing a ‘New’ Economic Normalcy

There is little doubt that many of these families are wretchedly poor, but it is hard to say whether they were really that much better off earlier. But what strikes one immediately is that such a large percentage actually found the same jobs they held before. If one were now to factor in change of residence, it becomes clear that nearly all those who had to find new jobs were the ones who moved house. This is hardly a startling conclusion. The same feature can be found, but to a lesser extent, in places like Gomtipur in Ahmedabad. Many riot victims stayed on in the area but moved to a lane where Muslims are in a majority. So on the face of it they are still in Gomtipur, but they have actually shifted to a safer street.

In Gujarat there are many more examples of steep downward mobility than is the case in Mumbai. There are many more instances in Ahmedabad of those who found it difficult to restart their enterprises, and are now working for someone else. In a rather sad case from Paladi (Ahmedabad), a man who once supplied material to a factory is now forced to work in the same establishment, but as a watchman. Hafiz at Akbar Nagar owned a lorry which was burnt during the riots. He still works with lorries, but now as a daily wage loader. In the same locality, Firoz today toils for a pittance as a carpenter, but he once owned a furniture store.

What is very noticeable in Ahmedabad is the number of Muslims who work as casual, unskilled labourers. They did this before the riots, and are at the same jobs again. They have no skills, no capital and no education. After the riots were quelled this class of workers found jobs quickly. They lost household goods, some lost their earlier homes, but most of them found the kind of work they did earlier with relative ease. Obviously, the lower one goes down the economic ladder, the easier it becomes. This unkind
generalisation cuts to the bone as most Muslims in Ahmedabad are from the poorest labouring class on near starvation wages.

The residents of Akbar Road fit this description best. On Bapu Nagar’s Akbar Road (Ahmedabad), almost the entire settlement is made up of such casual labourers. I have not come across a Muslim slum in Mumbai that is entirely dependent on casual wage labour in the way it is in Akbar Road. The men in this slum (for that is what it is) leave in the morning in search of jobs; they wait at the bus stand and in certain designated squares in the hope of being contracted for the day. When one enters this slum the first thing that one sees is a field of white polythene. A large number of households are engaged in making bags out of this material. In addition, many families also contract to produce incense sticks. Little children, some barely six years old, can be seen labouring at this task. They are paid at the rate of ₹10 for 1,000 sticks. They can perhaps make half that amount in a day, perhaps a little more. In other words, a full day’s work, and more, for less than ten rupees! In many Akbar Nagar shanties, mothers and children sit together working long hours rolling out incense sticks. Even the little ones do this with near mechanical precision (Plate 3.2).

Are we then saying that economic dislocation after a riot is not that traumatic for the poor? After all, they do bounce back. As they

Plate 3.2: Child workers rolling incense sticks in Akbarnagar, Ahmedabad.
did not fall from great economic heights, it is not that difficult to climb back to the same spot. They were never highly skilled workers, so such jobs are not difficult to come by. Stated thus, the trauma and uncertainty that many affected Muslims had to go through in re-building their contacts and finding new jobs, as well as the hunger that is induced by the further reduction of income from an already low one, would be undermined. This is not the intention of the argument that is being forwarded here.

What should be factored in as a background condition is that most Muslims are poor to begin with, and after a riot remain by and large in that position. Development had passed them by, and it passes by them even now. If one were to go to them today they would complain about their economic status, just as they did in the past before the riots. On the whole, what Javed Malik said of Mumbai Muslims holds in Ahmedabad too, but perhaps at a lower economic scale. As Mohammad Shafi Madni, Ameer-e-Halqa of IRC (a wing of Jammat-i-Islam) said,

Our brothers found jobs in other places, but more or less doing the same thing. When their earlier employers did not want them, there was somebody else - perhaps far away. Soon, however, they found new patrons and clients. It can never be the same as before, but we are very hardy people.

Through all of this there is one conclusion that comes through very clearly. On a daily routine basis, in order to keep body and soul together, Muslims are generally able to find some livelihood commensurate with their past occupations and their skill sets. Where affected Muslim families ran medium-sized business, they lost significantly because their goods and property were burnt or damaged. In some cases, as we mentioned, a merchant and trader became watchmen, in yet other cases a person running a tailoring business is now forced to work as an embroiderer, or even as a tailor, for somebody else. In about 25 per cent cases in Mumbai, when a business enterprise was burnt and destroyed, attempts were made to return to commercial activity again, perhaps doing something different. A bakery shop owner now runs a shoe factory. But these are mostly Mumbai stories; not many Muslims in Gujarat ran any business of any substance.

In Gujarat the poor Muslims found jobs that were more or less of the same status that they had in the past before the carnage
or toofan. If they were labourers once, they are labourers again; if someone worked with a cloth merchant, he now works for a dry fruit retailer; someone had a bicycle shop and now works in a shoe factory; if they were mechanics once they are mechanics again; if they were push-cart vendors once they are back peddling wares in the same fashion, though the commodity may be different. Their initial condition of poverty makes their economic return to near status quo ante that much easier than for the better off.

It is the other things like peace, trust and justice that take so much longer to be realised, if ever. Development issues are even further behind.

Small Business Not as Usual: The Role of the Unorganised Sector

Despite the brutalities that Muslims faced in Ahmedabad, sometimes from their neighbours, as in Naroda Patiya, many returned timorously to their original homes after several months in refugee camps. Most of them found their belongings burnt to ashes or looted and very little left of what once used to be a roof over their heads. Despite being a minority in these areas it was the livelihood compulsion that drove them back. If they had a grocery shop, then they unlock its rickety doors and wait for customers to come. If they can no longer run a full-fledged store, they vend nuts, or gram, dolls, sunglasses, hairpins and so on, in push-carts. This brings in a trickle, but in straitened circumstances, petty though the amount may be, every little bit adds up. They had connections with agents who functioned in that part of the city; others had employers in the vicinity; and there were still others who re-opened their much damaged shops with help from friends and relatives.

Where Muslims lost their petty self-employed businesses, they usually started another, but on an even lower scale. A tailor begins another enterprise of the same kind, a watch maker becomes a tailor, and vice versa, a taxi driver starts a motor garage. A tailor in Tulsiwadi lost his shop and sewing machine and has now switched to repairing watches. A cloth merchant gradually sets up another shop but on a lower scale with hefty bank loans. His son helps him run this business. A leather merchant is forced to diversify and sell goods made by others because he cannot operate
on the strength of what he and his son produce. Or a motor mechanic finds another site to open up his garage, or start an air-conditioning repair shop. A small shop owner in Behrampura (Ahmedabad) lost his meagre stock in the carnage and could not pay back his creditors. He too is forced to be a wage worker now.

Instances of losing one’s own petty self-employed business were significant in Mumbai too. The difference is that in Ahmedabad, small Muslim enterprises found little or no help from the wealthy in their community. In Mumbai, on the other hand, as mentioned earlier, there are several business areas where Muslims are entrenched and which suffered no losses. Many poorer Muslims found economic refuge there, as well as loans to start all over again. Of course, in mixed neighbourhoods like Tulsiwadi, Dharavi, Govindip, small Muslim entrepreneurs were economically hurt. Incidentally, some Hindu shopkeepers in Dharavi lost property too because they were in Muslim-dominated parts.

But then there are areas like Crawford Market, Chor Bazaar, Mohammad Ali Road and Byculla, which are rich and nearly all Muslim. This allowed Muslim shopkeepers, embroiderers, metal workers and so on to get business, albeit on a lower scale than what it was before 1993. They were not bereft and without support in the way Muslim craftspeople and petty entrepreneurs in Ahmedabad were.

Sources of Succour: Formal and Informal Ties

Who helped these poor Muslims to start earning again? Both in Mumbai and in Ahmedabad, Muslim families were often without a job for several months after a riot — sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes a little more. But in none of the cases we came across did the state help these victims find employment. Very few got bank loans, but even here defaulting on payments was a constant threat. It is not surprising that bank loans should be so hard to get because most Muslims really do not have collateral of the kind that these financial institutions need. In fact, many residents of Muslim-majority areas, like Gomtipur, allege that banks had practically blacklisted residents from these areas and refused them loans (Plate 3.3).

The state compensation they received was niggardly, though it helped a few in Ahmedabad to buy a new push-cart in place of the older one that was destroyed, or sometimes a sewing machine.
If a family member was killed in the violence then a compensation of ₹ 5,00,000 was granted to the next of kin. By 2007 most of those affected on this count had received the money. Many in Naroda Patiya, and elsewhere, used this money to restart their business, some even put a part of it in their son’s education in a boarding school outside Ahmedabad. Almost all of them spent a portion of this money to repair their homes.

But one had to die for the next of kin to get something substantial. The paltry nature of state assistance can be further estimated from the fact that the Gujarat government gave only ₹ 4.40 crore to 1,564 persons (average of ₹ 4,165) to compensate for loss of earning in urban areas and ₹ 4.73 crore to 6,631 affected individuals in rural areas (average of ₹ 7,133). Assistance to restart small business works out to an average of only ₹ 6,235 and just about 2,149 received this help. For those who lost industrial units and restaurants/hotels, the average was higher but still a niggardly ₹ 24,436 for urban establishments and a lower ₹ 21,284 for rural ones. This compensation package was not disbursed at one go. Initially, the central government announced ₹ 106 crore as relief to the riot victims.\(^1\) Pressured by Public Interest Litigation (PIL), the government of Gujarat disclosed a fresh relief package in late March of 2007.\(^2\) The eventual package agreed upon is an
outcome of years of negotiations, grandstanding, backtracking and judicial pressure. Today the government of Gujarat has to pay ₹ 5 lakh to the next of kin of a deceased person as compensation (see Nikhat 2009). As Gagan Sethi, a leading activist, said: ‘We have now established the benchmarks for compensation. This is our achievement.’

In Akbar Nagar, for example, we were shown an official statement of the government of Gujarat dated June 2007 saying that 84 families of this locality would get at least ₹ 20,000, 114 families between ₹ 20,000–50,000 and some 10 families even ₹ 1,00,000. But so far, according to the residents of Akbar Nagar, 193 people have received less than ₹ 5,000 (72 got nothing at all), and only three have been compensated above ₹ 10,000. Government compensations therefore hardly steady families that have been economically hurt by the riot. Most of the help, such as it was, came from informal sources — from friends, neighbours and earlier associates in the trade or craft. Almost all the Muslim families we interviewed said that they had received no help from any quarter to start their livelihoods again. This is substantially true, but on closer questioning we found that in about 20 per cent cases in Ahmedabad, neighbours and relations, sometimes even NGOs, provided them with contacts and stop gap employment.

In Mumbai it was much better because there were so many independent Muslim entrepreneurs in Muslim-dominated areas, as we mentioned earlier. Once Muslim riot victims found their way to these Muslim-majority areas, like Khoja Chawl, they made a little money doing odd jobs for the many entrepreneurs in these localities. They worked either as shop assistants or as labourers to haul goods to and from these stores. A few continued in these occupations, but we were told the majority left after some time for employment opportunities elsewhere. They had moved on in life as so many years had elapsed since the 1993 riots. We did not come across a Muslim family which did not have an earning member. The fact that the money they brought back was meagre is another matter (Plate 3.4).

In Ahmedabad, the story is qualitatively much worse than what is in Mumbai. There is no Khoja Chawl-like area in Ahmedabad, for business streets like Relief Road were not entirely Muslim-dominated. This made even the better-off Muslims quite vulnerable in this city. We met members of some of these larger
Plate 3.4: An impressive mosque in Khoja Chawl, Byculla, Mumbai. On this street, nearly all commercial establishments are owned by Muslims.
Muslim establishments who after some hesitation opened up to our queries. They did not adopt the same strategies for recovery. Some admitted that they were able to dip into their savings, others pulled out stocks from their godowns and restarted their business, some even got bank loans by placing their properties as collateral, and in one case, a brother-in-law stood as guarantor. Then there were those who failed to make a new beginning and their lifestyles suffered considerably, in a relative sense. What this also means is that the better-off Muslims of Ahmedabad were not in a comfortable enough position to act as patrons for the poorer Muslims of the city. Relief Road is no Khoja Chawl.

**Back to School: Education and the Faith**

Contrary to popular impressions, the FBOs that I came across in Gujarat were not fomenting militancy or fundamentalism, but rather, greater tolerance between communities without abandoning the cause of justice or the urgency of rehabilitation. I have already recorded in some detail the sterling contribution of Muslim organisations in relief and rehabilitation. Nowhere did I find any sign of religious intolerance or bigotry among them. This is probably because they realise how important the status of citizenship is for minorities to function in a Hindu-majority country, especially in moments of ethnic madness.

This is why even the IRC wants government recognition for the schools it has established. They do not want to open madrasas that only impart religious instruction, but secular schools that abide by the curriculum of the state's educational board. Also, it may be recalled that one of the colonies that the IRC helped set up to house those who did not have a home to go to after the camps were closed down was called ‘Citizen Nagar’. That is how strongly they wished to be considered as citizens of the country even though the state encouraged terrible brutalities unleashed against them. At the end of the day they still want to impress upon the public that Muslims are ‘citizens’ first.

The Muslims of Gujarat have taken a decisive step towards development, and without state support, in one field: education. They want to break the mould in which Chief Minister Modi and many others have cast them. They do not want their children to
be poor, vulnerable and unskilled as they are. This is why they emphasise proper education for their children, and it began well before the 2002 riots. Barring the very poor, Muslim parents are seeking ways to educate their children, and sometimes even send them to private schools. Where they cannot afford to do so, they hold on to the ambition of doing that one day. It needs to be underlined that in post-riot Gujarat the number of new attendees in madrasas did not swell by much. In Citizen Nagar, an area where Muslims have been resettled, only one family sent a boy to a madrasa. Even the school that was set up by Jamaat-i-Islami in Naroda Patiya after the riots was not a madrasa. The founders said that they wanted the children to go to secular institutions where, in addition to the regular curriculum, they would also learn about their traditions.

Interestingly, Muslims in Ahmedabad and Mumbai have responded to education differently, and this tells us a great deal about the two cities and the ethnic tensions therein. In Ahmedabad (perhaps in all of Gujarat) there is a strong urge among Muslims to send their children to Gujarati-medium schools. This is because they believe that the only way for them to get ahead is if their young can get the same skills, technical and linguistic, that the majority community possess. In their view, it is not possible to get good employment opportunities in the state if they do not speak Gujarati. The subtext is that they also want future generations to speak Gujarati so fluently that their Muslim traits will not be evident (Plate 3.5).

In an earlier section it has been mentioned that the poor Muslims both in Ahmedabad and Mumbai are migrants from other states. While the Mumbai Muslims are not worried about their inept Marathi, the ones in Ahmedabad seem to be acutely conscious of acquiring Gujarati linguistic skills. As they come from other parts of the country they often trip up in their attempts to speak Gujarati. As a Muslim woman in Ahmedabad mentioned: ‘Urdu words come out involuntarily. Even before they know our names they can tell we are Muslims.’ Knowing Gujarati then is a way of merging with the mainstream and not just about education for development, though that too is important. It is possible that the Muslims of Mumbai resist sending their children to Marathi-medium schools because Marathi is not the dominant language of commerce in Mumbai in the same way as Gujaratis in Ahmedabad.
Even so, the need to assimilate linguistically is stronger among Muslims of Gujarat, probably because of ethnic pressures.

A major problem in accessing Gujarati-medium schools is that most of them are in Hindu areas and many Muslims, post-riot, feel threatened by this fact. In Citizen Nagar the residents complained that Adarsh, a Gujarati-medium school, but it was closed down for a municipality construction project. Three kilometres away there is a middle school and then from class X onwards the school is even further, 5 kilometres from their home. The basic fee is about ₹120 per month, and the students have to pay more if they want to enrol for special programmes like computer lessons. In these schools the medium is Gujarati and emphasis is placed on English language training as well. Now that the shift has taken place towards Gujarati medium there are not enough teachers for the purpose, though there is an excess of Urdu instructors simply because fewer Muslims now choose to study in that language. Hanif Lakdawala of Sanchetna (an NGO devoted to improving reproductive health and education among the poor) and Afzal Memon of GSRC make the same point in almost similar manner.

Plate 3.5: Muslim primary school in Arsh Nagar, Ahmedabad. Note that the children are not wearing ‘orthodox’ uniforms.
In Citizen Nagar we found a unit of the government-sponsored Sarvyashikhsha Abhiyan (All Round Literacy Drive) in operation in a small room with children from five to seven years of age. This, as may be recalled, is a Muslim rehabilitation colony, but the instruction was in Gujarati. The Jamaat-i-Islami has, as noted earlier, also set up a school in Naroda Patiya for Muslim children, and the language of instruction here too is Gujarati. As the principal of that school mentioned, ‘Our children must develop and get well connected. They must rise above the insignificant jobs their parents held. They too deserve to be in comfort and have a few luxuries. Urdu alone will not help.’

We also visited a very large school called Anjuman Islamic High School run by a Muslim Trust and prominently located on the main street of Gol Limda, Ahmedabad. The teachers were all Muslim, from the principal downwards, but the medium of instruction was largely Gujarati. But with a difference! From primary to middle school the classes were held in Gujarati, but in middle school only girls were allowed to switch to Urdu medium and not the boys. In the senior school again, the instruction for both boys and girls was Gujarati (Plate 3.6).

