

**COMMUNAL RIOTS, SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HINDU
NATIONALISM IN POST-INDEPENDENCE GUJARAT (1969-2002)**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of History at the
University of Oxford
Trinity Term 2009

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Short Abstract

In much existing literature the incidence of sexual violence during Hindu-Muslim conflict has been attributed to the militant ideology of Hindu nationalism. This thesis interrogates this view. It first examines the ideological framework laid down by the founding ideologues of the Hindu nationalist movement with respect to sexual violence. I argue that a justification of sexual violence against Muslim women is at the core of their ideology. In order to examine how this ideology has contributed to the actual incidents, this thesis studies the episodes of Hindu-Muslim violence that occurred in 1969, 1985, 1992 and 2002 in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad, Gujarat. An examination of these episodes shows that sexual violence against Muslim women, in both extreme and less extreme forms, were significantly motivated by Hindu nationalist ideology. However, in addition to this ideology, patriarchal ideas that serve to normalize sexual violence as 'sex' and sanction its infliction to maintain gendered hierarchies also motivated such crimes. Moreover, this thesis argues that the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations in acts of sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties between Hindus and Muslims in 1969 and 2002. By contrast, during the 1985 and 1992 riots Hindus and Muslims strengthened neighbourhood ties despite extensive communal mobilization, which seems to have prevented the perpetration of extreme sexual violence against Muslim women. Thus, by providing a comprehensive analysis of the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology, and arguing for the significance of the patriarchal ideas and neighbourhood ties in the infliction of sexual violence during conflict, this study contributes to and departs from the existing literature.

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Long Abstract

Sexual violence against Muslim women has become a feature of contemporary Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. In much existing historiography the incidence of such violence has been attributed to the militant ideology of Hindu nationalist movement. Scholars have argued that ideologically motivated Hindu men sexually victimize women to violate the symbols of honours, sanctified property and biological reproducers of the Muslim 'enemy'. However, there are several gaps in this existing literature, which I hope to address in my study.

Firstly, whilst placing considerable emphasis on the significance of Hindu nationalist ideology in motivating such violence, scholars have seldom examined this explanation in relation to the founding texts of the Hindu nationalist movement. In this study I address this lacuna. I undertake a comprehensive analysis of the writings of the three founding ideologues of the movement – Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar – with respect to sexual violence. By examining a broad range of their texts and speeches, this study argues that the intricately crafted ideological framework of the movement contains a justification for sexual violence at its very core.

Secondly, the existing literature on sexual violence during Hindu-Muslim conflict has often examined conflict in isolation from the wider socio-political context of the region. This study however, attempts to provide a more comprehensive analysis of such violence. It tracks and interrogates the growth of Hindu nationalist organizations and the spread of Hindu nationalist ideology in Ahmedabad over four decades. It argues that the growth of Hindu nationalist organizations and the widespread support for their gendered anti-Muslim ideology

was closely tied up with the socio-economic, political and spatial landscape unique to this region.

After providing this wider context, this study scrutinizes the contribution of Hindu nationalist organizations to sexual violence during inter-religious conflict. It argues that during 1969, 1985, 1992 and 2002, these organizations circulated incendiary propaganda that not only instigated violence against Muslims but also sexual violence against Muslim women. It also investigates the nature of organizational support that Hindu nationalist organizations provided to rioters, which contributed to the incidence of such violence during conflict. In order to show how Hindu nationalist ideology motivated men to inflict such violence, this study traces such violence all the way to the survivors, the eyewitnesses and wherever possible, the perpetrators.

By examining the founding ideology of Hindu nationalist organizations, tracking their growth in the context of wider socio-political developments in Ahmedabad, and interrogating their role in contributing to the incidence of sexual violence during four episodes of inter-religious conflict, this research will address those gaps.

This thesis interrogates the role of Hindu nationalist ideology in the incidence of such violence and examines whether the perpetration of sexual violence against Muslim women be understood in terms of this ideology alone. In doing so, my study departs from the existing historiography in two important ways. Firstly, it argues that patriarchal ideas that serve to normalize sexual violence as 'sex' and sanction its infliction for reasserting the gendered status quo are important motivations for such violence during conflict. Secondly, I argue that the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal ideas in violence is enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties during conflict. I argue that under the strain of communal mobilization, neighbourhood ties based on everyday interaction, friendship and strategic inter-community alliances, breakdown during large-scale conflict. This breakdown reconstitutes the neighbourhood space into a gendered communal space in which Hindu men are pitched against Muslim men and women, thus, enabling the infliction of sexual violence against Muslim women. By contrast, when neighbourhood ties endured communal mobilization they seem to have prevented the incidence of such violence.

This thesis has been divided into five chapters. Chapter I, entitled 'Hindu Nationalist Ideology and Justification of Sexual Violence', examines the writings and speeches of the

founding ideologues of militant Hindu nationalism with respect to sexual violence. It argues that three elements of the ideological framework laid down by Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar combined to justify sexual violence against Muslim women. The first element was concerned with the construction of a carefully crafted historical narrative about the ferocity of the Muslim 'enemy'. The second element involved the projection of the violence allegedly committed by Muslims against Hindus, especially Hindu women, as a symbolic humiliation of the Hindu male. The third element of the ideology laid down by the ideologues insisted that Muslims pose a persistent threat to the future of Hindu women, and by implication, to the masculine pride of Hindu men. In order to avenge past atrocities and combat this threat these ideologues justified sexual violence against Muslim women. Through pre-emptive and retaliatory sexual violence against Muslim women, Hindu men could redeem their lost male pride and humiliate the Muslim male. This chapter thus argues that a justification of sexual violence against Muslim women is at the core of the ideology.

Chapter II, entitled 'The 1969 Riot in Ahmedabad', begins with an examination of the socio-political and economic landscape of the city. This examination argues that the rise of Hindu nationalist organizations in the city was facilitated by the socio-economic crisis of the 1960s and the wider political shift towards right-wing politics. Subsequently, during the events in the run-up to the riot, Hindutva outfits had little difficulty in securing greater popularity and legitimacy for their ideology. When the riot broke out, these outfits provided ideological instigation for sexual violence and organizational leadership to the rioters. In the industrial labour region, where Hindu nationalist organizations had mobilized Scheduled castes against Muslims throughout the 1960s, Muslim women were subjected to brutal sexual violence. Whilst arguing for the significance of Hindu nationalist ideology in motivating such crimes during the riot, this chapter argues that such violence was not motivated by this ideology alone. Patriarchal ideas that serve to normalize sexual violence as 'sex' also played a part in motivating attackers to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women. Moreover, through an examination of events at the neighbourhood level this chapter further challenges ideology-based explanations. It argues that the manifestation of Hindutva ideology and patriarchal motivations in acts of sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties.

Chapter III, entitled, 'The 1985 Riot in Ahmedabad', begins by arguing that between 1970 and 1985 an intensification of the socio-economic and political crisis in Ahmedabad enabled a rapid growth of Hindu nationalist organizations across the city. This growth fuelled anti-Muslim hostility even further. When the 1985 communal riot began, Hindu nationalist organizations started a propaganda campaign invoking those tenets of their ideology that combine to justify sexual violence against Muslim women. In addition to this, Hindu nationalist outfits organized several events in which men inflicted verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women. However, during this riot similar violence was also inflicted against Hindu women. This violence was not motivated by Hindu nationalist ideology but rather by patriarchal ideas that conflate sexual violence with 'sex' and sanction the perpetration of such violence as a way to punish transgression of gendered norms. Moreover, despite the prevalence of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations during the riot brutal sexual violence was not reported in the riot. This chapter suggests that this absence was the result of strong neighbourhood ties that were forged between Harijans and Muslims in the form of a strategic alliance. Thus, this chapter shows how Hindu nationalist ideology and patriarchal ideas motivated verbal and visual sexual violence against women. However, it also argues that the strengthening of neighbourhood ties seems to have prevented these motivations from manifesting in extreme forms.

Chapter IV, entitled 'The 1992 Riot in Ahmedabad', focuses on the riot that followed the demolition of the Babri Mosque. It begins by arguing that the period between 1985 and 1992 saw the entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations across Ahmedabad and the hardening of spatial boundaries between religious communities. Following this, the Sangh Parivar started the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation that led to repeated bouts of communal violence in the city. As the rhetoric of Hindutva acquired greater militancy, verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women during religious events became frequent. When the riot began, Hindu nationalist activists took an active part in orchestrating violence against Muslims and inflicting sexual violence in the form of verbal and visual abuse against Muslim women. However, in Ahmedabad, sexual violence did not take on the extreme forms it did during communal riots in Surat and Bombay. This chapter argues that a plausible explanation for the absence of brutal violence lay in the nature of neighbourhood ties. It shows that even though ties between Hindus and Muslims had been strained under aggressive communal

mobilization, some ties endured. The preservation of these ties probably prevented the incidence of severe sexual violence against Muslim women. Thus, this chapter shows that while Hindu nationalist ideology manifested itself in the form of verbal and visual sexual violence against women, neighbourhood ties served to prevent the brutal sexual violence.

Chapter V, entitled the 'The Anti-Muslim Massacre of 2002' focuses on the worst episode of organized violence against religious minorities in the history of independent India. During this massacre, Muslim women were subjected to macabre sexual violence not only in Ahmedabad but also in other parts of Gujarat province. In order to contextualize this massacre, this chapter undertakes a detailed examination of the wider socio-economic and politico-ideological landscape of the city between 1993 and 2002. It argues that during the said period, Hindu nationalist organizations entrenched themselves firmly across Ahmedabad as well as in the State machinery. Following the arrival of their 'own government', the Sangh Parivar widely circulated and legitimized its gendered anti-Muslim rhetoric and orchestrated a series of attacks against religious minorities. Subsequently, when the 2002 massacre began, the Sangh Parivar received extensive support from the State machinery in orchestrating violence against Muslim men and women. A belligerent propaganda campaign was organized that sought to project Hindus as the victims of an alleged sexual tyranny of Muslim men, which motivated Hindu men to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women. However, this chapter argues that the men who inflicted such violence were partly motivated by the patriarchal idea that serves to normalize sexual violence as 'sex'. Indeed it was this motivation that led some Muslim men to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women in the relief camps. Moreover, the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations in sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties between Hindus and Muslims.

By tracking the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology and activists at these various levels, this study has thus provided a nuanced analysis of their contribution to the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women during conflict. However, in two significant ways this study has challenged the efficacy of understanding such violence in terms of Hindu nationalist ideology alone. Firstly, it argues that it is important to take into account the contribution of certain patriarchal ideas in motivating sexual violence against women during communal conflict. Secondly, it emphasizes the significance of neighbourhood

ties in enabling or preventing the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women during inter-religious conflict.

Furthermore, by emphasizing the role of neighbourhood ties in preventing the occurrence of sexual violence this study foregrounds the heterogeneity and complexity of the gendered politics of the subaltern classes that manifests itself during conflict. I have argued, for instance, that at times when caste-based and religion-based politics contradict one another, inter-religious alliances can prevail over inter-religious hostility and thus have the effect of preventing sexual violence. In glossing over the local contexts of the riots, the plurality of the ideological discourses and contradictions between different political interests, existing historiography denudes the politics of the subaltern classes of its rich complexity.

While the issue of sexual violence during conflict calls for greater attention, I hope that this study genuinely contributes to the literature on sexual violence during large-scale conflict and communal violence in India.

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List of Abbreviations

ABVP	Akhil Bhartiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (All India Students Union)
ACP	Additional Commissioner of Police
AMC	Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
BJP	Bhartiya Janta Party (Indian People's Party)
BJS	Bhartiya Jana Sangh (Indian People's Corps)
CoI	Commission of Inquiry
Congress (I)	Congress (Indira)
Congress (O)	Congress (Other)
CM	Chief Minister
CP	Commissioner of Police
DCP	Deputy Commissioner of Police
FIR	First Information Report
HDRS	Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti (Committee for the Protection of Hindu Religion)
HJM	Hindu Jangran Manch (Forum for Hindu Awakening)
KHAM	Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis, Muslims
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
OBC	Other Backward Castes
PSI	Police Sub-Inspector
RJP	Rashtriya Janta Party (National People's Party)
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Corps)
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
SRP	State Reserve Police
UP	Uttar Pradesh
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council)

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Figure 1 (a): Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 'Savadhan Campaign' (Ahmedabad, 1998) 182

Glossary

<i>Adivasi</i>	(the indigenous people) used to describe the Scheduled Tribes
<i>Ahimsa</i>	non-violence
<i>Akhada</i>	gymnasium; wrestling den; centre of physical culture; the spatial organization or the site of activities and training of any specialized group
<i>Amari Sarkar</i>	our government
<i>Avarna</i>	a generic term for lower-caste Hindus
<i>Bajrang Dal</i>	the army of the monkey deity, Hanuman
<i>Beizzati</i>	literally ‘insult’; the term is often used as a euphuism for rape
<i>Badli</i>	a temporary worker; a casual worker; a substitute
<i>Balwadi</i>	crèche
<i>Bandh</i>	shutting down of businesses, shops and offices
<i>Basti</i>	slum
<i>Bhajans</i>	Hindu religious prayers
<i>Bhakti</i>	Hindu devotionalism
<i>Bhai</i>	brother
<i>Bibi</i>	a Muslim woman
<i>Budhe</i>	a derogatory term for an old man
<i>Burqa</i>	veil worn by Muslim women
<i>Chacha</i>	a term of respect and endearment; literally refers to father’s younger brother
<i>Chawl or Chawli</i>	a form of neighbourhood: a row of rooms with either no sanitary conveniences or with community facilities built around the textile mills for the labour; tenement
<i>Corporation</i>	a commonly used short form for Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
<i>Crore</i>	10,000,000
<i>Dalit</i>	(oppressed) former untouchables; in legal parlance called Scheduled Castes
<i>Dharma</i>	religion or religious duty

<i>Danga</i>	local term for riot
<i>Ghar Ke Log</i>	members of the family
<i>Gita</i>	an ancient Hindu mythological text that contains the story of Jasoda, her son, Lord Krishna and his victory over evil.
<i>Gunda</i>	thug; local muscleman; tough
<i>Harijan</i>	(children of God) term coined by Gandhi for the former untouchables
<i>Hindutva</i>	term coined by Savarkar in 1923 that roughly translates as Hindu-ness; the essence of being a Hindu
<i>Hindu Rashtra</i>	Hindu nation-state
<i>Jammat</i>	religious and occupational based associations
<i>Karsevak</i>	Hindu religious volunteers
<i>Kaam ki cheez</i>	useful object
<i>Kirtan</i>	religious prayers
<i>Lakh</i>	100,000
<i>Lathi</i>	a wooden staff, a pole; truncheon
<i>Maha Arti</i>	grand Hindu ceremony of worship
<i>Majdoor</i>	labourer
<i>Majoor Mahajan</i>	Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association
<i>Mandir</i>	temple
<i>Mangal Sutra</i>	sacred marital thread worn by married Hindu women
<i>Masjid</i>	mosque
<i>Marzi</i>	consent
<i>Matrubhumi</i>	motherland
<i>Miya</i>	Muslim man
<i>Moksha</i>	enlightenment
<i>Mritughant</i>	death knell, symbolized by the banging of kitchen utensils
<i>Mohalla</i>	neighbourhood
<i>Nav Nirman</i>	social reconstruction
<i>Pitribhumi</i>	fatherland
<i>Pol</i>	traditional neighbourhoods in the walled city of Ahmedabad, consisting of narrow streets lined with buildings