Plate 3.6: Independence Day celebration in Anjuman Muslim school in Ahmedabad. Note the obvious demonstration of patriotism.
On enquiring further into this curious phenomenon, the principal of this school said that girls can afford the indulgence of Urdu for two years for they can then teach their children the scriptures. However, if boys were to do the same they would lose in the race for jobs against other Hindu boys. Also, as a fairly large number of Muslim girls tend to drop out after the middle level, it is alright that they end with Urdu. The enrolment in school showed that boys outnumbered girls in senior school, but not by much — about 20 per cent. Therefore, whether we take schools in Muslim ghettos or outside, the preference very clearly is that Gujarati be the medium of instruction. In fact, according to Deepa (2007), from 92 Urdu-medium schools before the riots of 2002, the number has fallen to 76 as there are fewer takers on this score (see also Ministry of Education 2005–6: 132, 331–32).

It might also be mentioned in passing that the Anjuman Islamic High School in Ahmedabad wins frequent prizes in competitions held on Independence and Republic Days. Children are arranged in neat formations on these occasions to either signify the Olympic symbol (that was in 2008), or the flag of India, or other motifs that have a high degree of popular appeal. The school maintains an album with photographs of these events, and they are proudly displayed by the principal to visitors. The attempt clearly is to make this school a mainstream one. It has an all-Muslim student body, but its patriotism and nationalism are in full view. I had the distinct feeling that the school was probably trying a little too hard.

In Mumbai, on the other hand, Muslims are still aggressively pursuing Urdu and openly claim that they are not Marathi speaking. Mumbai municipality allows for instruction in its schools in nine languages that include Marathi and Urdu till at least class 7, at least, and on some occasions till class 9 as well. A majority of Muslims choose the Urdu option if they go to these schools, and if they want to study Urdu at the high school level too, then they enrol in private schools. Consequently, these Muslim children can grow up in Mumbai and not learn Marathi at all.

The picture is different for the rich Muslims whose children study in English-medium private schools. When I asked working class Muslims, including those who were affected by riots, what their first language was, I was almost always told it was Urdu. There were a few Muslims who came from the coastal regions and said that their mother tongue was Konkani, but these were
rare exceptions. What is however more striking is that Mumbai Muslims also claim that they cannot speak Marathi and can barely understand it. As one of them told me:

In Mumbai it is bazaar Hindi that dominates so why should we speak Marathi. Besides that is not our language. We come from Uttar Pradesh and we speak Urdu like our forefathers did. We cannot give up our language to make some Shiv Sainik happy. We are Indians and we have the right to send our children to Urdu-medium schools.

One does not find such an aggressive statement in favour of Urdu among Muslims in Ahmedabad. This probably is also an indicator of their vulnerability in this city. At the same time the bazaar language in Ahmedabad is Gujarati. That too must be an important factor that persuades Ahmedabad Muslims to learn Gujarati. In Ahmedabad too there are government schools where the medium of instruction is Urdu, but there are probably two such institutions in the city, and only one that goes up to high school. A senior civil servant in Ahmedabad told me that it is difficult to maintain Urdu-medium schools in Gujarat, including in Ahmedabad and Baroda, for most Muslim children are opting for Gujarati-medium instruction. I am quite inclined to accept this position for none of my Muslim respondents in Ahmedabad had even the slightest interest in opting for an Urdu-medium school. Consequently, the government of Gujarat was forced to close down several Urdu-medium schools, including several in Ahmedabad too.

Indeed, Ahmedabad is not Mumbai! Education is one development opportunity that the Muslims of Gujarat are eager to grasp, with or without state help, mostly without. But how far they will be successful in this endeavour is not yet very clear. It should also be remembered in this connection that surprisingly enough, the percentage of literates among Muslims in Gujarat is higher than that among the Hindus (Statistical Abstract of Gujarat State 2007: 68). So it is not just literacy, but the quality of literacy that counts.

**Conclusion: Development as Safeguard**

It cannot be conclusively maintained that education, economic security and even wealth can safeguard a community such as the Muslims from repeated ethnic depredations. In all riots, it is the
poor who face the brunt of physical violence the most. Therefore, when Muslims exchange old poverty for new, they still remain easy targets. Faith-based organisations and NGOs have their limitations, which is why they have been unable to provide sustenance over a long period. What seemed so exemplary in the days following the violence has lost a lot of its sheen several years down the line. Muslims, in general, do not want to retreat into orthodoxy and funda mentalism. They want to progress and the only way that can happen on a durable basis is if the ‘hard’ issues of development come to their aid.

Benign neglect is what they face now. This forces them to make the best of what they can summon on their own meagre resources. Thus, while they seem to have settled into a ‘new normal’, they are acutely aware that the toofan can happen again. And once again they will be without support and shelter.

In this connection, deliberate efforts must be made so that Muslims shed their old demographic and occupational specifics and are able to enter the formal sector and in government services, access educational facilities and enjoy substantive citizenship. This is not an issue that will resolve itself, nor will it disappear if we turn away. ‘Hard’ developmental issues have to be trained to sort out ‘soft’ developmental features if the trauma of affected Muslims is to be truly addressed. Only then will the ‘new normal’ forget the ‘old normal’ and embrace citizens regardless of religious differences.

Notes

1. The Hindu, 6 March 2002.
Psychological healing will take a long time, and if ever it does, there will certainly be a scab around the wound to remind the victims of what had happened to them. Justice is almost impossible to achieve, though that is something that all the victims I met, barring one, want urgently. In their view, psychological scars can only heal once those who killed, maimed, raped and brutalised them went to jail and were properly charge-sheeted for their crimes. It is only then that they will finally feel secure.

Even as children start going back to school, adults begin finding jobs and women search for security at home and in the outside world, it is quite clear that this new normal that we are approaching is not like the old. The old one was a contested normal too, but one in which a certain level of predictability was possible in social intercourse. The contestations and the negotiations that are since being worked out have to take into account the clear bias of the state structure, particularly in Gujarat. While this may have been suspected in the past, the enormity of it is no longer in dispute for Muslim survivors. It is this perpetual tension that blocks inter-community relations at the very source. The tendency to distrust the ethnic other, even at the most preliminary level, is too powerful to be ignored. The status quo ante can never be achieved, and this fond and utopian hope needs to be buried. Instead, one should pay attention to the modalities by which one contested normal can give way to another.

The quotidian space discussed earlier would gradually assume a regularity of its own. But if this is not to be disrupted again, and for this to attain a degree of predictability, the state must abide by the principles of its liberal democratic constitution. The government of Gujarat had lost its legitimacy in the eyes of most Muslims because it allowed the law to be so wantonly flouted. It needs to
be pointed out in this context that for the minority, the state loses its independent status when the majority community attacks them in the name of the ‘people’ who have one history, one culture and one holy land. The minority victims, on the other hand, respond to these ‘people’-inspired attacks as citizens and want compensations, ex-gratia payments, and more than anything else, justice from the state. The more the state delays, or prevaricates, on these issues, the less credibility it has with the minoritised victims.

The Role of Law: Victim or Citizen

In my experience with riot victims in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, I found that the issue that concerns them the most is that those who killed and brutalised them should be punished by law. As a Muslim victim told me in Ahmedabad in 2002:

I want nothing more than seeing those who killed my family to go on trial and be punished. I can wait for a job. I can wait to give away my daughter to a good man in marriage. But I cannot rest till those who tore my life apart are brought to justice.

Islamic relief organisations are painfully aware of this reality and know that unless law prevails it will be very difficult for Muslims to regain a modicum of trust in their surroundings. Jamaat-i-Islami has a legal cell which pursues all kinds of court-related issues and defends those Muslims against whom false charges have been framed. Unfortunately, however, not enough pressure is sustained on this question of false accusations, which allows the criminals to get away. As a representative of the Jamaat-i-Islami said: ‘The lower and higher courts in Gujarat are biased. Can you imagine one High Court magistrate in fact said, “We have given you Pakistan, now go there”. We need to have justice otherwise our youth will go astray’. In Ahmedabad one also comes across the term ‘belonging to the Prevention of Terrorist Act (POTA) family’, as a large number of Muslims have been detained as terrorists, and, according to Gagan Sethi, almost always without justification.

Even the Srikrishna Committee (set up by the government of Maharashtra after the Mumbai riots) noted in great detail who the major culprits were, but no action has really been taken against them. Some like Madhukar Saroptdar, Ram Naik, Gopinath Munde, R. D. Tyagi and P. J. Lahane were public figures, police officers
and politicians (see also Singh 1997). In fact, the Committee was suspended briefly after the Shiv Sena–BJP government came to power in 1994 in Maharashtra. But even after the Congress government returned to Maharashtra five years later, the Srikrishna Committee’s report still remains unimplemented. On Gujarat, almost all civil rights organisations from Amnesty International to UN bodies, to National Human Rights Commission, to International People’s Human Rights Commission (see also Sebastian 1993) and many more have provided graphic details of the violation of minority citizens; but justice has not yet provided.

When the Supreme Court in 2006 reopened 21,000 cases that were closed by the Gujarat government, it gave fresh hope to Muslim migrants that justice in some form might still be done. The concern for justice is very strong among the Muslim community, for among other things, as the Jamaat-i-Islami member said, this would help to keep their youth on track. They would then come to regard the law of the land as fair and see the state administration as following the principles of a secular, liberal constitution. However, there are two points of view on this among scholars and NGO activists.

A few international NGOs operating in India are wary of frontally addressing the issue of justice and the need for victims to reclaim their ‘citizen’ space. IDEA (1998: 30) does not want to press this matter for it believes that this would harm the healing process. Instead of ‘positional based negotiations’ where, I believe, claims for justice are paramount, IDEA advocates ‘interest based negotiations’, where I suppose the business of getting jobs and going to school are of uppermost concern (ibid.: 40). Oxfam mentions the need for justice but carefully avoids emphasising it over issues such as the importance of handling mental disorders, children’s health and speedy processing of claim forms (see Multi-Disciplinary Team 2002). With CARE all pretences are dropped and there is an open espousal to stay away from pursuing the legal path that is directed to bringing criminals to justice (Ahmed 2004; Oommen 2008).

The CARE-led initiative emphasises peace alliances (Oommen 2008: 77), restoration of shelter, livelihood, access to schools, psychoanalytic care (ibid.: 85), but there is no mention of seeking justice. That too would probably be acceptable. After all, each NGO has its own zone of relevance and competence. The problem emerges...
when CARE openly undermines the search for justice by arguing that restorative justice is better than retributive justice as in the former no harm is done to anybody (Oommen 2008: 92). As far as the CARE team is concerned, a society must learn to ‘live with its violent pasts . . . by understanding the reasons for transgressions, admitting the brutal loss of humanity and projecting new meaning to the present’ (ibid.: 92). Retributive justice gets lost in ‘all sorts of legal and political manoeuvrings’ (ibid.).

The argument in favour of abandoning the pursuit of justice to punish the guilty is quite clear. It begins by ennobling forgiveness as a virtue and ends by undermining the status of Indian law by calling it retributive in character. In fact, Oommen (2008: 139) argues that one should not alienate the police force, but involve them instead and make them members of the relief team. But should not the police, by virtue of their office, be helping the victims anyway? Further, if those policemen who actually aided, abetted and participated in the carnage are embraced, what then happens to justice?

At first sight, Mander (2009) seems to be advocating a similar position. This is because he extols the Truth and Reconciliation Committees of South Africa and frequently enjoins that ‘perpetrators and survivors of hate violence come together . . . seek and offer forgiveness’ (ibid.:10), and so on. But after all these rather soft and ambiguous statements, he acknowledges that ‘justice involves primarily legal justice’ (ibid.: 20), and this should be ‘done and seen to have been done’ (ibid.); only then can we say that reconciliation is finally achieved. In other words, Mander underlines the need for ‘justice under the law’ (ibid.: 146) and clarifies for those who believe that the courts should not play a role that justice should not be confused with retribution (ibid.: 170), as Oommen tends to do.

When Congress MP Sajjan Kumar visited Sikh refugee camps in Delhi after the 1984 killings, the widows there refused to let him in as they recognised him as one of the killers. Under such circumstances how can one hope that the victims will actually invite those policemen who have harboured, encouraged and protected killers, if not actually participated in the killing, to be members of the reconciliation team. Sara Ahmed goes further down this road when she says, ‘Not by forgetting, but by understanding
the reasons for the transgression, admitting the brutal loss of humanity, and projecting new meanings into the present’ (2004: 97), the past can be healed and the victims can be best rehabilitated.

The undermining of the need to punish the guilty has a certain charitable ring about it but it certainly does not help the victims regain some of the citizen space that was snatched from them during the riots. Harsh Mander argues that compassion is all very good, but without legal justice, reconciliation will never be authentic. In his view truth commissions are unsuccessful where ‘political and social realities remain unchanged for the victims’ (Mander n.d.). Without the law being put to work what we will have is a ‘counterfeit peace’ which will be ‘divisionary’ in character. This is why he calls for ‘Nyayagraha’ (justice offensive), an update on Gandhi’s ‘Satyagraha’ (or truth offensive), as the need of the hour. Only then, Mander argues, can the multifold attempts to rehabilitate victims of ethnic violence be comprehensively realised. As long as there are people out there who can calmly trample upon domestic calm, as long as it is unsafe to step out into the outside world, the call for justice will remain. CARE is unconcerned about these issues. What is central to it is that the boat should not be rocked and the powerful oppressors not challenged by law. It is as if by keeping quiet and lying low the pain will automatically go away.

While it is necessary to get justice in order to bring about a measure of respect among the victims, the costs can be extraordinarily high. This is what Gagan Sethi, an influential lawyer and activist of Ahmedabad had to say,

Remember, to fight in court on something like the Bilkis Bano case (where a six month pregnant woman was gang raped by her neighbours in the village) requires skilled advocates who know their job well and have years of experience. Young lawyers and NGO activists cannot do that job. This is why it is necessary to put the scope of “Nyayagraha” in perspective. Further, what about the expenses? The Bilkis Bano case was a major victory for us and for the democratic cause. We had to go to Mumbai courts and even though lawyers took up this assignment without charging their regular fees, the cost of this legal fight was upward of ₹ 30 lakh. Once we did the calculations we were so disappointed. How can an ordinary person get justice if such a huge sum of money is required? This was deeply saddening and dampened our celebration over our victory in the Bilkis Bano case.
How Can We Forget? Towards a Phenomenology of Victimhood

It is understandable when the alternate point of view which bypasses the issue of violence is forwarded by those who specialise in psychological care (Lakshminarayana et al. 2002) and Asthana (1997). They can be condoned for their insensitivity to citizen space as they have a limited range of specialised interest. But if one were to begin phenomenologically and ask the victims what is the most pressing concern on their minds, then the need for justice figures right at the top. When one takes the phenomenological route then the correct path is not one that is prefigured in board rooms, but one that takes its cue from what people, in this case Muslim victims, feel. Robinson writes of Shakeel in Mumbai who says, ‘Without nyaya (justice), for whom would peace come in society’ (2005: 215). Shakeel then goes on to say that the Mohalla Committees that were set up in Mumbai after the riots did not ‘talk of justice. They advocated that we embrace (gale mil jayen) with the same police who did wrong’ (ibid.). Last (2001) found a similar sentiment among those who were victims of ethnic violence in Biafra.

In South Africa, the victims of apartheid saw the policy of truth and reconciliation that was being pushed as one of ‘exceptional generosity towards a community that had done serious wrong’ (Last 2001: 316). Gillian Slovo (whose father, Joe Slavo, was a rare white South African supporter of the African National Congress) recalls how Black South Africans, and she herself, found ‘the forced embrace of their enemies’ very distasteful. In fact, when her mother’s killers were brought up for amnesty, she found the feelings of hatred rise up in her (Slovo 2002). Kentridge too notes that when victims found that the perpetrators of injustices against them were going to be pardoned if they spoke up in South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings, they were deeply upset (2007: viii). In fact, just two days after the TRC report was released on 28 October 1998, the BBC reported that a large number of South African Blacks were deeply unhappy that many of the functionaries of the apartheid regime would walk away free after this. To believe then that reconciliation can come about without justice is to take a very partial view of the entire issue. Unfortunately, it is this simplistic position that Oommen and CARE would like to encourage.
As the TRC of South Africa is often quoted by those who advocate reconciliation without justice, it is worthwhile noting a few pertinent facts on this matter. Ross's excellent anthropological study (2002) of the women who gave evidence to the TRC were deeply traumatised by the task because of its gendered dimension and the oversimplified belief that all could be forgotten by relating sufferings. It should be remembered that the Xhosa people had the least faith in the TRC for they felt that this was a way of letting the Afrikaner apartheid regime off the hook (see Vora and Vora 2004: 301–22). De Kock, for example, was let off though he acknowledged his role in the horrific Motherwell bombing incident. In this connection it may be recalled how indignant Steve Biko's family was regarding the TRC and the manner in which P. W. Botha defied the subpoena to appear in the Commission and was let off without even being fined.1

Seen in this light, not only is it necessary to examine the TRC's role more carefully, it is also imperative to judge the authenticity of the reconciliation without justice route that international NGOs tend to take. CARE states its position clearly on this, but others, like IDEA and Oxfam, do so by remaining silent on this question (see IDEA 1998 and Multi-disciplinary Team 2002). They do not want to offend their local hosts, but it does very little to assuage the feelings of hurt among ethnic victims (see also Kaminer, et al. 2001: 375–76). Unless that issue is addressed, as Harsh Mander remarks, there is something 'counterfeit' about peace. In order to come to a less contested version of the new normal, the pursuit of justice is an essential step to take.