<i>Pracharak</i>	propagandist
<i>Punyabhumi</i>	holyland
<i>Purdah</i>	veil
<i>Quran</i>	Islamic scripture
<i>Rabaris</i>	a lower caste community who traditionally work as milk producers and distributors
<i>Rakhi</i>	a Hindu festival that is marked by the tying of a rakhi, or holy thread, by the sister on the wrist of her brother. The brother in return vows to protect her.
<i>Roti</i>	Indian flat bread
<i>Ramayan</i>	ancient Hindu mythological epic
<i>Ramlila</i>	a dramatic folk re-enactment of the life of the mythological god Rama as described in Hindu epic <i>Ramayana</i> . In most parts of northern and western India local troupes perform the Ramayan over 10-15 days.
<i>Rath Yatra</i>	a Hindu religious procession
<i>Sadhu</i>	Hindu ascetic or mendicant
<i>Safas</i>	turbans
<i>Sankalp Shibir</i>	resolution camp
<i>Savarna</i>	a generic term for upper caste Hindus (also referred to as the twice born)
<i>Savadhan</i>	warning / caution
<i>Sangh Parivar</i>	the family (network) of Hindu organizations
<i>Saree</i>	a female garment in the Indian subcontinent. It is a strip of unstitched cloth, ranging from four to nine metres in length that is draped over the body.
<i>Sarkar</i>	government
<i>Sarsangchalak</i>	supreme philosopher-guide of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
<i>Shakha</i>	branch
<i>Shuddhi</i>	literally 'purification'; religious movement for the reconversion of Muslims to Hinduism or for the incorporation of lower castes into the Hindu caste hierarchy
<i>Swayamsevak</i>	RSS volunteer
<i>UP ka Bhaiya</i>	labour immigrants from the north-Indian province of Uttar Pradesh

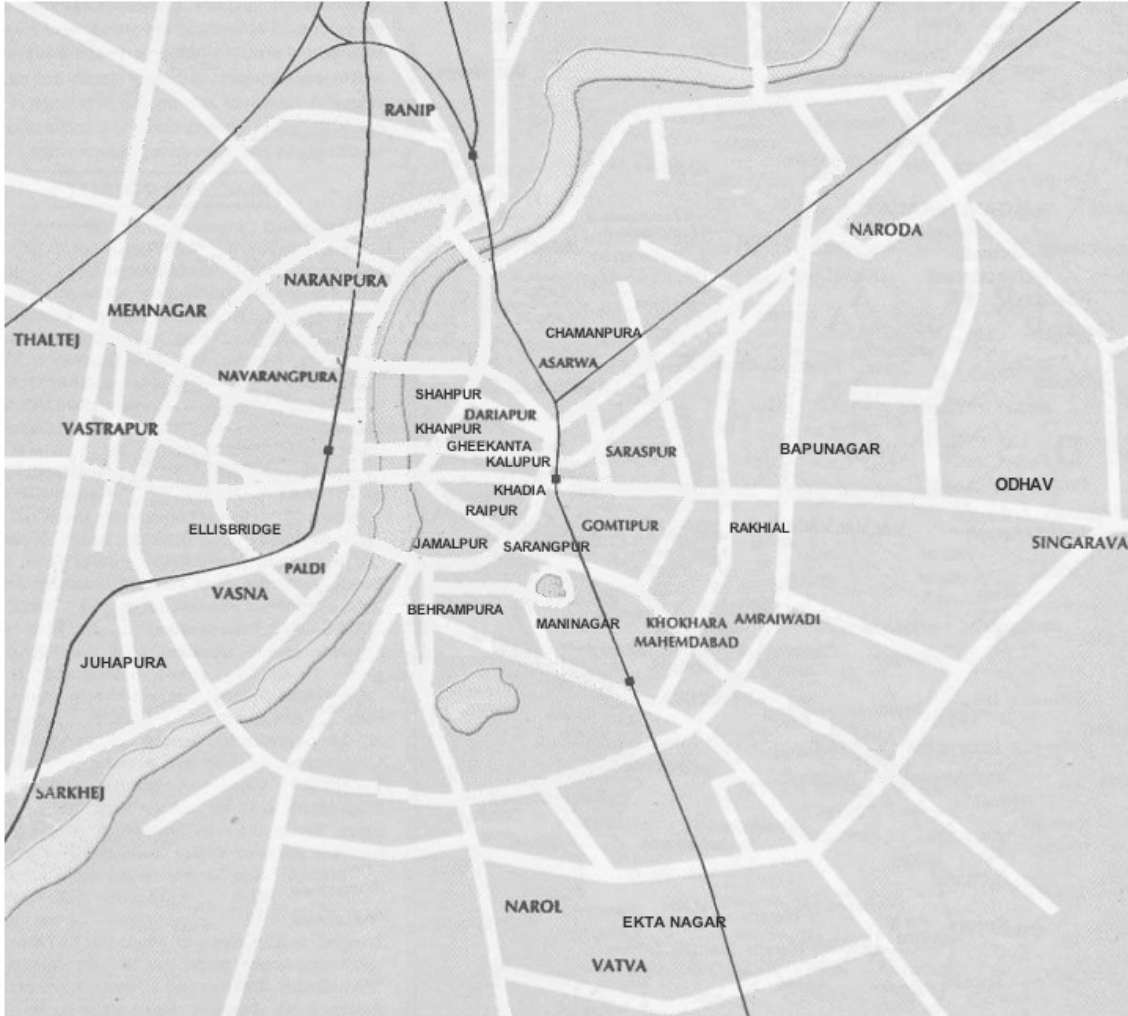
Urs

Sufi religious ceremony

Vistaar

a neighbourhood in the mill district

Map of Ahmedabad



INTRODUCTION

A disturbing number of inter-religious conflicts and inter-state wars in the past century have witnessed the incidence of sexual violence¹ against women. The First and the Second World War, the Bangladesh war in 1971, the 1980 civil war in Uganda, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia in 1992-5, and the Rwandan genocide in 1994 are some of many episodes of conflict during which women were subjected to macabre sexual violence.² In India, the events that followed the Partition in 1947 saw widespread sexual violence against Hindu, Sikh and Muslim women.³ In the second half of the twentieth century, Muslim women were sexually brutalized during Hindu-Muslim conflict in 1969, 1990 and 1992 in different parts of India.⁴ Sikh and Christian women were also subjected to similar violence in Delhi in 1984 and in Madhya Pradesh in 1998 respectively.⁵ More recently, in 2002, Muslim women were

¹ Sexual violence refers to any act physical, visual or verbal act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact. Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 41. Section I (b) will explain why this definition has been chosen for this thesis.

² For a comprehensive review on the existing literature see Inger Skjelsbæk, 'Sexual Violence and War: Mapping Out a Complex Relationship', in *European Journal of International Relations*, 7 (2), 2001, pp. 211-37; and Megan Gerecke 'Explaining Sexual Violence in Conflict Situations: Preliminary Findings from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda and Sierra Leone', pp. 1-62, <http://www.allacademic.com>. Accessed 27/9/09.

³ Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi and London: Penguin, 1998); and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998). Although these studies have made a significant contribution to the field, they focus on the experience of Hindu women only.

⁴ Ghanshyam Shah, 'The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad: A Case Study', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.) *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India* (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1991) on Ahmedabad, Chapter by Shail Mayaram in Ashis Nandy, Shikha Trivedi, Shail Mayaram and Achyut Yagnik (eds.), *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995) on Jaipur; Lancy Lobo and Paul D'Souza, 'Surat Riots II – Images of Violence', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(5), January 30, 1993, pp. 152-4 on Surat; and Sikata Banerjee, 'The Feminization of violence in Bombay: Women in the Politics of the Shiv Sena', in *Asian Survey*, 36 (12), 1996, December, pp. 1213-25 on Bombay.