As I remarked earlier, the minority community that has been brutalised by ethnic violence looks towards the state first to offer a helping hand. Without this assistance, which should be in warm and generous measure, the citizen space remains vacant for most ethnic victims. Naturally, this would leave the room wide open for an antagonistic normal to emerge instead of a merely contested one, which is comparatively benign in nature. This is exactly what, as was mentioned earlier, the legal cell of the Jamaat-i-Islami-i-Hind was worried about.

In the first few frantic hours and days after majoritarian violence strikes, the victims are thinking most of a safe haven. But this is the first stage. After this come questions of rehabilitation, compensation, finding jobs again, sending children to schools and
Social Rehabilitation

so on. After this stage is more or less over, what remains is the issue of justice. It is not as if this question comes up only after the first two stages. It is something that started its career at the time the killings began but grew in significance with each passing day; that justice was first delayed, and then denied.

As we argued in the opening pages, the new normalcy does not come about overnight, and like the earlier negotiated normalcy, this too is gradually beaten down and forged over a period of time. It would be incorrect to say that what is freshly negotiated recalls the old world. In fact a new world and a new polity are brought into being. But even as this is done, the old normalcy acts as a point of departure, as indeed so will this should it also be shattered by another violent episode.

There are two ways of answering issues of the sort that we have just raised. One is to take a forgive-and-forget attitude in the hope that wounds will soon heal and status quo ante will return. This is what I call the naïve view which borders on the dangerous as it encourages the wrongdoers to do the same things again. The Shiv Sena, for example, is an ethnically charged recidivist.

When I went to Gujarat after the riots I met a large number of victims in camps that were set up for them and the one refrain I heard again and again was that they wanted the killers to be tried by the courts. Those who ran away from the dreaded Naroda Patiya were particularly angry at the Cchara community. The Ccharas were listed as criminal tribes by the British, but belong, after Independence, to the category of 'denotified tribes'. There is a large Cchara neighbourhood a little way down the road from Naroda Patiya, and it is widely believed that they were the most brutal in their attacks against Muslims. As a retired professor said, 'The Ccharas have lived up to their reputation. The British were right in classifying them as a criminal tribe'.

To this day the Ccharas live on the edge of the law as many of them are involved in distilling illicit liquor in their homes. But they get by as the police are ready and willing to be bribed and can be seen in these areas after sunset when liquor is being served. During the days of the killings in Ahmedabad I often heard it being said, even by liberal intellectuals, that the Ccharas were the main killers for their recent past is one of crime. But I have since met several Ccharas who take exception to this allegation. They admitted that there were Ccharas among those who killed and looted, as
there were non-Ccharas too, but there were many Ccharas who
had also saved Muslims, such as Sunil Tamichi and Ajit Indrekar
who are fairly well-known Ccharas in this neighbourhood. They
hid Muslims in their homes, and on one occasion dressed them up
as members of a Hindu wedding party.

But then there were also those who killed brutally and with
savage relish. What about them? A new normalcy cannot rest on
the old one for there are too many memories that are difficult to
forget.

I remember Sikh victims voicing an identical sentiment in 1984.
As late as 2007, when a group of Sikh widows of 1984 assembled
to push for their demands for justice, a seemingly sympathetic
member of the audience said that Sikhs should forget what had
happened and move on. After all, nearly 25 years had passed and
how long were they going to hold on to a grudge. At this point a
Sikh widow stood up and said that she was willing to forget, and
she would forget, but the criminals have to be tried first. Without
that, it was impossible to forget. Their faith in the system must be
restored. Her remarks met with tremendous ovations.

From my point of view what this signifies is that a new ‘contested
normal’ would be hard to come as long as the state does not
assume its position as an independent upholder of the law. There
is little point in dragging the old one out for its many inadequacies
are known to both sides. Nothing remains the same. But for human
societies to persist, in the midst of tensions, mistrust and dif-
fences, a stable triadic configuration must somehow claim its
position. Warring ethnic dyads left to themselves are compelled
to seek the annihilation of the other as its principal raison d’etre,
unless they are held back by the triadic node of the liberal
democratic state (see Chapter 1 and Lacan 1977).

Coping Strategies: Mumbai and Ahmedabad Compared

First compared to Mumbai, the killings in Gujarat lasted longer,
involved large parts of the state north of Baroda and in the
Panchmahals. In addition, the government’s hand in encouraging
the killers added incalculably to the plight of the victims (Com-
munalism Combat 2002). Ahmedabad provides a good case in this
respect for it was probably the most ravaged of all the places in
Gujarat. Second, the trail in Mumbai has gone cold. It has been
over 25 years since the rioting took place, and memories are no
longer than fresh. Besides, the scale of violence was much less in Mumbai. Even so, Mumbai is useful for comparative purposes. The Muslims in this metropolis were not as helpless as they were in Gujarat, primarily because the state government in Mumbai did not "officially" bless the killings. This does not mean that there were no supporters in the police and in the administration for the Shiv Sena and other Hindu activists. The Srikrishna Committee that enquired into the riots had come out scathingly against the ineptitude and downright encouragement of certain officials, but the fact still remains that the presence of diverse political formations, a divided state assembly and ground-level secular activism gave Muslims some room for manoeuvre. They had no such luck in Gujarat!

Mumbai and Gujarat offer other points of contrast too. Mumbai has a history of trade unionism which created an alternative intellectual and political force that was ready to oppose the Shiv Sena and other Hindu organisations. Gujarat lacked such a background for which reason it does not have an entrenched intellectual cum political class that is strong enough to oppose the Hindutva forces (see Breman 1997; Mehta 2005; Gupta 2002; Shah 1970). Further, and this point should not be elided, the first round of attacks on 6 December in Mumbai was started by the Muslims against Hindus. This provided a kind of justification to Hindutva forces that may have been hard to resist and could have also contributed to the sectarian hardening of administrative attitudes towards Muslims. Police complicity has been pointed out on several occasions by a number of commentators and even by the Srikrishna Enquiry Committee (see Ansari 1997: xviii).

Further, unlike Gujarat, the Muslims of Mumbai were not willing to take things lying down. The bomb blasts on 12 March 1993 in several parts of Mumbai are generally considered to be an expression of Muslim vendetta. The casualties were the highest in the Mumbai Stock Exchange Area, but a bomb also went off outside the Shiv Sena office in Central Mumbai. This kind of capacity to hit back is non-existent among the Gujarati Muslims. The damage that the Mumbai blasts caused was very extensive; 447 people died and about 1,005 were injured. Muslim gang lords, such as Tiger Memon and Dawood Ibrahim, are widely believed to have been behind these blasts. During this period old scores were also settled and known Hindu underworld figures in Mumbai, such as Ramdas
Nayak, Prem Sharma and Ramesh More, were killed by hitmen of the Muslim mafias (Tripathi 1997: 4). Ethnic wars rumbled in the belly of the beast.

In Mumbai the underworld has strong Muslim connections. Before Tiger Memon and Dawood Ibrahim began their careers, one of the most dreaded figures of Mumbai was Haji Mastan. After a long innings as India’s most notorious smuggler, he started an organisation called the Bharatiya Minority Suraksha Mahasangh Party in response to what he felt his coreligionists were going through at the hands of Hindutva forces. The nomenclature of the organisation clearly shows that Haji Mastan was directing his attention on winning over Muslims and other minorities to his outfit, for he clearly saw a political role for himself (Tripathi 1997: 4). Nothing much happened as far as Haji Mastan’s political ambitions were concerned, but such attempts clearly show that Mumbai Muslims are not easy pushovers.

The Way Forward: The Call for Justice

As is clearly evident, nothing has remained the same, either for the perpetrators of violence and even more so, for the victims of ethnic hatred. As far as the Muslim survivors are concerned the state is held with much greater suspicion than before, though they have begun to interact with it. They see their Hindu neighbours not just in terms of religious distance, keeping in mind some basic ground rules, but now as possible killers and looters too. The world has changed completely for women who have become widows. Not only are they grief-stricken and burdened by new responsibilities, but many of them cannot look their relations in the eye for shame at having been molested or raped during the riots. The number of school dropouts among Muslims has gone up, according to anecdotal evidence. Also, there is a greater concentration of Muslim ghettos in both Mumbai and Gujarat. Finally, we should remember that relations between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat or Mumbai or Bhiwandi have nationwide repercussions. This is why the earlier the normalcy is restored, the better it will be for all of us. Militancy and hate campaigns will probably die out if the wheels of justice begin to move. They may move slowly, that can be allowed for, but they must grind fine.
I asked the Islamic organisers of these camps in Gujarat, viz., the JI and JU, how the Koranic scriptures helped them and their inmates in those tension-filled days. Their answer was very simple, and somewhat along these lines:

We told our people to remain calm. If something unjust has happened to us, be sure that the sinners will be punished one day. In the meantime, remember you must only fear God and his wrath and not human beings no matter how menacing they may appear.

They said that this message was delivered at every opportunity, particularly after the Friday prayers, at all religious gatherings and community festivals.

Madni, who is the Ameer-e-Halqa of the Islamic Relief Fund, said that it was unfortunate that the international relief organisations that were so active after the Bhuj earthquake did not find it necessary to come to Gujarat during the post-Godhra carnage. He did mention that a large number of NGOs and important individuals had come to their help because of which Muslims lost some of the fear that had completely consumed them in the refugee camps. They began to see that there were non-Muslims in the country who were on their side and who were deeply anguished at their plight. So it was not as if all Hindus were against Muslims. Though over six years had passed he was able to effortlessly recall the names of Dighant Ojha (a prominent Gujarati journalist), Indu Kumar Jaani (a well-known Gandhian who works among Dalits), Mallika Sarabhai (of the famous Sarabhai family of Gujarat and the head of the NGO, Darpan), Swami Agnivesh (a public figure, politician and an Arya Samaji preacher), Nirmala Deshpande (the well-known Gandhian activist) and several others who stood by him when he addressed Muslim victims at several gatherings. He also commended Ojha, Jaani and Sarabhai for petitioning the Supreme Court on 7 March 2002 to intervene and stop the holocaust in Gujarat.

This effort is still going on. In an interview with Yogendra Sikand as late as 24 October 2007, Shakeel Ahmed, who heads the legal cell of Jamaat-i-Islami-i-Hind, related a similar story. The Jamaat-i-Islam-Hind (recall that the IRC is its front organisation) held 18 public meetings in the 2007 Eid celebrations and invited a large number of prominent Hindus to them. In one meeting they had asked Murari Bapu, a well-known religious Hindu figure, to be the main speaker. Shakeel Ahmed went on to say that they had
also organised a number of Dalit-Muslim-Tribal Sammelans. Yet, he
confessed sadly, there was still a long way to go before communal
harmony is achieved (see Sikand 2007).

Afzal Memon of the Gujarat Sarvajanik said that it is impossible
to forget the past for those who lost their family in the killings
of 2002. When provoked by the statement made by many that
Muslims should forgive and forget and try and understand why
their killers behaved the way they did, Memon had nothing but
scorn. I reminded him of T. K. Oommen’s work where such a point
was made. He dismissed this argument angrily and said words
to the effect that people who don’t understand what others have
gone through can be very glib on these matters. When I further
reminded him that in Oommen’s book his organisation is acknow-
ledged as a research partner and collaborator, Memon shot back
saying that how would he know what gets printed everywhere.
I continued with the question, had he not been consulted before?
To which he answered that if he had been he would certainly have
opposed this argument to the full.

Muslim victims like Zubeda Appa in Naroda Patiya or Nadir
Hussein in Faisal Park or Hamid Ali in Paladi will tell you that
what they want above all is that the killers be brought to justice.
My friend Dakxin Cchara who accompanied me in most of my
visits startled many Muslims in Citizen Nagar when he mentioned
his full name. After all, Ccharas have a terrible reputation with
the Muslims for in Naroda Patiya they were considered to be the
most barbaric of the lot. After initial expression of disquiet at his
presence, one of the residents of Citizen Nagar asked him about
Pappu Cchara, the most hated killer of Naroda Patiya. Dakxin
replied that Pappu was dead. There was an immediate sense of
pleasure with which this news was greeted. ‘How did he die?’, they
asked. ‘Well’, said Dakxin, ‘Pappu was drunk and drove his
car into a lamppost’. The others in the room were pleased with
the news and one of them went on to sermonise that a drunkard
and a killer should meet a quick end. A little later a middle-aged
woman in our midst quietly suggested that would it not have been
better had Pappu died in jail for the crimes he had committed?
After a moment’s silence, the whole room reverberated in fulsome
agreement. Even recalling the force with which they endorsed
the need for justice, months later, makes my hair stand on end.
Mukul Sinha of the Jan Sangarsh Manch (an NGO specialising in delivering justice to the poor) has spent the past seven years of his life in combating Modi’s government and fighting for justice for the affected Muslims of 2002. His work is widely acknowledged, and he has kept up the campaign for bringing some of the BJP leaders such as Maya Kodnani to the attention of the law. But when he suggested in 2008 that Muslims drop minor cases, such as theft and stone throwing, and concentrate on big ones like murder and rape, he met with a lot of disapproval and, as he said, from many of his erstwhile friends as well. He believes that his suggestion was tactically sound for the long-term strategy he had in mind, but the victims and even those in his corner did not agree with him.

If a mild suggestion such as that expressed by Sinha, which may have some merit, could arouse so much opposition, imagine the outrage with which the proposal of embracing your enemy, as put forward by Oommen and CARE, would be met if it were put to vote. I asked Shakeela in Juhipara whether there was any merit in Sinha’s tactical move. Without a moment’s hesitation she strongly opposed him. Clearly, it was not as if she was encountering such a proposal for the first time. She expressed herself very unambiguously,

I would feel terrible if I knew that somebody else down the street was watching a movie on my television and I am sitting here in the dark. How would you feel if the goonda (ruffian) over there was drinking cold water out of your refrigerator and your throat was parched in the hot summer months?

As this question was directly posed to me, I had to concede that it was convincing.

But it was not just about cold water and television screens. It was household goods, trade utensils, shops and so on. What about that? Should we forget those too? This was clearly not Sinha’s proposal, but some of my respondents unfairly took his position to its extremes. The lesson was, however, simple: No compromise. But this is a scenario for the best of times; what about the here and now? Compromises are the order of the day, but that does not make them happy. They live with it, and they will continue to do so though the anger and demand for justice will remain. Of that I am quite convinced.
While Mumbai may have forgotten 1993 to some extent, Muslims in Gujarat choke back tears when they recall the events of 2002. The naked barbarity they faced was so sustained and complete that their cry for justice makes them weep easily. The wounds are still open if only one cared to look.

The new ‘normal’ is thus very different in both Mumbai and Ahmedabad. In time this might become an established way of life. The hurtful memories may recede in their intensity, but the new practices that have emerged as coping mechanisms, whether of going to Mumbra, consolidating enclaves, getting children to Gujarati schools, will become so entrenched and crusted over a period of time that Muslims will forget the earlier normal and pay attention to the specifics of the new one. Community sensitivities, whether Hindu or Muslim, will adjust to this emergent reality and while there may not be much conscious theorising on when and why all this began, the observance of the practices itself will suggest the wariness with which communities will approach and interact with each other for a long time.

**Criticism of Islamic Relief Organisations:**

**Views From Within the Faith**

Interestingly, the ‘beneficiaries’ of FBOs are quite critical of what they have received. This ranges from outright condemnation to ridicule, to mild disapproval. Perhaps unjustly, many complain that after taking the compensation money from them the structures that were rebuilt were not up to the mark. Their homes had become smaller, inadequately equipped and made of inferior material. This was a universal complaint among residents I talked to in these colonies set up by FBOs. They stated their dissatisfaction with the FBOs but I have no way to judge the legitimacy of such pronouncements. Representatives of both IRC and GSRC dismissed these criticisms saying that most of the beneficiaries do not really know how expensive things are and how difficult it is to find space in the city to build these homes.

Then there is the question of not getting ownership rights in the units of resettlement colonies such as in Ramola or Citizen Nagar. The residents say that without ownership rights they always feel as if this is not their real home. Yet, they are charged quite heavily for water, much more than what is legitimate. The fact that Dorabji
Yatimkhana has given all 30 of its residents ownership rights is pointed out by the residents of that part of Citizen Nagar built by IRC as an illustration of what the right thing would have been for FBOs to do. They also complain that the water in their colonies is of very poor quality, but that the FBOs are unconcerned about it. I can testify that the overhead tank in Ramola was filthy and I saw the remnants of a bird in it. The subsoil water in Citizen Nagar is also far from being potable.

Why, these residents ask, should the resettlement colonies be built at such inhospitable sites? Could the FBOs not have found better locations? They must have got a lot of money coming from Muslims around the world. Several of them believe that just the donations from the Middle East would amount to crores of rupees. These are some of the comments that were frequently expressed in these resettlement colonies, particularly among the residents of Ramola. Many of them loudly complained against the Maulana in charge of the colony for regularly bringing in Muslims from other countries to visit the area. On such occasions the residents feel like specimens on display. By the end of it the Maulana is given a lot of money, but they have no idea where it goes. This may or may not be true; but at the level of perception, those resettled in Ramola have a poor opinion of the FBO management in their locality, in particular, the Maulana in question (Plates 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3).

Further, in Ramola, I was shown row upon row of units that were kept locked by JU who built this complex. I initially thought that the occupants had gone out to work, but I later confirmed that these rooms had not been allotted to anybody. I found this quite confusing, but to my surprise over 30 residents of the colony told me that the Maulana in charge is waiting to sell them when he gets the right price. In fact, it was widely believed by this group that some of the units were given away to his favourites, and then many salacious details followed.

While I cannot confirm the last aspect of the complaints I nevertheless found that the units that were locked remained locked on subsequent visits as well. This is certainly not true of Citizen Nagar or Yes Colony set up by JI where every unit was occupied and overflowing. The anger that was manifest in the JU colony of Ramola was unexpected. When I enquired as to why the mosque within the premises was so lavishly constructed, I was
Plate 4.1: A well-appointed mosque in Ramola camp constructed by Jamaat-i-Ulema-i-Hind, Ahmedabad.

Plate 4.2: Contrast the mosque with the Spartan living quarters constructed by Jamaat-i-Ulema-i-Hind, Ramola, Ahmedabad.
told that this is how the JU wastes money. They added it was not just the mosque, but the adjacent meeting hall too that was very expensively appointed. According to these residents, this facility is often rented to outsiders for a variety of functions. This is an aspect that again I cannot confirm for it is not as if this happens frequently.

What is however beyond doubt is the hostility with which Ramola residents look upon the JU administration that built their colony. They condemned the Maulana as a man who made a mockery of Islam and of the very virtues he so broadly proclaims. One person even called him ‘Hitler Number One’. Several people, men and women, who stood around while this conversation was taking place clapped at this. Usually it is expected that given the trauma that Muslims underwent and the shelter that has been offered to them thereafter they would be overflowing with gratitude, perhaps even becoming more religious in the process.

In Modassa, outside Ahmedabad, there is near-open revolt against the FBO that set up the housing colony that we visited.
We took care to go to an establishment built by TJ just as a matter of comparison. The units again were quite drab and unremarkable, much like what we found in Ahmedabad. But here lines were clearly drawn between the residents of the colony and the TJ. The cleric of TJ insisted that prayers should be offered in a certain way which went against the established practice and conventions of the people who lived there. They, therefore, refused to comply, but without too much fuss in the beginning. As the clerics kept on making the same demands and raising the tone and pitch of their condemnation, most of the congregation walked away. Now there are two prayer sites: one an impressive mosque, which is presided over formally by TJ clerics, and the other under a plastic tent where the rest gather for namaaz. The relationship is that scarred. Yet if we approach Muslim victims as normal people and not religiously charged believers then it is not difficult to accept such an outcome. After all, how many Hindus or Christians would go to a temple or church if they had difficulties with the priests or padres, respectively.

Islamic Fundamentalism: Between Fact and Fiction

The advantage of studying the victims of a religious carnage over a period of time is that one gets to see facets that would have escaped one in the earlier stages. Like a moving picture book, the greater the number of pages and the rapidity with which they are flipped, the more one gets to see the dimensions of a tragedy.

In the beginning it was believed that with the FBOs stepping in, Muslim victims would turn more and more towards Islam. In fact Rubina Jasani’s work makes this argument quite clearly. She may well have been right for she was researching in the early months following the Gujarat riots (Jasani 2007). Today, the TJ is not nearly as convincing as it may have seemed in 2002–3. Not just in Modassa, but even in Ahmedabad, the TJ does not arouse popular endorsement from ordinary Muslims in Juhipara, Ramola, or Danilimda. As a resident of Yes Colony said,

The Tablighis are interested in what happens under the ground (when we are buried) and above the ground (where God is), but not on the ground where we live and spend our lives.

The orthodoxy of the TJ is irksome to many Muslims I met. Muddassar from Citizen Nagar felt that the TJ was just too
demanding and unrelenting. The clerics from this organisation come from time to time and talk to them about the Koran. Thus far it is alright, but they cannot be in attendance every time they visit. There is nothing wrong with being educated on one’s own religion. The problem however arises when TJ Maulvis want them to give up their earlier practices, which includes not worshipping at the shrines of Sufi saints and pirs. As Muddassar went on to say,

How can we give up our reverence for Sufi dargahs? How can we forget that during those terrible days after the toofan hit us we all took refuge in Shah Alam Dargah. That is a Sufi shrine and that shrine was so good to us. It protected us when we were absolutely helpless. That is what God is meant to do. We just cannot accept the Tablighi insistence that we stop venerating these saints. They too were men of God.

Here one has a clear statement of revolt against orthodoxy that TJ best represents. The JI is also committed to preaching Islam, but members of this organisation feel that the TJ carries matters a bit too far and that it is not really interested in any other aspect of a Muslim’s everyday life apart from religion and prayer. The JU is officially the least dogmatic of the three for its primary interest is in building bridges between Hindus and Muslims and in correcting misconceptions about Muslims. Even so, as we found in Ramola, the JU cleric was attacked very vehemently by the residents of that resettlement colony.

In Chapter 3 we saw how Muslims of Ahmedabad and, in fact, Gujarat as a whole, were keen to educate their children in Gujarati. They did not really believe in madrasa-type instruction, and to be fair, even the IRC (a JI wing) supports this sentiment. The IRC school in Naroda Patiya, as we have already noted, is clearly non-madrasa, and the teachers there, who are all members of JI, want their school to be recognised as a mainstream institution of learning. In some of the schools run by Muslim trusts, girls wear an Islamic-type uniform. This basically means that their head is covered but they are not veiled. Muslim clerics and lay Muslims find nothing wrong with it as long as it is the school uniform. As a mother of a school-going girl told me in Behrampada in Mumbai,

These clothes are fine for going to school. After all these are young girls and they must be modestly clad. But when they grow up and get married and become mothers of children, where is the need for all this
covering up? If I were to be clothed that way do you think I could do half the work I do all day? Besides it is so hot. Nobody in my family ever put on a burqa, so why should I?

This is exactly what Zarina told me in Citizen Nagar. She too argued that it was unnecessary for Muslim women to wear the burqa or cover their head all the time. I must say I was impressed by the fact that not one woman I met in Ahmedabad’s FBO-constructed resettlement colonies wore a burqa, many did not even cover their heads in the traditional manner. I think it is important for all those who talk of the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism to take a walk through the lower class Muslim quarters to correct the popular impression of orthodoxy sweeping Muslims in riot-affected areas.

What would also surprise such people is the clarity with which these women put forward their point of view. On many occasions when I went to Citizen Nagar or to Yes Colony most of the men were out, and yet the women were very forthcoming with their views. This was not the kind of scene one would imagine in a ghettoised, fundamentalist Muslim enclave. I am not sure how widely this is perceived, but several women also told me that it is not the women who want to wear the burqa but it is the men who force them to do so. Dr Seema Dalwai of University of Mumbai seemed to agree with this position. At any rate, neither in Akbar Nagar in Ahmedabad nor in Khoja Chawl in Mumbai did I see a burqa-clad lady. If there were some, they were certainly too few to make a difference.

Interestingly, it was in Mumbra, the Mumbai suburb mentioned earlier, where there were many burqa-clad women. This is an interesting feature as most of those who now live in Mumbra did not face any direct attack during the ethnic violence in Mumbai in 1993, but chose to move to Mumbra on their own over a period of time. These people actively sought refuge where only Muslims live and where their practices will remain unchallenged and their way of life would face no threats. In Oshiwara, another Mumbai suburb with a majority of Muslims but not nearly as preponderant as in Mumbra, there were a few burqa-clad women. In fact, some Muslims in Byculla told me that they feel out of place in Mumbra for it is too orthodox for their liking. In other words, there are Muslims and Muslims, and it is unfair to generalise (Plates 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8).
Plate 4.4: Girls returning from school in the Muslim slum of Behrampada, Mumbai. Notice the girls are wearing an ‘orthodox’ uniform.

Plate 4.5: Middle class neighbourhood in Mumbra, about 35 km from Mumbai. This came up as a residential area after the 1993 ethnic carnage in Mumbai and is populated almost entirely by Muslims.
Plate 4.6: Poor neighbourhood in Mumba.

Plate 4.7: Slums in Mumba, 35 kms from Mumbai.
Plate 4.8: A well-constructed mosque in Mumbra.
Justice before Reconciliation

We can, however, conclude that in the main there has not been a resurgence of fundamentalism on account of either the 1993 Mumbai episode or the 2002 killings in Gujarat. In fact, even in resettlement colonies set up by FBOs there is a marked absence of religious orthodoxy. Shahid of Yes Complex said:

Our homes were built by IRC but neither they nor the JI placed any religious conditions before handing over these units to us. They occasionally ask us to go for marches, or collect in front of some office or the other, but otherwise they don’t really bother us. They don’t come here and take us for prayers either. That is up to us. This is why we prefer them to the TJ. They make much less fuss.

The Dividing Walls of Mumbai and Ahmedabad: Separating the Metaphorical and Imaginary

Farid Sheikh is a practical person. He accepts that there are metaphorical walls between Hindus and Muslims which need to be breached. Farid Sheikh partly manages Mumbai’s Musafirkhana that lodged a few thousand Muslims in the 1993 violence. He believes that the best way of bringing about intercommunity harmony is by doing everyday things together. According to him the area around Crawford Market and Mohammadali Road in Mumbai was relatively peaceful in 1993, while there was great unrest in large parts of Mumbai. This was unusual, for in the 1980s, particularly between 1982 and 1983, this area was tense and would easily flare up along religious lines. He believes that the situation has now changed because people like him worked hard in the past to establish solidarity with Hindus in the neighbourhood.

Among other things, Farid Sheikh said that playing cricket across community lines in the neighbourhood really helped. Hindus got to know Muslims, and vice versa. It is not clear however whether this can be raised to a general principle: the more cricket you play the less you fight on the streets. In Behrampada in Mumbai, a young man told us that his school building actually housed three educational institutions. It had three floors and on one floor the instruction was in Marathi, on the next in English and there was a floor where Urdu was the only medium of instruction. This floor obviously had only Muslim students but they all played cricket together in teams that were made floor-wise. On the English-medium floor there were a few Muslim boys too, but the others were from Hindu families. Nevertheless, they played cricket year after year, got to know one another very well, till suddenly,
with the violence of 1993, it all stopped. Listening to this was as if one was replaying the India–Pakistan matches that were suddenly halted after the Kargil war.

While the metaphorical walls between communities are proving difficult to overcome in Gujarat, it is necessary to demolish the imaginary walls in Ahmedabad that many commentators have written about. Bunsha (2003, 2004) has filed graphic reports of how walls had come up in Ahmedabad’s Vejalpura area. When I went there I found that a middle-class housing colony, Venugopal Society, had raised its walls by a few feet in 2002, fearing the violence around. This wall in no way separates Hindus from Muslims, but just cordons off this housing colony. Across the street from this wall there are both Hindu and Muslim homes which in no way signifies a ‘partition’ between communities. Jan Breman also mentions the erection of a wall, but in much measured tones and not as if a brick and mortar partition was clearly segregating the two communities across large swathes of Ahmedabad (1999: 262).

I came across a wall of sorts in Gomtipur that separates the Dalit settlements from the Muslim ones. We should recall that some of the bloodiest cases of killing and looting were led by Dalits against Muslims. In this slum-like location the two communities live separately and have done so well before 2002. What has happened now is that a gate with spikes has been fixed in the opening between the two slums. It is not a big gate, but is a sturdy one. This gate, however, is always open, but it can be closed. Likewise, the wall around the west side of Gupta Nagar still exists, but the one on the east side has long been demolished. Interestingly, the wall that still stands in Gupta Nagar is only about 10 feet high and roughly 60 metres across. It cannot effectively barricade communities except for a very short stretch. Also, this wall was initially constructed by Muslims because the BJP and the VHP are very strong in that section of the neighbourhood. It was not built to keep away the Muslims, as it may appear in some renditions.

When activists were asked in the course of this study to comment on the walls they were remarkably lukewarm about it. This did not match the hyperbole that surrounds the description of such walls in a number of sources. The walls that are written about are not nearly as imposing as they are made out to be, nor do they regulate the intercourse between the two communities, at least, not today. This is why many of my respondents thought that I was referring to metaphorical walls, but as it turned out, I was talking of ‘imaginary’ ones (Plates 4.9 and 4.10).
Plate 4.9: Different views of the much written about ‘wall’ in Gupta Nagar, Ahmedabad. Notice how unimposing they actually are.
Exaggerations of this sort nevertheless have a deleterious effect on the credibility of secular activists. All the Hindu partisans and sectarians need to do is to point to these inflated accounts in order to underplay the terrible things they have done. Ghanshyam Shah, a noted political scientist, who gave a lot of his time in gathering evidence from victims, also expressed a similar view. He said that even secularists want to create an alarm, though of a different kind, by painting trivia in lurid colours, but that does not do their cause much good. For example, he argued, some of these opponents of Hindutva claimed that Muslim rickshaw drivers dare not cross the river to enter Hindu parts of the city. This was a patently false statement. Muslim and Hindu rickshaw drivers are carrying passengers from different parts of Ahmedabad, and a glance out of any window overlooking a busy street will prove that.

Note

1. The prize winning documentary ‘Long Night’s Journey into Day’, produced by Frances Reid in 2000, is also useful for a rounded picture of South Africa’s TRC.
In this penultimate chapter, we shall reflect on our field experiences to take a second look at some of the broader conceptual issues that emerge from the study. While majoritarian attacks attract intellectual attention around the time it climaxes, much more needs to be done regarding how victims pick up the pieces afterwards. Is it possible to arrive at a 'new' normal? Or is there just an uneasy calm where the minorities swallow their hurt and hope to live life incognito? What role can the state play in this process, and with what kind of charter? A liberal democratic one, or one that is imbrued with the colours of the flag?

If India is to remain a secular state then our discussions must necessarily be factored within the framework of India as a liberal democratic state, howsoever flawed it might seem. This is why we need to understand the challenges of democracy and how resolution between communities can best be achieved. To do this adequately we are forced to recognise that there exist a number of misperceptions that make it difficult to both understand the causes behind ethnic violence and how best post-conflict resolution can be arrived at.

We have the benefit of looking at Mumbai and Ahmedabad well after the violence occurred in these cities. In one case it has been 15 years and in the other a little over seven. But far from being a drawback, this is actually to our advantage, for we can see how things work out after the first shocks are over and absorbed. Sequentially, but not exclusively, in the beginning it is all about refuge and then a roof over one’s head, followed by sending children to school and getting compensation for damages, searching for viable sources of income to make ends meet and, last of all, the need for recognition as citizens.
When violence erupts, for that is how it happens, one cannot anticipate all the stages. Indeed, at that point one is not sure that the victims will ever be able to cope with the tragedy that has struck them. Bit by bit we realise that what is impossible to recapture is the ‘old’ normal, but through a variety of ways victims seek a ‘new’ normal which, however, may not be a happy one.

Whether it is multiculturalism in America and Europe, or Sikh regional politics in India, or Muslim ethnicisation in Gujarat, minorities want the state to act as guarantor of their citizen status. Hindu sectarians however believe that they do not need the law behind them for they are the authentic Indians and their status rises more profoundly from the soil. But majoritarian spokespeople can occasionally make grand gestures and certify certain members of minority communities as ‘patriotic’ and ‘pro-India’. Bal Thackeray once said to me that a certain Muslim Shakha Pramukh of the Shiv Sena was a very nice man for he lived and thought like a Hindu. On another occasion he commented that Mohammad Azharuddin, once India’s cricket captain, was a good Muslim. Evidently Azharuddin had passed Thackeray’s highly idiosyncratic test and was now a designated patriot. Such people fit the Hindu idea of who is a ‘proper’ Muslim.

A final closure of sorts to ethnic conflicts can only come about when the democratic state reinstates itself in the eyes of the minorities. This is the final test of a democratic society.

Multiculturalism and Justice: Secularism and Democracy

In a democratic state the issue is not so much about tolerance as it is about rights. In India we have often misunderstood secularism in terms of being large-hearted, soft-shouldered and generous to other cultures and communities. These sentiments, while laudable on their own, have little to do with the hard facts of the law which emphasise individual rights and non-discrimination. Everything else, all other humanitarian and altruistic urges must be subservient to the supreme liberal condition of individual rights and non-discrimination that are enshrined in law.

This implies that at the most fundamental level a citizen has rights which cannot be infringed upon. This is one aspect of the
constitution of any liberal democracy that is not negotiable. If, for
some reason, this aspect is undermined in favour of pure tolerance
or love of the ‘other’, then the lives of minorities will always be
delicately balanced on the altruistic imperative. Looked at carefully,
such an approach towards minorities depends too heavily on the
goodwill of others, which can be taken away without notice.

Such majoritarian concessions obviously do not satisfy the
minorities. In fact, this mode of thinking takes us back to medieval
times when minorities were given privileges at best, but not rights.
What minorities want in such cases is political parity which is
religion-blind and a state dispensation that treats all communities
as equals with equal rights. These issues are certainly amenable to
democratic resolution. One of the basic principles used to resolve
minority anxieties is to allow their cultural practices to flourish
as long as they do not interfere with the fundamental rights that
each individual has by virtue of being a citizen.