⁵ See Uma Chakravarty and Nandita Haksar, *The Delhi Riots: Three Days in the Life of a Nation* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1987) on the anti-Sikh violence in 1984; and on the Jhabua incident in Madhya Pradesh see *Indian Express*, Delhi edition, September 30, 1998.

sexually victimized during the anti-Muslim massacre in the western Indian province of Gujarat.

The frequent incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women in inter-religious conflict in India has increasingly drawn the attention of scholars. Existing scholarship has pointed to the militant ideology of Hindu nationalist movement in instigating such violence. This thesis interrogates this predominant view. It undertakes a detailed analysis of the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology to the incidence of sexual violence against Muslims during inter-religious conflict and asks whether the incidence of such violence can be understood in terms of Hindu nationalist ideology alone. In order to answer this question, this thesis takes as its case studies four episodes of large-scale Hindu-Muslim conflict, or ‘communal riots’, that took place in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad.

Located in the western province of Gujarat, Ahmedabad has witnessed endemic inter-religious violence over the last forty years. In fact, a recent study bestowed Ahmedabad the dubious title of the most communally violent city in the country.⁶ In 2002 Ahmedabad was the epicentre of the worst anti-Muslim massacre in the history of independent India, during which macabre sexual violence against Muslim women took place. The impunity with which Hindu nationalist organizations orchestrated such violence against Muslim women, has led some to view the region as being governed by a ‘democidal rape culture’.⁷ Less well known is that Ahmedabad had witnessed brutal sexual violence against Muslim women during Hindu-Muslim conflict in 1969 as well. Since no other region in India has fared as poorly as Ahmedabad on this register, this city makes for an important and interesting case study.

⁶ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 220.

⁷ Upendra Baxi, ‘The Gujarat Catastrophe: Notes on Reading Politics as Democidal Rape Culture’, in Kalpana Kannabiran (eds.) *The Violence of Normal Times: Essays on Women’s Lived Realities* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2005).

This city makes a significant case study for one more reason. In 1985 and 1992 the city witnessed two major episodes of inter-religious conflict during which, interestingly, sexual violence against Muslim women was limited to verbal and visual acts. Even though the city had witnessed macabre violence in 1969, during these two episodes of large-scale conflict instances of extreme physical sexual violence, such as rape and genital mutilation, did not occur.⁸ The case of the 1992 riot is especially important because in that year sexual violence in the form of rape, gang rape and genital mutilation was reported from Surat, a city located in the south Gujarat, but not from Ahmedabad. It is this variation in the form and scale of sexual violence that the city has witnessed that enables us to pose some important questions: Was militant Hindu nationalist ideology, which much of the existing historiography holds responsible for such crimes, absent during the 1985 and 1992 riot? If it was present, what prevented the incidence of brutal sexual violence? A detailed study of the large-scale conflicts that occurred in 1969, 1985, 1992 and 2002 in Ahmedabad will offer answers to these questions.

The remainder of this Introduction has been divided into four sections. The first section engages with preliminary conceptual issues in studying sexual violence. It responds to the postmodernist critiques of the concept of sexual violence and then lays out how the term will be used throughout this thesis. The second section examines the literature on sexual violence against Muslim women during Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. It identifies its gaps and describes how this study conceptually contributes to and departs from this existing historiography. The third section takes note of the methods adopted to conduct this research, and the sources used for this study. It further examines the methodological limitations that are

⁸ Chapter III on the 1985 riot and Chapter IV on the 1992 riot will clarify the basis on which this claim has been made.

inherent in studies of sexual violence during conflict generally, and during Hindu-Muslim conflict in Gujarat particularly. The fourth and final section of this Introduction lays out the structure of this thesis on the basis of individual chapters.

I. CONCEPTUAL PRELIMINARIES

Is there ‘sexual violence’?

Many scholars use the concept of ‘sexual violence’ unproblematically. In recent years, however, postmodernist scholarship has presented a strong critique of this concept by either questioning the ‘binary logic’ of gender that underpins the concept of sexual violence against women or by describing the latter as having no ‘real existence’ outside language. The following paragraphs deal with each of these propositions in turn so as to determine whether or not there is something called ‘sexual violence’.

The foremost critic of the logic of binary gender identities is Judith Butler. She has argued that the common understanding of sexual violence is based on the idea that the body as a gendered physical object exists prior to all discourse.⁹ According to her the gendered body, and therefore sexual violence, does not have any such prior existence.

[G]ender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for ...the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence.... In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed [...] there is no “being” behind the doing, effecting, becoming [...] there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.¹⁰ (emphasis added)

⁹ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York, London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York, London: Routledge, 1990), p.33.

In arguing that gender identities are performatively constituted Butler is not simply emphasising the importance of the discourses of conditioning and socializing to which all of us are subject, but rather disputing the existence of any reality beneath or within constructions of gender. Gender identities, for Butler, do not exist prior to the discourse on them: they only come into existence by being expressed.

This proposition seems dubious. In much of her work, Butler does not address those experiences of men and women that are fundamentally binary and *exist* prior to the discourse, in fact irrespective of it. Pregnancy, menstruation and lactation involve bodily experiences, which give the female body a gender identity. The body, then, does have a real identity beneath the various constructions and expressions because certain gender differences are *not* free of the determinative influences of binary logic. With regard to sexual violence, which is often accompanied by a fear of pregnancy, it is important to account not only for the discursive history associated with sexuality and violence but equally the possibility of intense female bodily experiences with far-reaching consequences. While Butler is correct in pointing out that there is a strong performative/expressive aspect to gender, binary gendered bodies do have an existence prior to discourse. Therefore, sexual violence does exist and is unique in its potential for striking at the body beneath the discourse.

The second proposition has been presented by Sharon Marcus who argues that sexual violence, both the act itself as well as what one might call the 'after-experience', does not have a *reality* outside language. According to her, sexual violence is a linguistic text that is underpinned by 'narratives, complexes, and institutions, which derive their strength not from outright, immutable, unbeatable force but rather from their power to structure our lives as

imposing cultural scripts'.¹¹ For Marcus, it is dominant linguistic discourses that give men the power to rape. So, if the victim were to alter the linguistic text of her experience of victimization then the experience itself would be altered. This is Marcus' idea of a strategy that 'will enable women to sabotage men's power to rape and empower women to take the ability to rape completely out of men's hands'.¹² Although tempting, this practical proposal to transform a violent experience into one that is not as damaging by simply rewriting its linguistic script, seems implausible on closer scrutiny.

In conflating textuality with experience, Marcus ignores some unique characteristics of sexual violence. Firstly, her analysis of sexual violence is confined to the actions of the perpetrator and experiences of the victim: what she does not account for is the social and political consequences that confront many women once they have experienced this form of violence. This seems like a problematic omission because even if it were possible for a woman to change the 'text of her experience of sexual violence', there is no guarantee that this alteration would also bring about a change in consequences. She might still be stigmatized, find her marital prospects in jeopardy, face abandonment from husband/parents, and in some parts of the world be imprisoned on charges of adultery. Moreover, in some cases of sexual violence the injury to reproductive organs is so grave that it either renders some victims incapable of ever bearing children, if not seriously disabled, or leaves them pregnant: each of these involves long-term repercussions for these women's lives. In all such situations the aftermath of this unique victimization extends beyond the confines of the perpetrator's actions and the women's experiences of it.

¹¹ Sharon Marcus, 'Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention', in Judith Butler and Joan Scott (eds.), *Feminist Theorize the Political* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 388-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 388.

Secondly, by reducing the experience of sexual violence to a linguistic text to be transformed by the victim, Marcus may quite rightly be accused of shifting the responsibility of the action away from the perpetrator onto the victim. Since she leaves women in charge of ‘rewriting the text’ of our experiences the perpetrator appears to be absolved of responsibility for his actions. Furthermore, by this token, those of us who succeed in altering the text will not have been sexually violated at all, and those of us who do not, would be responsible for the violence. For, according to Marcus it is our linguistic experience of it as violence that makes it violence in the first place: it is the victim of sexual violence who would be responsible for creating and perpetuating her experience of victimization and not the assailant. This argument, implicit in Marcus’s suggestions, dangerously approximates the ubiquitous patriarchal notion that it is the responsibility of women to constantly perform self-surveillance, prevent sexual violence against them from occurring, and, if it does, to deal with the consequences. In either case the blame for sexual violence rests on women. This position, if taken to its logical conclusion, would make criminalizing sexual violence impossible; and this surely amounts to absurdity.

Ultimately, the problems of both these postmodernist propositions are largely born out of the conflation of experience and expression. By not acknowledging gender determined experiences that exist irrespective of expression, as in the case of Butler, and by not thinking through the repercussions of her linguistic script theory, as in the case of Marcus, their otherwise competitive propositions fall short on important registers. Although their work is a useful intervention in contemporary feminist debates on the issue of sexual violence, they are inadequate for the purposes of this study. Throughout this thesis, therefore, it will be assumed

that gender-based and gender-specific forms of sexual violence do exist. The next question to ask is: how do we define sexual violence?

Defining 'Sexual' Violence

Let me begin with the legal definitions of sexual violence in India because despite its limitations the law continues to exercise determinative social and political power, and is a reflection and extension of dominant discourses.¹³

Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (hereafter IPC) holds penetration as sufficient to constitute 'sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape'. A man is accused of committing the crime of rape, according to this section, if he has had sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the following circumstances: a) against her will; b) without her consent; c) with her consent when the consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested, in fear of death or hurt; d) with her consent if her consent is given because she believes the man to be her lawfully married husband, when the man knows he is not (and the wife is not fifteen years of age); e) with her consent if she is unable to recognize 'the nature and consequences' of that to which she gives her consent because of intoxication or unsoundness of mind; and f) with or without her consent if she is under sixteen years of age. Apart from Sections 375 and 376 (which deal with the punishment of rape), there are other sections of the IPC 354, 377, 509, 511, 109, and 34 which criminalize assault or use of criminal force with an intent to outrage a woman's modesty; sexual intercourse 'against the

¹³ Ann Cahill, 'Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body', in *Hypatia*, 15 (1), Winter, 2000, pp. 43-63, p. 57.

order of nature', which refers to sodomy; violating a woman's modesty with word or gesture; attempt to commit rape; aiding and abetting rape; and common intention or gang rape.¹⁴

These legal provisions, which are similar in many countries, have been widely criticized by feminist researchers and campaigners. The first issue that they have taken with such provisions is their emphasis on 'unlawful sexual intercourse' i.e. for an act to constitute rape the penis must penetrate the vagina. Flavia Agnes, a leading activist in the campaign against rape in India, pointed out that the law continues to place a premium on notions of chastity, virginity and marriage. Expressing her misgivings about the limitations of the law she argued:

Penis penetration continues to be the governing ingredient in the offence of rape. The concept of 'penis penetration' is based on the control men exercise over 'their' women. Rape violates these property rights and may lead to pregnancies by other men and threaten the patriarchal power structure.¹⁵

She has further asserted that by treating vaginal penetration by the penis as tantamount to rape, the forcible penetration by other objects and other forms of sexual acts get excluded from the purview of law. The law does not recognize that a husband could rape his wife, as she is deemed to have consented to sexual intercourse upon marriage. Feminists in many part of the world concur that in the legal arena male perspectives on rape are routinely privileged over women's definitions. Nivedita Menon argues, for instance, that rape must be understood as: 'a) violence not sex; b) as violence, but a unique form of violence because of its sexual nature and c) as violence and the violence precisely *is sex*'.¹⁶

¹⁴ Quoted in Nivedita Menon, *Recovering Subversion. Feminist Politics Beyond Law* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2004), p. 108. See Chapter 3 of Menon's book for a detailed analysis of rape laws, the draft of the Sexual Assault Law Reforms, laws on sexual harassment at the workplace and a review of the landmark cases.

¹⁵ Flavia Agnes, 'Protecting Women Against Violence? Review of a Decade of Legislation 1980-90', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 25, 27(17), 1992, pp. 19-33, p. 21.

¹⁶ Nivedita Menon, *Recovering Subversion*, p. 110.

The second issue that legal rights campaigners have taken with the existing legal provisions relates to their limited scope. They argue that the law obscures the subtler and more pervasive forms of abuse of women by focusing on the extreme and less frequent forms of violence.¹⁷ They have suggested the replacement of ‘rape’ by terms like ‘sexual violence’ or ‘sexual assault’, which reflect both the extent and range of sexual crimes and are sensitive to women’s perceptions within it.

One of the most useful and comprehensive definitions is put forth by Liz Kelly who describes sexual violence as ‘any physical, visual, verbal, or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact’.¹⁸ This definition takes into account the more subtle forms of violence such as visual violence (men stripping in front of women) and verbal violence (use of sexually derogatory and intimidating language). Simultaneously, it also responds to the more extreme forms of violence such as rape, gang rape, stripping, and genital mutilation. Owing to the wider scope of this definition, which is in line with contemporary feminist critiques, this thesis will use this definition to explore ‘sexual violence’.

The preceding subsections have dealt with the postmodernist critiques of the concept of sexual violence, and clarified the usage of this term for the purposes of this thesis. The following section explores the existing historiography on the incidence of sexual violence during Hindu-Muslim conflict and identifies its gaps. Then, it delineates the various ways in which my study contributes to and departs from this historiography.

¹⁷ Dorie Klein, ‘Violence against Women: Some Considerations regarding its Causes and its Elimination’, in *Crime and Delinquency*, 27 (1), 1981, pp. 64-80.

¹⁸ Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, p. 41.

II. Sexual Violence during Hindu-Muslim Conflict

In much of the existing literature the incidence of sexual violence during Hindu-Muslim conflict has been attributed to Hindu nationalist activists and their chauvinistic, anti-Muslim ideology. Scholars have argued that ideologically motivated Hindu men sexually victimize women with the aim of targeting the male members of the Muslim community. However, there is little agreement amongst them as to which aspect of Hindu nationalist ideology motivate these crimes.

Some scholars have argued that this ideology motivates Hindu men to ‘dishonour’ Muslim women and their community.¹⁹ In most patriarchal worldviews, the sexual purity of women is associated with the honour of the family/community and the nation. The expression or forceful appropriation of female sexuality outside the realms of legitimate structures, such as the family or the community, impinges upon the honour of the male members of the community. As Purushottam Agarwal has argued,

Women are metamorphosed into a metaphor of both sacredness and humiliation. And the virility comes to hinge upon defending one’s honour and humiliating the ‘Other’ through the agency of the sexuality of women.²⁰

During communal conflict, Hindu nationalist ideology draws on this patriarchal notion to motivate men into ‘dishonouring’ the ‘enemy’ Muslim woman. By inflicting sexual

¹⁹ Purushottam Agarwal, ‘Surat, Savarkar and Draupadi: Legitimising Rape as a Political Weapon’, in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds.), *Women and the Hindu Right* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996); Tanika Sarkar, ‘Semiotics of Terror: Muslim Children and Women in Hindu Rashtra’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (28), July 13, 2002, pp. 2872-6; Sudhir Chandra, ‘Communal Consciousness and Communal Violence: Impressions from Post-Riot Surat’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 (36), September 4, 1993, pp. 1883-7 on India.