In contemporary societies there are two possible scenarios
where religion and politics come together. The first arises from
minority anxieties and the demand for self-respect and cultural
equality, and the second from majoritarian attacks on religious
minorities ostensibly to protect the nation-state from enemies
within. When religion and politics combine in the making of
nation-states then the outcome is either majoritarianism or
theocracy, which, in practical terms, means the same thing. But
being a nation-state is not everything. It is democracy that makes a
nation-state modern and liberal. To be able to trace one’s ancestry
in blood and territory can easily give way to jingoism, which has
been the unfortunate case in many independent nation-states.

Minorities became politically active on the issues of multi-
culturalism or justice. In the politics of multiculturalism, the time
period is an indefinite one as the effort is to establish certain norms
in perpetuity. This could be with regard to dress codes, family law,
education, worship and so on. In such instances, however, the
multiculturalists have to stay within the ambit of civil and penal
law and cannot violate the most elementary principles of liberal
democracy and the rights of the individuals. Issues of justice,
however, become central when minorities face majoritarian
violence that is justified in the name of protecting territory and
sovereignty.
In India, minority-inspired religious politics is no longer of much significance. The state of Punjab where most Sikhs live have more or less come to accept the status quo though the grievance of not having a capital of their own and having to share Chandigarh with neighbouring Haryana is not quite forgotten. The militant secessionist movement of the 1980s is now a distant memory, and most Sikhs do not want to be reminded of it. The only other significant unrest where the minorities have taken the lead is in the Kashmir valley. Unlike Sikh politics in Punjab, secessionists here want to separate from India though it is not clear whether the demand is entirely religious, or that it seems religious as the Muslims are numerically preponderant in the Kashmir region. It is widely recorded that more Muslims than Hindus have died at the hands of separatist militants, which makes it difficult to call it a religious agitation. The fear of becoming a minority in a sovereign Kashmir state has pushed Hindu organisations like the BJP and Paunoon Kashmir to oppose the demand for Kashmir secession or autonomy.

This has an ironical side to it as a majority of Kashmiri Muslims do not want to be part of Pakistan, nor do they identify with other Muslims in India. This became apparent after the 2002 mass killings of Muslims in Gujarat. Leading opposition parties in Kashmir failed to generate popular support for their call for a statewide agitation in sympathy with the persecuted Muslims of Gujarat. The Kashmir Muslims clearly see themselves as quite distinct from their coreligionists elsewhere in the subcontinent and have little in common with them. In fact Abdul Ghani Bhatt, a leading Kashmiri activist, argued that this was because Muslims in India ‘never reacted to whatever has been happening in Kashmir over the past 12 years . . . We don’t hold any grudges against them about it because we see them as Indians’.

Other than Kashmir, nowhere else is minority-inspired politics of any consequence in India. On the other hand religion and politics combine frequently, and with telling impact nationwide, when it comes to expressing Hindu majoritarianism. In India, religious politics did not win much favour during the struggle for Independence. This is quite surprising given the potential for using this sentiment against the British. Indeed, there were Hindu activists from the 1920s onwards who tried to work up religious
nationalism, but they never made it to the mainstream of the nationalist movement that stayed in the control of the secular Congress Party.

With Independence came the Partition and the emergence of Pakistan. The bloodshed and the trauma of leaving what was always home and becoming a refugee aided the Hindu nationalist cause in post-Independence India. It needs to be recalled that the opening chapter discussed how Hindu organisations like the RSS and the Jana Sangh found it convenient to portray those Muslims who stayed behind in India as traitors and agents of Pakistan. To this day the memory of the Partition is invoked in the many riots that have targeted Muslims in India. In order to comprehend the overall appeal of Hindu majoritarianism, it is necessary to factor in Pakistan and the significance of territory in any imagination of the nation-state, any nation-state.2

The Significance of Religion: How Muslims and Sikhs Were Minoritised

Ethnic mobilisations that use religion to thematise the nation-state find it much easier to survive than when other forms of community identity are activated. We shall illustrate this point with the way Shiv Sena has scored repeatedly with its attacks against Muslims at different points of time. It was earlier shown how the Shiv Sena began its career in 1966 in Mumbai on a single anti-South Indian migrants platform. Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena Chief, effectively argued that if Maharashtrians were not getting jobs in the capital of their own state then it was because of a conspiracy hatched by migrants to the city from South India. Though he meant Tamilians usually, his pronouncements against South Indians in general included migrants from the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

While this platform launched the Shiv Sena to political heights in Mumbai, Bal Thackeray soon realised that he had no friends at the national level. No major party dared make any common cause with the Shiv Sena for fear of losing its supporters from the four South Indian states. Shiv Sena found itself isolated. Thus, while it was strong in the city of Mumbai, its influence did not reach even Pune, the cultural capital of Maharashtra.
It was then that the Shiv Sena realised that it has to have a second string to its bow. In 1967 it attacked the communists, particularly the Left trade unions, and immediately made friends with a number of parties, from the Congress to the Right wing parties. In late 1960, Mumbai was besieged by working class unrest brought upon by recession, bad monsoons and famines in certain parts of the country. This anti-Left stance of the Shiv Sena yielded rich dividends, so much so that Thackeray even said that communists were now its main enemies, and in that sense, the heat was off the South Indian migrants in Mumbai.

However, by the late 1980s, the Left threat had receded and it was hard to work up any popular enthusiasm by attacking communists. At that point the Shiv Sena was going through a political slump. In 1984 it revived itself by adopting the Hindutva platform and isolating the Muslims as its principal targets. This change of tactics has stood the Shiv Sena in good stead for many years, and it continues to milk anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan sentiments as its basic nourishment.

Thus, while linguistic differences can stoke a popular movement for some time, it is difficult to maintain the tempo because all-India level considerations make their presence felt before long. This is why ascription-based mobilisations tend to thematise the nation-state and point to external enemies across the border to win support for their cause. No wonder that Muslims are the most frequent targets of such majoritarian excesses, though through the 1980s even the Sikhs were minoritised effectively.

Though it was widely believed that there was a widespread secessionist demand among Sikhs, the fact is that a vast majority of them were not in favour of breaking away from India. Yet, because Sikhs could be identified as a separate religious community, the fear of another Partition came readily to mind. We need not repeat how the government played up this anxiety for political advantage. However, the manner in which the Punjab problem was resolved has lessons for other ethnic conflicts too. If Sikh organisations are today willing to participate in the national democratic process, it is because subsequent post-Congress governments from 1989 onwards made concerted attempts to defuse the feeling of anger and hurt in Punjab. In 1990 when V.P. Singh was elected as Prime Minister and he toured Punjab, he was given a most rousing reception. Sikhs believed that Singh had come to apply the healing touch,
and they were most grateful for it. Quite clearly, Sikhs wanted the state to safeguard their status as full citizens and punish those who were guilty of the 1984 violence, as well as for the way the Golden Temple was attacked under Operation Blue Star the same year. One shudders to think what would have happened if Sikh militancy had been allowed to fester for a few more years. Would the Sikhs then have been equally charitable about their future within India?

It is interesting to plot the trajectory of the disturbances in Punjab in the 1980s for yet another reason: to show that minority resentments can be made to look seditious by clever political manipulations. A legitimate demand by citizens can be transformed by the ‘people’, speaking in the name of the majority, into an anti-national act. That is why the political calculations behind ethnic killings need to be clearly brought out.

The problems in Punjab did not begin with demands of secessionism, however muted and fragmented that may have been. The nation-state became the central theme later, but political dissatisfaction in Punjab against the Congress at the Centre was based on the need to set up a tribunal for water distribution between north-western states, a territorial tribunal to resolve outstanding disputes between Punjab and neighbouring Haryana, and most of all, the demand for Chandigarh as the capital of Punjab. None of these in any way was remotely linked to any secessionist or breakaway demands. In fact, many other regional parties have made demands for greater autonomy, much as the Akalis had done, without getting the secessionist tag. Fortunately, the Akali demand for a separate unilingual state of Punjab in the 1960s escaped this opprobrium (Nayar 1966).

In the case of Punjab, a variety of contingent factors helped to represent Sikhs as extremists. First, there was Bhindranwale and the religious politics of the Akali Dal which constrained a large number of moderate Sikh leaders. Second, there was the memory of the Partition which still haunted many Hindu Punjabis in Punjab, and the thought of another Partition sent them uncritically into the arms of those who were demonising the Sikhs. Eventually, it must also be said, the nation as a whole participated in this orchestrated fear (especially after Operation Blue Star and Indira Gandhi’s assassination) that Sikhs were, in the majority, out to break up India again and commit sacrilege to the memories of those who had suffered during the Partition. What most people
overlooked was not just the actual wording of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, but that the Sikhs had probably suffered the most during the 1947 Partition. In this case, the Hindu–Sikh face off did not require a history of traditional animosity. It was cooked over a slow fire from the late 1970s onwards by interested political parties (most notably, the Congress), till it came to a boil in the mid-1980s. Operation Blue Star, which drove tanks into the Golden Temple and drove bullet holes in the sanctum sanctorum, and the massacre of Sikhs after Indira Gandhi’s assassination set the stage for a full-scale ethnicisation of Sikhs led by the Congress.

This is an interesting variation. It was not the Hindu parties that initiated the attacks on Sikhs but the Congress, long known to be a secular bulwark against sectarian threats. After 1984, it did not take very long for the Sikhs to be portrayed nationwide as enemies of India and friends of Pakistan. Even today, if a political party or a community can be reasonably classified as a secessionist, then they are in the same breath considered Pakistani sympathisers too; strong is the link between majoritarian politics, nation-state and Pakistan.

While the Shiv Sena self-consciously moved from anti-South Indian to anti-Muslim, in the case of the Sikhs it all happened to them from the outside. It was the Congress that successfully made them look like secessionists though the Sikhs were really interested in issues that were well within the ambit of legitimate federal politics. But in both cases there were winners and losers. In Mumbai, the Shiv Sena won by attacking the Muslims, and in the case of Punjab the Congress scored in the 1984 elections by minoritising the Sikhs.

Two Kinds of Primordialism:
Demos-Centred and Ethnos-Centred

Now we are in a position to conceptualise clearly the distinction between two kinds of primordialism that often spur political agitations. The first we may call ‘demos-centric’ and the second ‘ethnos-centric’.

As we hinted at earlier, a demos-centric primordial movement is when the issues raised do not thematise the sovereignty of the nation-state or its geographical boundaries. This kind of political activism would include mobilisations on the basis of caste and
language, and could, by extension, include border disputes within states of the Indian union. In these movements the enemy is not considered to be anti-Indian or from outside India. For example, in caste conflicts nobody makes the claim that the ‘other’ is not Indian. The bone of contention is that this ‘other’ has a larger share of the cake than is justifiable. The same would apply to linguistic disputes and to interstate border antagonisms. It must be remembered that in India language has never, not so far at least, been the inspiration behind secessionist claims, real or imputed.

On the other hand, religious conflicts in India have tended to have separatist elements, sometimes real, but mostly imagined. This is probably an outcome of the way Pakistan was carved out of what was once an undivided India. For Indians, this was perhaps the sorriest chapter in contemporary history, but it also made the idea of territory a live reality with barbed wires, mines and soldiers in their deep trenches.

Religious conflicts, whether between Hindus and Muslims, or Hindus and Sikhs, have always carried the threat of another Partition. In most cases, this fear is activated by the majority community in order to put the minority group on the defensive. In such cases, territory and the nation-state get thematised as the belief that the sovereignty of India is in peril becomes an active political ingredient. In such situations the portrayal of the minority is always as an outsider, an enemy lurking within, a community whose history, roots and traditions are not intrinsically ‘Indian’. This is how the image of an ethnic other is created. When political mobilisations happen along the nation-state axis it is probably justified to call them ‘ethnos-centric’.

The tragedies of Mumbai and Ahmedabad, which form the subject matter of this research, are outcomes of such ‘ethnos-centric’ passions. As the nation-state is now the central thematic concern, the ideology that promotes ethnic violence, or majoritarianism, is not girded by economic considerations. These may grow later on the fringes, but they are not the driving force behind ethnos-centric activism.

‘Demos-centric’ mobilisations, however, are primarily spurred by economic considerations. It could be the scarcity of jobs, or the sharing of scarce natural resources, that energise such partisanships. But what can get confusing is when demos-centric movements get converted into ethnos-centric ones, as happened in
the case of Punjab. Initially, as we mentioned in the first chapter, the Akalis were agitating for more water, more territory and a separate capital for Punjab. Over time, it may be recalled, the movement was pushed to appear as an ethnos-centric one and nearly all national parties had a hand in this.

The Shiv Sena’s career may also be quickly revisited to make a similar point. It began by being against South Indian migrants to Mumbai, but it soon shed its ‘demos-centric’ drive and adopted an ‘ethnos-centric’ ideology that targeted Muslims. Some may say, and quite rightly, that even in those demos-centric days there were ethno-centric elements in the Shiv Sena; nevertheless it is without doubt that as we moved into the 1980s, the Shiv Sena found its charge in attacking an ‘ethnic other’.

To conclude this section, we may add that the surest way of disarming one’s political opponent is to charge it with extraterritorial loyalties. In the Indian context this does not work well if the ‘other’ is from a different linguistic group, but perhaps because of the tragedy of the Partition, religious differences are more amenable to such ‘ethnos-centric’ persuasions.

As ethnos-centred mobilisations are a quest for affirming status, there are only absolute winners and absolute losers. Unlike a demos-centred movement that is spurred by economic grievances where there are chances of a compromise, status-seeking ethnic movements are absolutist in their scope. This is probably why ethnos-centric activisms invite so much violence without remorse. The ethnic ‘other’ is after all an alien, someone who does not belong to the nation-state. In demos-centric caste movements in India, it is not as if poorer castes are told to leave the country, or denied their claims to being Indian. Dominant and prosperous castes must negotiate a future with them even as they are engaged in political struggle. Further, when Dalit castes fight for respectability, a large part of it is fuelled by their economic deprivation, both in the village and in towns. Land rights and jobs frequently accompany Dalit mobilisations, though there are instances of Dalits agitating on grounds of pure status considerations as well, particularly in the many Buddhist conversion movements. What however keeps Dalit uprisings from becoming ethnic is that so far Buddhism is not seen as a threat to the nation-state by Hindu activists. The matter would have been quite different if Dalits chose to convert to Islam. Even so, as Buddhists they have often earned the wrath
of Bal Thackeray because of their irreverence to Hindu sacerdotal texts. If it is Islam that arouses the greatest ire in ethnic mobilisations, it is because of the presence of Pakistan and the tragedy of Partition.

Andre Bèteille points out that human beings ‘everywhere discriminate among things and among persons, and that some kind of evaluation is applied to both’ (2005: 290). Recalling Talcott Parsons, Bèteille argues that evaluations involve a rank order or hierarchy. Only in rare circumstances might it be otherwise, but those would be special cases. We need to turn to Levi-Strauss at this point, who, in his study of the relationship between nature and culture, demonstrated the general tendency to cast these cultural evaluations in naturalistic terms (1969: 101). Is this not what status-affirming ethnicists are really doing? Are we then to be perpetual victims of our basic anthropological failing? If, in the future, nation-states and the memories they stoke become irrelevant, will some other kind of bigotry take over? Perhaps reflecting on this would help us overcome the severity of the consequences of our anthropological failing. Or, would it?

Enter Lacan: Post-conflict Resolution and the Triad

Jacques Lacan’s *Ecrits* (1977) gives us a profound theoretical basis for establishing post-conflict resolutions that are enduring and not limited to token gestures. It was only by establishing the triadic framework that Lacan believed contesting communities (or dyads) could reach lasting peace. Without going over what has already been discussed earlier, it is necessary to remind ourselves in conclusion that while jobs, education and homes are important considerations in terms of rehabilitation, the final and most comprehensive feature of lasting peace can only be achieved when the antagonistic dyads acknowledge the state as legitimately occupying the triadic node.

How did Lacan help me? In plain language, Lacan argued that a person’s sense of the self must correlate with the space around. Just as a child chuckles into a mirror as it sees its image without any breaks, so also is the urge among most of us to be able to project an image of the self which is in perfect concinnity with the surroundings. But as this was no ordinary image that Lacan was talking about, he used the ancient term ‘imago’ to dramatically capture the essence of what he was arguing. Unfortunately, as
Lacan pointed out, the correlative space is not unproblematic. We are, more often than not, misrecognised, which creates a tension between the self and the other. The only way this imago can keep itself from turning pathological is when both the self and the other defer to a big Other with a capital 'O'. Together with the big 'O' we have the formation of a triad without which egos can only clash against each other in endless conflict, or in limitless jouissance. Therefore, for a normal imago to come through it cannot be seen in isolation but within a triadic framework where the big 'O' acts as the name of the father, or (after being chided by feminists) as the fount of the law. If the big 'O' collapses, then all possibilities of language cease. After that there is only the cry!

This is why the voices of the minorities are often not heard, or if heard, not understood. If the triad has lost its position and the minorities see the state converging its interests with the majority community, then the language of the democratic constitution becomes incomprehensible as the triad has collapsed and has become an extension of an ethnic dyad (in this case, constituted by the majority community). Consequently, the minorities (Muslims or Sikhs) begin to feel that the state has compromised itself and the triadic node has merged with the Hindu 'other' (Lacan's small 'o'). I am not quite sure if Slavoj Žižek has got Lacan right for he argues that the theft of enjoyment of the big 'O' is like castration (Žižek 1993: 203–6; see also Žižek 1992). As far as I can make out, it is not as if the big 'O' is stolen and is now being enjoyed by the other, but that the big 'O' ceases to occupy the triadic spot for which reason the dyads are thrown into limitless jouissance. I think my rendition is closer to Lacan, and, in any case, castration and jouissance do not go together.

As we are always sitting on a powder keg of diverse social forces, as Parsons had once said, it is important that equanimity be maintained as the price of disruption is too high. To have to hold all-round renegotiations between social actors and institutions is much too laborious and unrewarding. The social compact is a delicate one for the charge of being misunderstood is always lurking in the background.

This point really belongs to Hegel, but it has been expanded in recent times by Jacques Lacan (1977) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guittari (1990) as well. In *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel (1977) put romance and warmth in their place when he pointed
out that the only relationship that can yield complete satisfaction is when master consumes the servant, but nobody asked the servant about it. This is a valid point for us to bear in mind for in ethnic violence, the master (the majority community) finds fulfilment only in the annihilation of the slave (the minority community). In less extreme cases of dyadic relationships, say between lovers, parents, friends and, by extension, even between enemies, there is always a sense of an unrequited promise. Sometimes, even enemies do not behave badly, and that can be a disappointment.

Lacan (1977) took this theme further and demonstrated that peace between any set of dyads is because there is a third element, the triadic node, which appears as the source of law (see Gupta 1997: 1888–889). This reins in dyadic relations within a certain zone of activism, but every now and again the chain snaps under pressure. The triad then collapses and dyads enter a period of limitless carnival (jouissance) of violence where each party claims 'misrecognition'. This goes on till a new triad establishes itself. It could now be headquartered somewhere else and not in the familiar ideological square. This would not just alter relations between dyads but alter them internally as well. So Parsons’s notion of the powder keg is not at all inappropriate.

By the time Deleuze and Guittari came along, it was clear that Hegel’s notion of an asymmetrical relationship between dyads could be worked out only with the help of Lacan’s triad. But in that case, neither dyad would be a complete victor, and the desire to consume the other will have to be restrained. This is why ‘desire’ as Deleuze and Guittari (1990) argue, is by itself a disruptive and dangerous sentiment for, as I see it, it tries to work its way in from the blind side of the triadic node. Desire is antithesis in the extreme for it is always there waiting in anticipation for the triad to collapse.

In my own work I have argued that democracy is a difficult project for it entails a conscious awareness of the fragility of Lacan’s ‘triad’ which is constantly under pressure from Deleuzianesque ‘desire’. To keep a triad going that is shored up on principles of liberal democratic and humanistic values is one of the hardest feats of social engineering ever. It is against all that is spontaneous in social relations which is why a democrat just cannot let the guards off on furlough. Democracy is constant vigil, for once the triadic node that is occupied by the Constitution fails to live up to
its expectations then the only language left is the ‘cry’ (see Gupta 1997: 189). We then slip back into predemocratic negotiations till the triad painfully re-establishes itself, if at all, and perhaps never in the same form again. There is then a new normal and the old one is lost forever, but for remnants in one’s memory. On the face of it, the new triad and the dyads may have the same outward form, but there would be significant internal variations as a fresh equation has been arrived at. It may not be a happy, or happier, one, but the three nodes are now embedded in each other with a different set of angularities.

Therefore, the making of a normal imago cannot be seen in isolation but within a triadic framework where the big ‘O’ acts as in the name of the father, or as the fount of the law, or as in the constitution of a liberal democracy. If the big ‘O’ collapses, then the established terms of discourse cease to exist. This is how the terrorist is often born for now there is no communication possible on either side. If in India we have been able to stave off fundamentalism for such a long while, it is because at the end of the day the big ‘O’ does manage to assert itself, often after a long gap, in dramatic electoral reversals, which restores some faith in the constitution and the law among the minorities.

Notes

1. Quoted in Indian Express, 5 March 2002.
2. For example, the lines that Sublieutenant Rupert Chawner Brooke (n.d.) wrote before he died in the battlefield at Skyros, Greece, in World War I: ‘If I should die, think only this of me; That there is some corner of a foreign land, That is forever England….’ (ibid. n.d.: 5).
Summary and Policy Options: Placing the Citizen in the Centre

A study of how victims of ethnic violence cope with their tragedies over the long term helps in understanding the many threads that need to be cautiously woven to arrive at a ‘new normal’. After the earlier established relations between communities in the old normal have been severely disrupted, it is no longer possible to quietly slip back to status quo ante. We must recognise that the earlier state of normalcy was not a ‘natural’ outcome, or a spontaneous lifeworld, but that too had been carefully crafted through multiple negotiations.

Yet lives must go on. Over time, some kind of peace is established; victims find a home or return to their earlier ones, children begin going to schools, perhaps different ones, and earning members of the family find opportunities to earn an income, often quite in variance from what they did before the violence affected them. Bit by bit, the riot-hit victims pick up the pieces, but it is a long and arduous process, never quite completed.

Claims of Citizenship: Returning to a ‘New Normal’

During this entire period the affected Muslims cannot forget the fact that ‘citizenship’ rights have been cruelly snatched away from them by people who have acted in the name of the ‘people’. This is why, time and again, whether in formal presentations or in informal discussions, the demand for justice is ever present in the minds of Muslims. The dust will eventually settle, but living a life will be a stealthy operation where one will perpetually have to be on guard, especially if one is a religious ‘minority’ and cannot speak in the name of the ‘people’.

An examination of how the affected people of communal violence in Mumbai (1993) and Ahmedabad (2002) gradually resumed their lives, albeit in an altered fashion, brings out the importance
of the context. The differences do not lie so much in the fact that the violence in Mumbai happened almost 17 years ago while in Ahmedabad as recently as 2002. That must be kept in mind, but several interesting contrasts did show up in the way Muslims reacted to the carnage in these two cities over the long term.

These differences are on account of a number of features. To begin with, the political dispensation of the administration in Maharashtra is very dissimilar from that in Gujarat. Further, the character of the political and social elite of Mumbai, particularly among the Muslims, finds no counterpart in Ahmedabad. To a large extent these dissimilarities between Mumbai and Ahmedabad reflect the divergence in the social history of these two cities. Together they have left a lasting impression on how communities relate to one another in times of peace as well as during moments of heightened tension.

This is evident from the fact that Muslim victims in Mumbai and Ahmedabad coped with the violence against them quite differently. This is not so easily visible in the immediate aftermath of the violence because the common pressures then are to save lives, provide shelter and claim compensations. As the years go by the context begins to exert itself. At first dimly, and then more clearly the effects of the history of the place, the nature of state administration and the quality of civic life begin to be felt. It is not as if Muslims always react in the same way in negotiating a ‘new normal’ though the attacks against them may be engineered by identical passions.

Both in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, Muslims are in a minority, and many of them can easily trace their origins to North India. Though many have lived all their lives in these cities, they are more comfortable in ‘Hindustani’ than in either Marathi or Gujarati. Yet, several years later one can see a clear divergence in the way Muslims in these two metropolises have responded to the ethnic carnages of which they were the victims. In the initial period, as was observed earlier, after the violence the reactions tend to be the same. Security is their major concern, followed by those regarding housing, livelihood and education for their children. There is also an enlivening of identity which soon dribbles away.

This is the time that volunteers, NGOs, citizen groups, enquiry commissions, etc., play an important role. Activities of this sort require courage, dedication and specialisation and most often the
effects of these actions are greater than they ostensibly set out to do. While an NGO might specialise in education or health or help in getting compensation for victims, their very presence cushions the aftershocks of violence, cuts the chances of random bloodshed, puts greater pressure on the state by shaming it in the media, and most of all, gets the members of the frightened minority community to take the first steps outside their refugee camps and interact with the broader society.

We usually stop here when we examine ethnic carnages. The moment bloodshed ceases we tend to lose interest. For this reason, a long-term perspective on how to handle the consequences of community-driven attacks is incompletely understood. Over time, as the ‘new normal’ settles in, the impetus to examine the long-term effects of ethnic violence gradually diminishes. This ‘new normal’, like the earlier one, is collectively negotiated by community, political and state actors. A fresh set of issues now begin to mark off distances between communities, and in some cases, these indicators may be a more emphatic restatement of the old.

In contrast to Mumbai which has an established Muslim social and political elite, in Ahmedabad the Muslims were completely unprotected during those long months when they were under attack. This city lacked Mumbai’s cosmopolitan gravitas and its secular forces. Mumbai’s history of trade unionism and secular activism over many decades also built a different intellectual and civic life in the city. The Muslim elite of Ahmedabad are not of the same stature as their counterparts in Mumbai, and their impact on Gujarat and the city’s politics is marginal, or supportive, at best. The BJP has a much stronger political presence in Gujarat than it can ever hope to attain in Maharashtra. Therefore, what happens in Mumbai or Ahmedabad is also contextualised by the politics of their respective states of which they are the capital cities.

Otherwise, whether it is the literacy rate among Muslims, or the distribution of Muslims in different occupational categories, or even in terms of their proportionate numerical presence, the two cities do not differ from each other. Indeed, there is nothing that is remarkable regarding the status and size of Muslims in these two metropolises that should make them stand apart from other cities in India. The blame for the ferocity of attacks against Muslims in Mumbai and Ahmedabad cannot be conveniently explained away by positioning them as a business threat, or a numerical threat,
or as a threat to the jobs of white-collar-aspirant Hindus in these two cities.

Eventually then, if the Muslims of Mumbai and Ahmedabad have reacted differently to Hindu sectarian attacks against them then the answer does not lie in morphological Census figures, or in occupational profiles, as they do with the history of the place and the social and political context within which the carnages took place.

In Ahmedabad, unlike Mumbai, rich Muslims crouched into their shelter as gusts of bloody onslaughts against their community swept around them. Though the majority of the dead lived in poorer quarters of the city, the better-off Muslims did not have the courage and confidence to step out. Unlike Mumbai, there were an insignificant number of Muslim leaders and notables in Ahmedabad who could offer succour to their less fortunate coreligionist. Naturally, no citizen action could rise from among them as it did in Mumbai. In Ahmedabad, the rich Muslims also kept their head down and hoped that they would not be noticed.

In Ahmedabad, the only refuge Muslims could find was in the hastily set-up camps by different FBOs. The largest camp was in the precincts of the Shah Alam Mosque. In Mumbai, FBOs played a minor role because they were not called upon to render anything that only they could perform. The Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) in Mumbai did help in providing utensils to those who had fled from their homes, but were not engaged in providing housing and educational support as were FBOs in Ahmedabad. In Ahmedabad, only the FBOs came out to offer shelter. I have heard many poor Muslims say that the better off in the community were running for cover themselves and did not have the resources to act as patrons and protectors. The kind of civic role that Muslim notables and others played in Mumbai, or the way the state machinery returned to its task of maintaining law and order, just did not happen in Ahmedabad. This is what forced the FBOs to come forward and fill the void.

In Ahmedabad, the FBOs were involved in extending both relief as well as rehabilitation services, and the latter in a very concerted, protracted and organised fashion. The JI and the JU provided shelter for Muslims in newly constructed refugee colonies and also repaired the homes of many. It is not clear whether the victims paid for these services in full with the compensation they received from the Gujarat government, but it cannot be doubted
that but for these FBOs many Muslims would have had no roof over their heads, and many others a very dilapidated structure, and often a burnt-out shell, for a dwelling.

In Ahmedabad the ghettoisation of Muslims began before 2002 and so did this same process start in Mumbai well before 1993. However, the recent riots in both these cities only deepened this process. In Ahmedabad some of the Muslim-dominated areas have become magnets for frightened Muslims looking for a secure home. This is true also for Mumbai, but not to the same extent. What is however more interesting is that there has been a steady investment of real-estate capital by Muslims in areas outside proper Mumbai. These new neighbourhoods are almost entirely Muslim and in contrast to Mumbai city, the number of women wearing veils in these localities is quite high. The largest settlement of this kind is in Mumbra, which is about an hour and a half by suburban train from Mumbai Central. Faith-based organisations have had no role to play in the remaking of Mumbra, though several mosques have been constructed here. Mumbra is a township on its own; it has upper middle class homes as well as rows of slums and everything else in between.

Most Muslims, whether in Mumbai or Ahmedabad, are poor artisans and labourers. They work largely in the informal sector. In contrast to the general population, a larger percentage is involved in crafts, ‘own enterprises’ and petty business. Whether it is auto workshops or selling bangles, there are proportionately more Muslims than Hindus. The Sachar Committee Report, which draws heavily on the National Sample Survey, provides many illustrations of this order (Sachar 2006).

Finding a job is always difficult, especially after a riot. It is much harder for those Muslims who had to change their residence because their place of work was now much farther away from where it used to be earlier. This has hurt the earning capacity of poor Ahmedabad Muslims for so many of them live at a distance from the city in refugee settlements built by JI and JU. This compels them to spend long hours on the road to get to work, or even to search for one. In Mumbai, the situation is not that grave, primarily because Muslims in that city did not experience large-scale displacement after 1993. When people choose to go to Mumbra or Oshiwada, they do so of their own volition and at their own pace. Before they make their
move they often find a suitable occupation and make sure that other civic amenities such as health and schools are also available to them. Things were very much more under their control.

Given the poverty levels of Muslims, as also the fact that a large number of them work either as daily labourers or on piece-meal contract terms, or are owners of microenterprises as small as vending out of push-carts, it is not hard to get a job after a few months of displacement. They move from poverty to poverty. Of course, there are other displacement costs in Ahmedabad, but in most cases they have a job which is roughly comparable to the one they had in the past. Finding a job is not a major issue. The big problem is fighting poverty. This fight gets tougher if one is in a position of constant fear that ethnic attacks could engulf one again any time.

There is one other area where the difference between Muslims in Ahmedabad and those in Mumbai is very striking, and that is in the field of education. In Mumbai, Muslims generally refuse to learn Marathi and prefer to go to Urdu-medium schools instead. There are many private- and government-run Urdu-medium schools, and Muslim children prefer them to the Marathi-medium ones. Of course, English-medium schools are the most preferred, but they cost more.

In Gujarat the story is very different. In Ahmedabad, for example, the JI and the JU also encourage the setting up of Gujarati-medium schools. The Muslims I met in Ahmedabad said that they wanted their children in non-Urdu schools because they must be as well equipped as the Hindus are when they grow up. Some also mentioned that if they went to a regular Gujarati school then Urdu words and expressions would not escape their lips. This would make their livelihood prospects brighter. I even saw several Anjuman Trust schools in Ahmedabad where the teaching was almost entirely in Gujarati. Please recall that the majority of poor Muslims in Ahmedabad and Mumbai are migrants, and a significant proportion of them are from North India. Yet, there is a significant difference between Muslims of Mumbai and Ahmedabad when it comes to choosing the medium of instruction for their school-going children.

Finally, as Mumbai Muslims have not really gained from, or interacted with, FBOs, they have a distant view of them. They see the
JI and JU as purely religious bodies, primarily devoted to preaching and propagating Islam. In this connection one must include the TJ as well. In Ahmedabad, the relationship with FBOs is different. It is more intimate, and it has also changed over time. Soon after the killings started in Gujarat, the FBOs were looked up to as saviours by the terrified Muslims. These organisations even built homes for them and provided other social services. But as time went on, the relationship between Muslim beneficiaries and the FBOs began to sour. Differences emerged with the FBOs on issues such as the provision of civic amenities and mode of worship. Many Muslim victims even expressed distrust over how their compensation money was used by FBOs in constructing their dwellings.

To sum up, this study brought out a few important points. First, even though the displaced and harassed Muslims found jobs for themselves, a school for their children and a roof over their heads, there is one fear that has stayed with them and it drives nearly all of them to ghettoisation and to a hostile political relation with the state and the governmental apparatus. In the case of Ahmedabad, Muslims live under the added burden of constant fear from the state government of Gujarat (Human Rights Watch 2003). The one common feature among Muslims of both Ahmedabad and Mumbai is their longing for justice; those who killed, maimed and brutalised them have to be punished.

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, South African style, are often recommended by Indian NGOs in situations such as in Gujarat, but it is a misplaced advocacy. To begin with, first, TRCs were not an unqualified success even in South Africa. Those who suffered grievously during the apartheid regime were not always willing to forgive. Second, it is often forgotten that not all officials were pardoned even if they confessed to implementing a racist policy. The most important difference is that South Africa went through a regime change when TRCs were introduced. It was not as if the vanquished were asked to forgive when still in a degraded state. But once the suppressed Blacks became victorious they could then extend the olive branch and selectively reconcile with some White apartheid enforcers. It would make no sense to ask for TRCs when the government that has inflicted ethnic violence is in power and shows no signs of remorse; when officials resist meeting with the SIT set by the Centre to conduct and co-ordinate proceedings against the accused of 2003 Gujarat killings, and so on. If under
these conditions TRCs are imagined, it would be an utter travesty of justice. At any rate, Muslims in general, in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, are totally averse to this suggestion.

Second, it is not at all the case that the carnage in Ahmedabad and Mumbai has turned the Muslims towards fundamentalism. One does not find significant traces of this in their choice of education for their children, or in their relationships with religious clerics. In Ahmedabad, in addition, Muslims want Gujarati-medium schools and are often at loggerheads with religious virtuosos who helped them rebuild their lives.

Third, riots hurt poor Muslims the most. It was not as if these victims had to start afresh to build assets, but they had to look for jobs all over again. This was very difficult as they were often forced to search for employment in areas much further away from home, and under hostile circumstances. As many of the victims ran small enterprises or were labourers, poverty was something they were used to. Even so, on top of everything else, finding a way to earn money was a great aggravation. Eventually, most of them found other low-paying jobs and somehow made ends meet. They moved from one kind of poverty to another.