²⁰ Purushottam Agarwal, ‘Surat, Savarkar and Draupadi’, p. 39.

violence against women, men humiliate her and through her bodily violation, the male members of her family and community.²¹

For others, the Hindu nationalist ideology motivates men to ‘violate’ the sanctified property of the male members of the Muslim family, community and nation, i.e. Muslim women.²² They argue that during conflict men are instigated into forcefully appropriating the sexual and productive property of the Muslim male. As Paola Bacchetta has asserted,

The Muslim woman’s unclothed body constitutes the inversion of *purdah* [veil], and the simultaneous violation of what, in his mind constitutes her as into his communal and sexual property.²³

Consequently, perpetration of sexual violence against Muslim women symbolically denies the male foe *his* property.²⁴

However, other scholars have argued that Hindu men who sexually victimize women during conflict are motivated by the desire to usurp and/or destroy the biological reproducers of Muslim community.²⁵ On the one hand, perpetrators seek to impregnate allegedly ‘hyper-

²¹ This explanation has frequently featured in the writings of scholars working on conflicts in other parts of the world as well. The most notable studies are Meredith Turshen, ‘The Political Economy of Rape: An Analysis of Systematic Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women During Armed Conflict in Africa’, in Caroline O. N. Moser and Fiona Clark (eds.), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2005) on the conflict in Mozambique and Rwanda; Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975) and Joyoti Grech, ‘Resisting War Rape in Bangladesh’, in *Trouble and Strife*, 26, 1993, pp. 17-21 on the 1971 Bangladesh war.

²² Paola Bacchetta, ‘Communal Property/Sexual Property: on representations of Muslim women in a Hindu nationalist discourse’, in Zoya Hassan (ed.), *Forging Identities* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994); and Vasanth Kannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran, ‘The Frying Pan or the Fire? Endangered Identities, Gendered Institutions and Women’s Survival’, in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds.), *Women and the Hindu Right* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996)

²³ Paola Bacchetta, ‘Communal Property/Sexual Property’, p. 216.

²⁴ Meredith Turshen has endorsed this explanation in her analysis of violence in Mozambique and Rwanda. She has asserted that women’s productive and reproductive labour also comes within the ambit of transferable property during conflict when they are abducted to do menial jobs, farming, sex work etc. or sexually abused to bear children. See her Meredith Turshen, ‘The Political Economy of Rape’.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Veena Das, *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), Amrita Basu, ‘Hindu Women’s Activism in India and the Questions it Raises’, in Patricia Jeffery and Amrita Basu (eds.), *Appropriating Gender: Women’s Activism and Politicized religion in South Asia* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998); Urvashi Butalia, ‘Muslim and Hindus Men and Women: Communal Stereotypes and Partition of India’, in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds.), *Women and the*

fertile' Muslim women with the seed of the 'superior' Hindu race through sexual violence. By impregnating Muslim women, Hindu fundamentalists assuage their anxiety about the diminution of the Hindu population. On the other hand, the destruction of Muslim women's reproductive organs is intended as a way to deny Muslim men the possibility of procreation and thereby diminish the Muslim population.²⁶

In short, these views argue that sexual violence during inter-religious conflict is motivated by the ideological desire to violate the symbols of honours, sanctified property and biological reproducers of the Muslim 'enemy'. However, there are several gaps in this existing literature, which I hope to address in my study.

Firstly, whilst placing considerable emphasis on the significance of Hindu nationalist ideology in motivating such violence, scholars have seldom examined this explanation in relation to the founding texts of the Hindu nationalist movement.²⁷ In this study I address this lacuna. I undertake a comprehensive analysis of the writings of all three founding ideologues of the movement – Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar – with respect to sexual violence. By examining a broad range of their texts and speeches, this study argues that the intricately crafted ideological framework of the movement contains a justification for sexual violence at its very core.

Secondly, the existing literature on sexual violence during Hindu-Muslim conflict has often examined conflict in isolation from the wider socio-political context of the region. This

Hindu Right (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996); and Madhu Kishwar, 'Safety is Indivisible: The Warning from Bombay Riots', in *Manushi*, No. 74-75, 1993, pp. 1- 3.

²⁶ In her work on the Bangladesh War, Susan Brownmiller has supported this view. She had argued that in the 1971 war, sexual violence against Bangladeshi women was used as a 'weapon of war' whereby the enemy can be impregnated by the sperm of the Pakistani victors. See her (1975) *Against our Will*. This explanation has also figured in Siobhan Fisher's work on the genocide in the former Yugoslavia. Siobhan Fisher, 'Occupation of the Womb: Forced Impregnation as Genocide', in *Duke Law Journal*, 46 (1), October, 1996, pp. 91-133.

²⁷ A notable exception is Purushottam Agarwal's 1996 study, 'Surat, Savarkar and Draupadi', which focuses only on Savarkar's *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*.

study however, attempts to provide a more comprehensive analysis of such violence. It tracks and interrogates the growth of Hindu nationalist organizations and the spread of Hindu nationalist ideology in Ahmedabad over four decades. It argues that the growth of Hindu nationalist organizations and the widespread support for their gendered anti-Muslim ideology was closely tied up with the socio-economic, political and spatial landscape unique to this region.

After providing this wider context, this study scrutinizes the contribution of Hindu nationalist organizations to sexual violence during inter-religious conflict. It argues that during 1969, 1985, 1992 and 2002, these organizations circulated incendiary propaganda that not only instigated violence against Muslims but also sexual violence against Muslim women. It also investigates the nature of organizational support that Hindu nationalist organizations provided to rioters, which contributed to the incidence of such violence during conflict. In order to show how Hindu nationalist ideology motivated men to inflict such violence, this study traces such violence all the way to the survivors, the eyewitnesses and wherever possible, the perpetrators.

Thirdly, although contemporary scholarship has insisted that sexual violence during Hindu-Muslim conflict is motivated by Hindu nationalist ideology, they have tended to base their conclusions on little, if any, primary research.²⁸ However, this study supports this view on the basis of a wide variety of source material collected during extensive fieldwork. By examining the specific role Hindu nationalist organizations play in instigating sexual violence, this study hopes to contribute not only to the literature on sexual violence but also to

²⁸ A notable exception is Lancy Lobo and Paul D'Souza, 'Surat Riots II – Images of Violence'. A part of this study is based on testimonies of survivors.

the substantial literature on the role of Hindu nationalist organizations in communal violence in India.²⁹

The preceding paragraphs have taken stock of the existing literature on the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women during Hindu-Muslim conflict in India and identified various gaps in our contemporary understanding. By examining the founding ideology of Hindu nationalist organizations, tracking their growth in the context of wider socio-political developments in Ahmedabad, and interrogating their role in contributing to the incidence of sexual violence during four episodes of inter-religious conflict, this research will address those gaps. Based on primary fieldwork, this comprehensive analysis will show how ideologically motivated sexual violence occurs during large-scale conflict.

After interrogating the role of Hindu nationalist ideology in the incidence of such violence, this thesis asks: can the perpetration of sexual violence against Muslim women be understood in terms of this ideology alone? In answering this question, my study departs from the existing historiography in two important ways. Firstly, it argues that certain patriarchal ideas also motivate sexual violence during conflict. Secondly, it argues that the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal ideas in violence is enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties during conflict. The following paragraphs provide a detailed description of these two arguments of the thesis.