Fourth, the context is very important. The social and economic character of Mumbai is very different from that of Ahmedabad and this explains, to a large extent, why Mumbai Muslims were relatively less affected than those in Ahmedabad. It also helps one understand the variations in the ways Muslims in Ahmedabad and Mumbai returned to a ‘new normal’.

Policy Options: How Can This Study Help?

1. The most important recommendation is that unless the law is adhered to in letter and spirit, it will be almost impossible to stop the tendency towards ghettoisation and the feeling of marginalisation among Muslims. They want justice so that they can be reassured of their status as full citizens.

2. Fundamentalism is not a threat; at least, not yet. Hence, instead of trying to ideologically persuade Muslims from staying away from hardline Wahabbis, the attempt should be to provide them with quality schools so that their young can lead a life with options other than being a labourer or a poor technician when they grow up. This is also what most Muslims want.
3. In places where ghettoisation has taken place, the government should step in and provide adequate municipal and civic services. Failure to do so will only rekindle feelings of alienation, anger and hurt among Muslims. Even in places like Mumbra, whose population is almost entirely Muslim, the government should encourage the establishment of technical education, colleges, secular schools and hospitals. The state should not withdraw its presence from such areas but should perhaps concentrate more on them.

4. Those resettlement colonies that have been built by FBOs are in very poor condition and the government must find alternative housing for the residents who live there. As of now, there is no interest in that direction, and in many of these neighbourhoods, even ordinary government schools are absent.

5. Political parties that claim to be secular should demonstrate their worth by making sure that in those regions where they are in power, justice is delivered to the minorities without delay. They should also ensure that in meeting development targets special care be taken to include Muslims and other minorities. In addition, secular politics will not appear attractive to the majority community unless it can deliver on the economic front in a way that is equal to, if not better than, what Modi has done in Gujarat. By common consent, this will not be easy, but what is not usually recognised is that secularism must go well beyond good words and actually perform on bread and butter issues (see Appendix II).

6. International organisations should also make their distaste for ethnic politics clear, especially when dealing with those provinces in India where state governments ideologically depend on minority baiting. This also applies to the Indian corporate sector as many captains of industry look kindly on states like Gujarat for they hope to get favoured treatment from the local administration and power wielders.

7. Citizen action and voluntary groups should continue to be active in disturbed regions till the demand for justice is met.

8. Police reforms that have been suggested by various government committees over the last 50 years must be implemented urgently. This would free policemen from subservience to political bosses and would introduce professionalism in their ranks.
9. The Indian Criminal Penal Code needs to be revised with the help of legal experts to enable proceedings against those officials who have failed in their duties to protect helpless citizens. As the Criminal Penal Code stands today, it is very difficult to charge an official, elected or otherwise, for such grievous offences. Inevitably, the only option left for many civil rights activists is to somehow build a case against the functionary for conspiring to cause harm. This is always a very difficult charge to prove.

10. The Sachar Committee has generated a demand in certain quarters that the policy for reservations be extended to include Muslims as they form an economically backward religious community. This may or may not be justifiable, but it should be borne in mind that reservations will not lessen the feeling of persecution, or of being ethnically targeted, among Muslims who have been victims of majoritarian brutalities. As the attacks against Muslims are not outcomes of economic grievances, reservations will have little consequence in ethnos-centric carnages. This is not a policy option that will give the affected Muslims of Mumbai 1993 and Gujarat 2002 a measure of security in their lives. Reservation politics should not swallow the demand for justice.

11. However, it would be worth considering the American model in the recruitment of India’s police personnel. In the United States of America, a disproportionate number of Blacks were recruited into the police force, for example in New York, in order to combat racism on the streets (Gupta 2001: 189–90). Likewise, quite disproportionate to their population, there should be a large number of Muslims in the police force of every major metropolis in this country, if not at an all-India level. This is not reservation of the usual kind for it is not proportionate, but clearly disproportionate, and not in every department of the government, though primarily in the police.
Appendix I
Annotated Bibliography


This is an investigation into the riots in Bandra east. It explores how many things about the Beharampur area were mysterious. Except for the Behrampada pocket, the area is a predominantly Hindu locality. Behrampada is a Muslim basti (slum). There was an allegation that the Muslims from the basti attacked the Ganesh mandir (temple) and took the head off the statue. This allegation resulted in massive rioting by the Shiv Sena in this area. The mandir was a roadside shrine and the sequence to the events is not very clear. Subsequently, Behrampada became known as the den of Muslim fundamentalists. The residents, though, claim that they were innocent victims of riots and police atrocities. Who attacked the Ganesh mandir is not established, and why the Shiv Sena chose Behrampada is not clear. It is also unclear if the attack on the mandir was a deliberate one.


This article describes the activities of Gujarat Harmony Project (May 2002) that attempts to reconcile Hindu and Muslim communities who have traditionally been living together. It makes special mention of women as survivors and sufferers of conflict situations. It works in the areas of livelihood restoration, social reconciliation, habitat security, psychosocial care, advocacy to promote harmony, community education, knowledge building and documentation.


This is a collection of essays on some important riots to provide an analytical insight into the status of secularism in the country. Akbar visited numerous riot-torn cities, towns and villages — Jamshedpur, Moradabad, Sarthupur, Meerut — to discover what lay behind the
outbreaks of communal and caste violence that had taken place there in the years after Partition. The book argues that the basic cause for the communal frenzy is the same: poverty, economic deprivation and a history that have been perverted and misused by religious zealots.


While there is no handy, universally applicable roadmap for reconciliation, creating trust as well as building an understanding between former enemies is essential. There is a need to engage the estranged communities, trying to find the path to justice, as well as to devise solutions that encourage harmony. Despite the fact that there are many differences between conflict situations, some essential similarities exist. This handbook tries to propose the possible ways of designing the reconciliation process. ‘To build a shared future from a divided past’ is the abiding theme of this work. The options provided are based on actual experience from post-conflict situations around the world. The starting point is an acknowledgement that democracy is the best form of government suitable for a post-conflict situation. Reconciliation also requires economic and social justice as well as democratic power-sharing, apart from goodwill. Reconciliation signifies the ability to live with former enemies, not necessarily to love them or forgive them, but to co-exist alongside. An effective reconciliation is the best guarantee that violence will not return.


This book focuses on three different sets of materials: the Jews in Germany, Russia and Israel; the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in India; and the African and Asian Americans in the United States. The first three chapters deal with violence against the Jews. Robert Weinberg examines the attacks against Jews in late imperial Russia. In the second chapter, Riger Friedland and Rishard Hecht compare two different episodes of Jewish/Muslim pogrom, where in the first round many Jews were the victims of violence and later it were the Palestinians. The next three chapters deal with India. Peter Van de veer analyses the relationship between the violence and rituals of the Hindu nationalist discourse. Jayati and Gyaneshwar Chaturvedi look at the Agra riots after the Rath Yatra. In the last chapter, Virginia van Dyke probes into the nature of the anti-Sikh violence in Delhi.

The book is structured around the questions: why do Hindu–Muslim communal riots persist in India? and what is the nature of the context within which such conflicts emerge? Brass examines the spread of riots in India and its concentration in particular sites (the focus of the book is Aligarh). The attempt is to arrive at a fuller picture of ‘the mechanisms that lead to the production of riots in India and the dynamic processes that precede them, produce them and explain them after their occurrence’. He explains these issues taking Aligarh as an example of ‘institutionalised riot systems’. Extensive portions of the book are devoted to detailing the setting that facilitates the functioning of the ‘institutionalised riot system’. He forcefully argues that the production of communal riots is very often a political one, associated with interparty competition and mass mobilisation. He also details how the lack of a resolute administration encourages a riot into becoming a full-scale massacre.


Elections were coming near in Gujarat but the survivors of the 2002 pogrom continue to live a miserable life, belying the claims of a ‘Vibrant Gujarat’. Chief Minister Narendra Modi has embarked on a re-election campaign emphasising the future over the shameful past. The plight of the riot victims raises questions about the state of democracy in Gujarat. The article talks about their shabby existence, inadequate housing and state apathy. The research team was keen to understand the issue of what happened to the people who survived? Where did they go? How have they reconstructed their lives and with the help of which agency? The victims were resettled into four pockets, Juhapura, Ramol, Vatva and Dani Limda, all of which are on the periphery of Ahmedabad. Not only are these relief camps so far away from the city where jobs and other facilities are to be found, also many of these families still own some land in their original habitats, but they fear going back to their houses. For instance Dani Limda is set in the shadow of a massive garbage mountain, garbage that comes from every part of Ahmedabad. There is absolutely no garbage draining system, water logging is common and most of the people here work in informal and petty jobs, leading to a fall in incomes. There is acute state apathy in these areas; the displaced have no electoral card, BPL ration cards,
etc. It is really the support of the NGOs that the displaced have been resettled. A lot of the relief work has been carried out by the resources of IRC along with some other agencies like Action Aid. Since the land deeds still remain with the IRC, people believe with good reason that they live in semi-permanent relief camps.


The Tribunal spent a fortnight in Gujarat in May 2002 recording evidence. In all 2,094 statements, written and oral, were processed by the Tribunal. These were from the affected areas, from over 16 districts of the state. Apart from Ahmedabad, the Tribunal had made a field visit to Godhra, Vadodara and Ankleshwar meeting survivors. The testimonies of government officials and several policemen were also put on record. The findings and recommendations of the Tribunal will have far-reaching consequences for the struggle for justice for the victim survivors of the carnage.


The UN guiding principles on internal displacement hope to constitute a 'binding' instrument that will 'help create the moral and political climate needed for improved protection and assistance for the internally displaced'. However, Das's work does not tell us anything about how protection can be improved and indeed how assistance is to be given to the internally displaced. He discusses different types of internal displacement but does not go beyond providing descriptions of them. The case studies of Gujarat and Calcutta are interesting.


The essays in this volume consider the ways in which violence shapes subjectivity and acts upon people's capacity to engage in everyday life, and how they make peace with a place that has brought so much harm. This collection of essays has three overarching arguments to make: violence as not just a brute physical fact but it leaves behind residues that affect everyday experience; that transnational organisations play an important role in local events; and it contests ideological distinctions between violence-prone areas and peaceful areas as it
believes that such distinctions are superficial and could indeed also be dangerous.


A Bangalore-based team of mental health specialists and social workers addresses the psychosocial needs of victims of Gujarat riots and has adopted the motto, ‘Putting life back’. The team, which includes experts from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Oxfam India, Bangalore and Action Aid, has prepared two manuals — Psychosocial Care for Individuals and Psychosocial Care by Community-Level Helpers for Survivors — to help people traumatised by the violence in Gujarat. Psychosocial Care for Individuals focuses on initiatives that can be taken by individuals to rebuild the lives of survivors. It addresses the needs of the people worst affected by the riots and presents strategies that the victims can adopt to gain control over their experience. The manual says that victims can handle the effects of disasters and manage emotional distress by sharing their feelings, speaking about their fears and mingling with people who care for them. They should pursue their interests, get social support and practise their spiritual beliefs. Psychosocial Care by Community-Level Helpers for Survivors targets community-level helpers, or aman pathiks, as they are called in Gujarat, and helps them in assisting survivors in dealing with their turmoil not only in terms of rehabilitation but also ‘normalisation’ of their emotions.


The controversy over the acquisition of land in Singur in West Bengal for an automobile project raises larger issues. The plight of displaced and project-affected persons across the country shows that it is the development pattern, nature of rehabilitation packages and the ‘public purpose’ declared by the state while acquiring land that need to be debated and redefined.


Horowitz argues that an ethnic riot is distinct from any other form of ethnic violence. He explains the process through which riots occur and identifies several important factors for riots to occur: two groups must have hostile relationship, one or more events must provoke the parties
and there must be relatively low risk in engaging in the violence. He also argues that a riot is both deliberately planned and consistently patterned. His work is based on an exhaustive examination of cross-national sources. In his view the timing and scope of the riot depend on the attackers’ sense of 'uncertainty, impunity and justification'. Thus, riots are more likely when the relative power of the aggressors and their target are in flux, rumor is rife, authorities inadvertently or deliberately offer rioters a 'green light' and killing restores 'justice'.


The government of Gujarat has said that some 98,000 people were displaced by the communal violence and are now living in 100 make-shift relief camps in different parts of the state. An overwhelming majority of the internally displaced in Gujarat are Muslims. Human Rights Watch visited two relief camps in Ahmedabad that together held 11,100 people. This report is based on interviews with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the camps, as well as representatives of non-governmental and humanitarian agencies, reports by NGOs and the press. The state government of Gujarat has failed to provide effective and equitable protection and assistance to those displaced by the violence. Security in the camps remains precarious, and there have been serious delays in the delivery of assistance, compensation and rehabilitation support. The camps continue to lack sufficient medical support, and there are reports of discrimination in the delivery of assistance to Muslims, as compared to Hindus affected by the violence. In responding to the crisis of the displaced, the state government has failed to adhere to the standards laid out in the UN guiding principles on internal displacement and with international human rights' standards. It talks about the appalling conditions of the camps. It also talks about the lack of protection and security for the minority community. There have been threats of forcible return of the displaced people, accusing that the camps were the breeding grounds of terrorism. The team also found lack of access to humanitarian assistance and discrimination in the distribution of the compensation and relief.

Human Rights Watch. 2003. 'Compounding Injustice: The Government Failure to Redress Massacres in Gujarat'.

This 70-page report examines the record of state authorities in holding perpetrators accountable and providing humanitarian relief to victims of state-supported massacres of Muslims in February and March 2002.

After many drafts since the 1980s, the Draft National Rehabilitation Policy 2006 was finally put in the public domain. The effort now is to encourage a statutory act on this subject. In the early years the government would only provide compensation of the land and property and a solatium; the need for resettlement or rehabilitation was not considered. The author proposes the following points that should be taken into account in making a policy for those who have been displaced.

a. One of the primary aims of the policy should be to ensure that displacement is minimal.
b. Where displacement is unavoidable, it ought to implement the principle of ‘free informed prior consent’.
c. To ensure that the consent is informed, necessary information must be provided.
d. It has been agreed by many that the Land Acquisition Act 1894 needs to be radically overhauled.
e. Adequate provisions need to protect rural communities from those who are economically powerful.
f. In tribal areas, the requirement of consultation with the Gram Sabha under the Panchayats must be observed.
g. Project-affected persons (PAPs) should be granted, through legislation, the first claims to benefits.
h. Rehabilitation must leave the people better off than before, or at least as equally well off.
i. We need an act on National Displacement and Rehabilitation, not just a statement of intent or policy.

To monitor the activities and to facilitate the work, we need a national displacement and rehabilitation commission.


Ravinder Kaur herself persuasively rejects simplistic and facile explanations of such violence as ‘spontaneous outburst of emotions’, the handywork of a few ‘anti-social elements’ or as proof of regrettable mutual hatred that periodically recurs in South Asia. She also argues against the assumption that frequent incidents of violence occur like a
Appendix I


This book deals with the massive carnage that happened in Gujarat in 2002 and brings out the state’s role in the carnage, as well as that of the Sangh Parivar. At the same time the author also records the various efforts that were made by ordinary citizens (aman pathiks) in bringing about healing and justice to Gujarat. It covers various aspects of the Gujarat riots and its aftermath and tellingly narrates the lives of people who suffered in the riots and their quest for justice. Mander writes ‘at stake in Gujarat is the very sense of affirmation of justice, a pluralist heritage and our survival as people who live in a polity that is democratic’. He describes the role of the police, the pathetic condition of the camps and state apathy. The book does not only paint a hopeless picture, but also celebrates the many volunteers from the civil society who came forward to help and redress. It also narrates many stories of care and courage.


Many of those who survived but were displaced by the widespread communal violence in Gujarat in 2002 have been forced to remake their lives in ‘relief colonies’ that are without most basic public services. Surveys of these colonies and their inhabitants, 5 years after the violence, reveal not merely the miserable conditions in most of them, but also the denial of all support by the state that thus perpetuates the insidious ghettoisation of a community.


No authentic reconciliation is possible unless it is based on four components: acknowledgement, remorse, reparation and justice. None of these have taken place in Gujarat after the 2002 pogrom.

There are few organised social and political spaces, official and non-official, in Gujarat today for fostering forgiveness and compassion. There is instead a frightening communal chasm, accepted or actively fostered by the powerful political, administrative, business and media establishments.

It is remarkable that despite recurring communal bloodletting during and after the traumatic Partition of the country, there has been no systematic structured official (or even significant non-official) processes of ‘truth and reconciliation’, to help perpetrators and survivors of hate violence come together; to see and speak to each other; to acknowledge their crimes and failings, their hate and fear, their grievances and suspicions; to seek and offer forgiveness, trust and goodwill; and ultimately to help bring closure and eventual healing. Mander also advocates the principle and practice of ‘Nyayagrah’, or a people’s campaign for legal justice and protection.


Thousands of people have been coming to Gujarat in the last few months motivated by the need to ‘do something’ — to mourn, to document and to do whatever they can to redress the injustice perpetrated on one community in the name of another. It is this documentation at all levels that has brought home the composite horror of Gujarat 2002.