This thesis argues that patriarchal ideas motivate sexual violence against Muslim women during conflict. The most important of these ideas is that which serves to normalize sexual violence as ‘sex’. In arguing for this conclusion, I draw on the wider literature on

²⁹ Some of the notable studies are Paul Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Thomas B. Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds.), *The BJP and the Compulsion of Politics in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, Asghar Ali Engineer, *Communalism and Communal Violence in India: An Analytical Approach to Hindu-Muslim Conflict* (Ajanta: Delhi, 1989).

patriarchy in India. Scholars have argued that in patriarchal discourses sexual violence is normalized as a 'natural' expression of male desire, lust, erotic impulses or lascivious tendencies. Owing to this normalization and naturalization of violent sexual conduct, sexual violence is understood not as violence but as 'sex'.³⁰ This prevalent patriarchal eroticization of sexual violence, I argue, also extends to times of large-scale inter-religious conflict. During conflict social constraints on men and safeguards that are meant to protect sexual victimization of women, such as legal discourses, are weakened. Subsequently, some men avail themselves of the impunity-ridden environment of conflict to have violent opportunistic 'sex' with women, wherein violent sexual subjugation is considered pleasurable. That such opportunistic violence does occur during large-scale conflict is suggested by Jan Breman's study on the 1992 riot in Surat³¹, and has featured more explicitly in studies on conflict elsewhere in the world.³²

A second patriarchal idea that motivates such violence during inter-religious conflict is the desire to preserve and reassert the gendered status quo. Several scholars have argued that patriarchy conventionally depends on the capacity of men to inflict violence at home as well as in wars.³³ It is through the anticipation or the infliction of this violence, Kumkum Sangari

³⁰ Kalpana Kannabiran and Vasanth Kannabiran, *De-Eroticizing Assault: Essays on Modesty, Honour and Power* (Calcutta: STREE, 2002), especially Chapter 5; Pratiksha Baxi, 'The Social and Juridical Framework of Rape in India: Case Studies in Gujarat' (University of Delhi: Unpublished Thesis, 2004), Veena Das, 'Sexual Violence, Discursive Formations and the State', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31 (35/37), Special Number, September, 1996, pp. 2411-2413+2415-2418+2420-2423.

³¹ Jan Breman, 'Anti-Muslim pogrom in Surat', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 (16), April 17, 1993, pp. 737-741, pp. 739-40.

³² See for instance, Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will* and Ruth Seifert, 'War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis', in Alexandra Stiglmeier (ed.), *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). However, her essentialized conceptions of masculinity have been largely rejected. For a critique of this position see Inger Skjelsbæk, 'Sexual Violence and War: Mapping Out a Complex Relationship', and Megan Gerecke, 'Explaining Sexual Violence in Conflict Situations'.

³³ See for instance, Liz Kelly, 'Wars Against Women: Sexual Violence, Sexual Politics and the Militarized State', in Susie Jacobs, Ruth Jacobson, Jennifer Marchbank (eds.), *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance* (London, New York: Zed Books, 2000); and Cynthia Cockburn, 'The Continuum of Violence', in

rightly argues, that patriarchal power structures ‘derive their authoritativeness, ensure obedience, inculcate submission and punish transgression of gendered norms’.³⁴ I will argue that, at least in some cases of inter-religious conflict, patriarchal ideas sanction sexual violence to reassert gendered hierarchies within institutions such as the family, the State, or the community.

This thesis will thus argue that patriarchal ideas that serve to normalize sexual violence as ‘sex’ and sanction its perpetration to reassert the gendered status quo are important motivations for sexual violence during conflict in addition to Hindu nationalist ideology.

The second important way in which this thesis departs from existing historiography on sexual violence is by stressing the significance of neighbourhood ties. I argue that under the strain of communal mobilization, neighbourhood ties based on everyday interaction, friendship and strategic inter-community alliances break down during large-scale conflict. This breakdown reconstitutes the neighbourhood space into a gendered communal space in which Hindu men are pitched against Muslim men and women, thus, enabling the infliction of sexual violence against Muslim women. By contrast, when neighbourhood ties endured communal mobilization they seem to have prevented the incidence of such violence.³⁵

Sudhir Kakar’ in his interesting study of the 1990 riots in Hyderabad has made a similar argument. He has argued that the absence of sexual violence during conflict in Hyderabad can be explained by the fact that both communities are aware that even after the

Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman (eds.), *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

³⁴ Kumkum Sangari, ‘Violent Routes: The Traffic between Patriarchies and Communalism’, in K.N. Panikkar and Sukumar Murlidharan (eds.), *Communalism, Civil Society and the State: Reflections on a Decade of Turbulence* (New Delhi: SAHMAT, 2002), p. 89. Raka Ray makes a similar point in her, ‘A Slap from the Hindu Nation’, in Amrita Basu and Srirupa Roy (eds.), *Violence and Democracy in India* (Oxford, New York and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2007).

³⁵ For a similar view see Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*.

riots they have to inhabit the same geographical space and carry out a minimal social and considerable economic interaction in their day-to-day lives.³⁶ 'However, my study takes issue with Kakar's argument because the latter implicitly suggests that were it not for these everyday interactions and socio-economic interdependence sexual violence against women would occur during conflict. Instead, I argue that what prevents the incidence of sexual violence during certain episodes of large-scale communal conflict is strategic alliances and genuine ties between different religious communities and not mere compulsions of cohabitation.

So far, I have demonstrated that the incidence of sexual violence against women is predominantly understood in terms of Hindu nationalist ideology. It has been argued that ideologically motivated men inflict such violence in order to destroy the symbols of honour, biological reproducers and property of the 'enemy' community. This thesis supports this view by providing a more comprehensive analysis of how Hindu nationalist ideology motivates such violence during inter-religious conflict. Simultaneously, this thesis departs from the predominant consensus in two important ways. First, it emphasizes the significance of certain patriarchal ideas that motivate sexual violence during conflict in addition to Hindu nationalist ideology. Second, it argues that the manifestation of Hindu nationalist ideology and patriarchal ideas in acts of sexual violence is enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties. At the same time, when neighbourhood ties endure communal mobilization, sexual violence is avoided.

The following section first describes the methodology I adopted to collect sources for this study, and then takes stock of the practical difficulties that such research entails.

³⁶ Sudhir Kakar, *The Colours of Violence* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1995), p. 110.

III. Methodology and Sources

This study is based on a wide variety of sources that I collected during fieldwork between October 2006 - January 2007 and September 2007-January 2008. Much of this time was spent in Ahmedabad although I also visited archives, academic institutions and human rights organizations in Surat, Baroda, Delhi and Bombay. For any complex and rich qualitative study, a diverse range of methods is considered essential.³⁷ I therefore used interview-based, document-based and observation-based methods.

Interview-based Methods

During fieldwork, I focused on interviewing people from broadly five backgrounds: human rights activists and academics; leaders of Islamic organizations active in Ahmedabad; Hindu nationalist activists and politicians; men who participated in the riots; and the riot survivors. In total I conducted 85 interviews during my fieldwork. Owing to the sensitive and confidential nature of the issues discussed in this thesis, pseudonyms have been used for most of the respondents.

Since the interviewees came from diverse backgrounds and spoke to me about various events and at times emotionally disturbing issues, I adopted a flexible approach to interviews. For example, I often allowed my interviewees, especially the survivors, to set the pace for the discussion, and did not stick to a pre-planned set of questions. In most instances, discussions were held over several days in the offices or homes of interviewees. Moreover, I consciously chose to interview both men and women from each group.

³⁷ Sandra Harding, 'Is there a Feminist Method?', in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires (eds.), *Feminisms* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Amongst activists, I focused on individuals working on communal harmony, preventing and addressing violence against women, or the rehabilitation of Muslim families affected during the riots. Their testimonies provided insights into the growth of Hindu nationalism in the province, the scale of everyday and episodic violence against women, the avenues of justice available to survivors, and issues involved in their rehabilitation, especially, in the aftermath of the 2002 massacre. Interviews with academics and political commentators helped in supplementing the information provided by rights activists. In addition to prominent activists and academics, I also conducted interviews with a second tier of activists who were mobilized from within the disadvantaged sections of the Muslim community. Their testimonies shed light on differences in the way the elite and the second tier responded to the issue of sexual violence in the context of the 2002 massacre.