Based on narratives of and interviews with Muslim men and women, this book furthers an understanding of the world and worldviews of those who have seen and lived through one or more violent confrontation in their lifetime. Through engagements with these survivors, it weaves many stories of devastating loss, the painful and never-absolute process of recovery and the unrelenting battles for survival and for redress from the state. It explores troubling issues like what it means to be a Muslim today; how people who have experienced such violence perceive their neighbours, their land, their own selves and their practices that have been violated.

The policy for rehabilitation formulated after repeated revisions by the Ministry of Rural Development seeks to provide equitable and adequate compensation to project displaced people. Yet loopholes remain and the impression that it has been enacted more to suit requirements of international donor agencies remains widespread.


The essay argues that truth, justice and reconciliation are sorely needed; that because they mean so many things to so many people, we must adopt certain rules of restraint and non-violence while we live and discover what they are. We must also take into active consideration that our proclaimed leaders often do not adhere to such rules, or have an equivocal stance towards political violence. Simeon believes that democracy and human equality are relatively youthful concepts in Asia — and even globally. Unfortunately, the extension of these principles to the world economy is still not acceptable to those who occupy its commanding heights. This is why destitution and oppression are still the common experience of millions of people. Against this backdrop, the preservation of democracy is under severe stress. It cannot be put in place as long as conflicting parties humiliate and stifle one another without a sense of justice and fair play.


The contention of the book is that there is something very wrong in centre periphery relations throughout the world which is why we have the many instances of ethnic violence globally.


This publication is like a public archive of the 2002 Gujarat tragedy. It provides how and why account of those months with detailed analysis of medial coverage and the activities of the Sangh Parivar. This work is divided into three sections: it begins with a chronology and
the story of the violence in 2002 Gujarat; this is followed by narratives from the field; and finally, the role of the police and the state officials. In addition, there are two essays demonstrating the violence on dalits and adivasis. The book argues that the scale of violence is too large for any civil society organisation to deliver independently. It also records how the Gujarat government is hostile to the idea of assisting the victims in any meaningful way.


Ashutosh Varshney’s book argues that if there are strong interfaith ties then riots, either do not happen, and if they do, then their durations are shorter and the violence less bloody. He believes that there are two kinds of civic life that are relevant in this context: ‘associational’ and ‘quotidian’. The first relates to interactions in formal organisational settings, for instance, business associations, trade unions, reading clubs, etc.; and the second is based more on spontaneous and informal relationships that relate to family and neighbourhood. Strong associational and quotidian ties are riot repellents. Varshney argues that the various existing perspectives of Hindu–Muslim violence are deficient on two accounts. The first is that they fail to distinguish between ethnic conflict and ethnic violence. And second, these theories generalise in excess, as a result of which they are unable to explain differentials across the country. Why is it that some places manage to remain peaceful while others are engulfed in hideous communal violence at the slightest provocation? The bulk of Varshney’s book (Chapters 5 through 11) is taken up by the empirical and theoretical study of the three pairs of cities, studied in contrast. The ‘master narrative’ of politics in Kerala has been Hindu caste injustices rather than communal oppression, making it easier to forge Hindu–Muslim links. Calicut, the main city of the region, has maintained an impressive record of communal peace. Hindu nationalists have at various points tried to polarise Calicut along Hindu–Muslim lines but failed. On the other hand, to the north, the west Uttar Pradesh town of Aligarh has minimal Hindu–Muslim civic engagement leading to communal violence. Lucknow, unlike Aligarh, has held its peace. This is because the master narrative here has been the Shia–Sunni conflict, which is internal to Islam, and further, the local chikan and zardozi industries ensure that Hindu traders are locked in a relation of interdependence with masses of Muslim workers. In Varshney’s analysis, these are the reasons why Aligarh and Hyderabad have experienced frequent bloody
riots, though Calicut and Lucknow have remained peaceful even during the Partition of British India in 1947 and the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992.


Wilkinson's central argument is that democratic states protect minorities when it is in their government's electoral interest to do so. He points out two principal possibilities: '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 that there is therefore a high probability that the governing party will have to negotiate or form a coalition with minority-supported parties in the future, despite its own preferences. Thus in some ways communal riots are manufactured with electoral interests in mind.


This narrative is built around the Mumbai blasts of 1993. The book tries to give us an insight into the minds of the plotters of the attack. It quotes from various interviews held during the investigations. The book traces the involvement of Dawood Ibrahim and Tiger Memon as well as the Mumbai film industry. Finally, it also gives us an update on the progress of the judicial case on the blast till 2000.
Appendix II
The Politics of Gujarat: Getting the Facts Right

Soon after the violence in Gujarat in 2002, the Chief Minister called an election as if to justify the attacks against Muslims and to legitimate sectarian Hindu politics in the state. He succeeded in this; his vote share went up and the number of seats he won also rose significantly.

Examining the Saffron Wave: How did People Vote?

What should not be overlooked is that in spite of BJP’s victory in 2002 Gujarat elections, which was repeated in 2007, it is not as no significant opposition to Hindutva politics within the state emerged. It is not as if Modi actually won a landslide victory for there were many who casted their votes against his government. A close study is therefore called for.

Did these elections, both in 2002 and 2007, really demonstrate a Hindutva wave in Gujarat? Let us scrutinise the election date of 2002, and then take the 2007 figures to deepen our conclusions. It is true that the final tally of results showed a very definitive win for the BJP; it won 126 seats while the Congress secured only 51. Narendra Modi and the BJP managed to win more than double the seats the Congress did. But if we examine the voting percentages we realise that we may have been victims of an optical illusion. The 2002 Gujarat elections did not really demonstrate a saffron wave after all.

In as many as 36 constituencies the contests went neck to neck. In Godhra, the epicenter of the 2002 killings, BJP’s victory over the Congress was by a mere 0.6 per cent of the votes polled. An examination of voting figures as released by the Election Commission show that the result could have gone either way with the changes in a few percentage points in terms of votes received. In Talala, for example, the BJP won by 0.5 per cent; in Dholka the BJP secured 48.8 per cent of the votes while the Congress
bagged 48.1 per cent. In a few other cases too, such as in Sarsa and Mandal, the BJP won by a little less than 1 per cent. In over 28 other constituencies, the BJP’s victory margin was less than 3 per cent. With a bit of luck these seats could have easily gone the Congress way, and the BJP victory would then not have appeared so pronounced.

Further, in the hypothetical situation where if the Janata Dal or the National Congress Party (NCP) formed an alliance with the Congress, the final tally may have resulted in the BJP sitting out in the opposition benches. After all, the NCP won 11.19 per cent of the votes. In fact, in Jhagadia it was the Janata Dal (U) that captured as much as 42.8 per cent of the votes to the BJP’s 21.2 per cent and the Congress’s 28.3 per cent.

If in Jodiya the NCP had partnered the Congress, then the 2.4 per cent of the votes it won could have been added to the Congress tally of 44.1 per cent and that might have just pipped the BJP at the post. In Kalawada and Olpad the Congress would have certainly won had the NCP not taken away 5.4 per cent and 7.7 per cent of the votes respectively. This is also true of Mangool, Matar, Morvi and Wankaner.

In all these cases the few votes snatched by the NCP made all the difference between defeat and victory for the Congress. This trend was demonstrated in Sarsa as well where the BJP won by a wafer thin margin of 1.4 per cent.

In elections the margin between victory and defeat does not really matter from one point of view. Even a single vote difference unambiguously makes for a victory. Yet when election analyses are made it is unwise to limit oneself to the number of seats won and not pay attention to the votes polled. Further, this election in Gujarat was not an ordinary election.

Anyone who has been to Gujarat post-Godhra will testify that the BJP put in everything to make it a contest between Hindutva and the rest. In many ways this was like a referendum, and if it was so then less than half the people of Gujarat voted saffron.

Some elections need to be studied as special cases because of the conditions in which they take place and because of the issues involved. Narendra Modi very clearly wanted to capitalise on the riot factor to win this election. This is why he advanced the poll date, and was deeply miffed when James D. Lyngdoh, then Chief Election Commissioner, was determined to spoil his well-laid plans.
Regardless of what the BJP leaders might have said, it was Godhra that was to be the pivotal feature of the Hindutva campaign because that is where Muslims allegedly burnt a train bogey which had Hindus in it coming back from Ayodhya. Yet in Godhra, as was mentioned earlier, the BJP was able to increase its lead over the 1999 elections by a mere 0.6 per cent. What a waste of a riot! In Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat, the BJP actually lost to the Congress, and the latter in fact increased its tally to 51.6 per cent from the 49.6 per cent votes it won in 1999. In places such as Deesa, Deodar, Dhanera, Dhari, Dhrangada, Jamjodhpur, Kalawada, Lathi, Mahuva (and the list can go on), the BJP actually polled fewer votes than it did in 1999.

Though the BJP won some of these seats, comparatively speaking, there was a negative wave in terms of voting percentages in these constituencies. In Dharampur and Songadh, the BJP was practically routed. In some areas such as Surat, the voting pattern was quite uneven. In Surat city west, the Congress met with a humiliating defeat while it did rather well in the other sectors of Surat.

While analysing the election results most commentators have concluded that there was a BJP wave, which is not incorrect, but neither is it a comprehensive statement. The 2002 elections certainly bore a plebiscitary character. It, therefore, needs to be noted that less than half the state's people went with the BJP in spite of the hate campaign generated by the riots. So, had it been a pure referendum on Hindutva the BJP would have lost — though narrowly. The BJP's allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) fielded a number of candidates but did quite miserably as they were neither fish nor fowl in terms of the current debate on Hindutva. For example, the Samata Party, headed by George Fernandes, put up as many as 25 candidates but failed to win a single seat.

Nor can it be said that where there was a large voter turn-out, there was a high degree of Hindu passion. In both Jamjodhpur and Wankaner over 70 per cent voted, and yet in both these constituencies the BJP won narrowly. In Jamjodhpur the BJP won by less than 3 per cent, and in Wankaner the BJP might have lost had the NCP not captured over 18 per cent of the votes.

It must also be borne in mind that there were many who voted for the BJP not because they welcomed the Hindutva plank but
because they were seriously disturbed by the prospect of terrorism overruling the country.

Even so, a little more than 49 per cent voted for the BJP and over 5 per cent voted for independents alone. It is true that the BJP increased its vote share by 5 per cent over the 1999 figure, but so did the Indian National Congress. This hardly fits the Hindutva wave thesis. To round off this discussion we should also take into account the fact that the BJP’s popularity in electoral terms has not increased over the years. It got fewer seats in 2007 (117) compared to its tally in 2002 (127). The Indian National Congress on the other hand increased its strength in the legislature by about eight seats, from 51 to 59. Moreover, unlike the seat tally in 2002, in 2007 the BJP did not get a two-thirds majority in the Gujarat Assembly.

Disaggregating Modi’s Appeal: Countering Hindutva

Countering BJP’s aggressive Hindutva in Gujarat is essential if a stable ‘new’ normal is to be arrived at in Gujarat. But to reach out to alternative, secular and democratic ones, it is necessary to realise how Modi has chiselled his political profile.

In Gujarat there are reports that extol Modi’s performance as Chief Minister. How he set up small dams, hydel projects, built industrial zones, provided better transportation systems and electricity, and, above all, created an environment conducive to enterprise so that there would be many more new jobs. Business is happy with Modi and the rural poor see a glimmer of hope in his emphasis on developing the countryside. According to this positive portrayal, ordinary voters of Gujarat are not thinking of the bloodshed in Naroda Patiya and elsewhere in 2002. This may be hard to stomach, but the unadorned fact is that the majority community everywhere is concerned more about bread on the table and money in the bank than with what happens to poor Muslims somewhere.

That is why reports of Modi’s popularity today are all the more striking. If after riding the passions of the post-Godhra riots his vote share is not that impressive, how is it that today, many years later, when tempers have cooled, he is still so popular? When supporters of Modi are faced with accusations regarding his involvement during the 2002 riots of Gujarat, they often respond
with a counter accusation. What purpose, they ask, will it serve to rake up the past as that can only have a divisive purpose? Why can we not move on, forget what happened years ago, and make sure that there is economic progress and order. Given the eternal disarray in which our public services usually are, even minor successes in organisational efficiency are a huge hit.

Gujarat and West Bengal are ideologically and geographically poles apart, but their politics has something in common. Both these governments claim that the Centre, that represents India, is doggedly undermining them though they do all the hard work. Recently, Modi made a public declaration that Gujaratis should consider not paying any Central taxes as all the money Delhi soaks in from this state goes elsewhere. According to Modi, Gujarat contributes ₹40,000 crore but gets only 2.5 per cent of it.

Therefore, Modi can argue credibly that if Gujarat is doing so well, it must be his administration that is responsible for it. He showcases this claim by pointing out to the enormous successes Gujarat has notched up during his chief ministership. Strangely enough, nobody has really questioned him on this. It is issues of this sort that need to be combated and not purely ideological ones which pit a stylised secular against a caricatured sectarian.

It should be recognised that Modi has managed to convey the impression to a large number of electorates in Gujarat that no matter how diligently his government works on the development front, his opponents keep raising the 2002 bogey, hoping to drive him out. By doing this India, the so-called secular India, is insulting Gujarat. By combining a species of reluctant subnationalism with claims of putting Gujarat on the fast-track of development, Modi has repeatedly scored against his opponents.

How much of this is really true? It has been reported that north Gujarat which was notoriously drought-prone has irrigational systems, even of the expensive drip variety in certain parts, and this has helped agriculturalists enormously. It is also acknowledged that during Modi’s time telecommunication services improved and so did roadways. Gujarat has not stepped back since Modi came to power in that state but has pressed on.

While all this is true, it is also worth recording that Gujarat was never a poor state. Roughly two decades from the time it was formed in 1960, Gujarat has outperformed most other states in India. In other words, Gujarat’s miracle is not new.
Behind the Miracle: Gujarat over the Long Term

What do the figures really tell us? In 1994–95, well before Modi took over, Gujarat's state domestic product surged at the rate of 13.2 per cent. However, in 1994–2001, it registered a growth average between 10–13 per cent (Dholakia 2007). It was only at the tail end of this period that Modi came in as chief minister.

On purely economic parameters then Gujarat was already among the top three in India by 1990. It took Gujarat 20 years after it was created in 1960 to climb up from the eighth rank to the third in terms of its state domestic product (Dholakia 2007). Twenty years of hard work, led primarily by Congress governments, may be added. Over 35 per cent of its infrastructural augmentation for power generation happened between 1995–2000. If Gujarat today can show off its treasure chest, it should gratefully remember its pre-Modi past.

Besides other riches, Gujarat processes 49 per cent of the country's petroleum products. It also has India's largest shipyard in Bhavnagar, as well as the giant Reliance refineries in Jamnagar. Even on something as pedestrian as soda ash, Gujarat is responsible for 90 per cent of its production. All this happened well before Modi cut his political incisors.

There is also a rather unreported, or underreported, side of Gujarat's economic profile. In spite of decades of growth as usual, as much as 93 per cent of Gujarat's workforce toils in the lowly paid informal sector. This is why growth is not synonymous with development. In fact, on the Human Development Index, Gujarat fell one place in 2003–2004, and now ranks below Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka (Hirway et al. 2002; Hirway and Mahadevia 2004). In terms of rural prosperity Gujarat is at number five and well behind Punjab, the front ranker (Dholakia 2007).

Now this is a hard one. Workers employed under the National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREG) scheme are short changed in Gujarat for they receive half of what their counterparts get elsewhere. Interestingly, this fact was recently released by a Parliamentary Committee headed by none other than Kalyan Singh, a one-time BJP stalwart.

Ernst and Young, consultants for Vibrant Gujarat conclave of 2005, ranked Gujarat's investment climate behind Kerala, Maharashtra,
Tamil Nadu, and at par with Karnataka. In terms of workforce quality, however, the same professionals gave Gujarat a very average 'B grade' as it failed to measure up on a number of accounts. It may be recalled in this connection that the Asian Development Bank in 1996 had ranked Gujarat as number two in India in terms of its investment climate. But in 2005, it was rated at number five. Perhaps the 2002 riots had something to do with this.

Why then does it seem that Modi invented Gujarat’s golden wheel when it was already spinning? There are probably two reasons for this.

The first is the simplistic assumption that ethnicists and primordialists are intellectually and organisationally incapable of running a streamlined state machinery. Modi has certainly disproved this point of view very convincingly. In the past, politicians of this ilk were good rabble rousers but failed to perform when in power. Modi is undoubtedly an exception. Not just that, he also stirred Gujarati garv (pride) into the everyday functioning of the state administration. This also helped to make the state’s usual growth rates taste unusual.

True, Modi is partial to business, but this is not exactly news. Gujarat consistently attracted a disproportionate slice of India’s private investment, around 15 per cent (Rangarajan and Padia 1981). What makes him different is his personalised executive style. This has attracted a large number of Indian corporate houses to Gujarat. These captains of industry were looking for efficiency of delivery and gave as much thought to Gujarat’s ethnic record as they would to a drain inspector’s report. Modi did not just give Nano (a prestigious TATA automobile project) shelter, but also readied permits for Ratan Tata in 3 days flat. The alacrity and promptness with which his government responds to executive decisions is so unlike to what happens elsewhere in the country, that the patronage element in Modi’s politics is overlooked.

Once we pay attention to these details it helps us to put Modi’s success in perspective and, at the same time, suggests ways by which an alternative politics can be envisaged. There can be no two opinions about the fact that Modi has raised the bar and if secular politics must contend against him, they have to outperform Modi and deliver justice as well to citizens.
Appendix II

Notes

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