I also interviewed leaders of Jammāt-e-Islami and Jamiyat-e-Ulema-Hind, who organized relief camps and have been active in the rehabilitation of survivors since 2002. Their interviews provided insights into the response of the elite leadership to the incidence of sexual violence during the 2002 anti-Muslim massacre, and the everyday lives of Muslim women who were displaced in the aftermath of the violence.

Although most Hindu nationalist leaders and sympathizers were unwilling to speak to researchers, I did succeed in coordinating interviews with a few leaders of the Bharitya Janta Party (BJP), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and Rashtriya Sevika Samiti. I also conducted discussions with heads of the RSS's publication and media centre and of their education wing. Despite initial hesitations they agreed to share not only their insights but also some of their documentation with me. Through the assistance of some organizations working with Dalit and Muslim youth and Muslim activists, I coordinated interviews with some

members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (hereafter VHP) and the Bajrang Dal [the army of the monkey deity, Hanuman] who participated in the 2002 violence.

Speaking with Muslim women and men who experienced the riots as adults and youths was perhaps the most important part of my fieldwork. Since official records have largely obscured the voices of the victimized community, and reports by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have recorded a limited number of testimonies, it was important to interview the survivors. Furthermore, since the experiences of those who inflict the violence are largely absent from official records and NGO reports, direct interviews with participants was the only way to gain insight into their motivations.

In order to make interviews manageable and representative, I concentrated on four neighbourhoods in Ahmedabad during my fieldwork: Behrampura, Vatwa, Juhapura and Ekta Nagar. Behrampura and Vatwa are located in the south-eastern part of the city, whilst Juhapura is located in the south-west. In Behrampura and Vatwa I interviewed lower-income Muslim and Dalit families who depended on the city's textile mills for their livelihood until their closure in the mid-1980s and 1990s. These two neighbourhoods were repeatedly affected by communal violence between 1969 and 2002. Moreover, Vatwa has become home to a large number of Muslim families who were displaced during the 2002 violence. These families could not go back to their homes for fear of being attacked. Juhapura has developed as the largest Muslim 'ghetto' of Gujarat. The area is primarily home to lower-income Muslim families who survived repeated bouts of communal violence. In the aftermath of the 2002 violence, however, several middle-class Muslim families also moved in to ensure their safety. In Juhapura I conducted interviews with both lower-income groups and the more affluent families. Ekta Nagar is located in south-east Ahmedabad and exclusively houses the

survivors of 2002. Here, I conducted fieldwork amongst low-income Muslim families who live in houses built by community organisations.

Initial introductions to interviewees were secured through the good offices of some NGOs that were active in these neighbourhoods. After the first connections were made, and as the fieldwork developed, I established relations with people in these localities. I made further contacts through my interviewees, especially local Muslim leaders who live in these neighbourhoods. The interviews were mostly conducted in the homes of the interviewees and in the absence of other members of the family. Their testimonies were collected through repeated in-depth interviews, during long hours spent with them throughout their daily routine.

I asked questions about the background of the locality, its history, caste, class and religious compositions, the nature of social and economic interactions before and after riots, political views and means of livelihood. A second set of questions related to their everyday lives, their experiences of domestic violence, how they coped, whether they sought help from the police or non-governmental organizations, and their impressions on the incidence of similar violence in their neighbourhoods. A third set of questions focused on their experiences of the riots: when and why the violence began, who was involved in inflicting the violence, how they defended themselves or engaged in violence, whether they or any members of their family were injured, whether they faced a threat of sexual violence, or witnessed such crimes on some else, what the impact of curfew was on their daily routine and sources of income.

These interviews often left me with ethical questions. I was concerned that by asking people to share their experiences of surviving or witnessing violence, I might inadvertently undermine their coping mechanisms. In order to assuage this persistent worry, I confessed to

my respondents that our discussion might stir painful memories and could have severe emotional repercussions. A lot of people, however, generously agreed to be interviewed. Moreover, I did not resist when my (male and female) interviewees asked me personal questions, not all of which were welcome.

Some group discussions were also conducted in the house of one of the interviewees in which members of the immediate and extended family and next-door neighbours participated. One group discussion was organized in the office of a local civil rights organization in which young Dalit and Muslim men and women participated. Some of the Dalits in the group had participated in the 2002 violence, whilst some of the Muslim participants were survivors of sexual violence. In contrast to what I had expected, men and women in each group discussion were remarkably frank about their everyday lives and experiences during communal violence. Although my questions kept the discussions focused, the participants commented on each other's remarks as well. This dynamics brought out some important ideas that may not have emerged if the interviews were conducted individually.

Document-based Methods

I consulted and collected document-based evidence from Ahmedabad, Baroda, Surat, Delhi and Bombay during fieldwork. More than half of the documents were in Gujarati, a language that I can speak, read, and write. Some of the documents were also in Hindi, in which I am fluent. The document-based evidence was collected from six major sources:

- 1) The Government (regional and national): publications such as regional gazetteers, decennial censuses and urban surveys; evaluative reports on communal violence, the status of women and crime; judicial affidavits, and recordings of the legal amendments to women's

rights

2) Hindu nationalist organizations such as the BJP, the RSS, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its women's wing Rashtriya Sevika Samiti: periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, fiction writing, published interviews, autobiographies and biographies of senior Hindutva leaders, election manifestos of the BJP and other propaganda material

3) Civil society organizations/activists/NGOs: evaluative reports on gender issues, reports on communal violence in Gujarat since 1950s, reports on human rights abuses against Dalits in the state, relevant films, news-clippings, legal documents, some confidential digital and published recordings of events organized by Hindu nationalist organizations and the Government of Gujarat, and records on everyday crimes against women in Ahmedabad.

4) Archives and Libraries: These included the South Asian Collections in the British Library (London), the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (Delhi), Prashant Archives (Ahmedabad), Setu Archives (Ahmedabad), Centre for Culture and Development (Baroda) and the Centre for Social Studies Library (Surat). In these libraries and archives I was able to access newsreels of several English, Gujarati and Hindi newspapers, political-news magazines, election manifestos of different political parties and unpublished doctoral dissertations on communalism and communal riots in Gujarat.

5) Internet: publications of human rights organizations, news reports, statistical profiles on the status of women on government websites and the national crime records bureau. Materials accessed online were cross-checked with published reports.

6) Secondary literature on the social, political, economic history of the region has been consulted and duly acknowledged.

Observation-based Methods

Apart from group discussions in which I partially participated, observation-based methods that did not involve any direct participation on my behalf, also remained important throughout fieldwork. In Delhi and Ahmedabad I observed several meetings and events organized by members of different civil rights' groups, academics and journalists on the socio-political situation of Gujarat. I also attended two meetings organized by an NGO on Muslim women's issues and the Domestic Violence Bill in Ahmedabad. I also viewed media recordings of speeches of senior BJP and RSS leaders, government ministers, and activists related to the events of 2002. I also viewed media recordings of the sting-operations carried out by some news channels in an attempt to expose the culprits of the 2002 violence.

Together, sources collected through interview-, document- and observation-based methods constitute a substantial body of empirical data for this study. However, there are certain limitations that are unique to any research on sexual violence. The following subsection focuses on these limitations and describes their impact on this study.

Working on Sexual Violence and Limitations of Sources

Research on sexual violence against women during conflict is confronted with unique difficulties. Notions of honour routinely prevent women from speaking out about their experiences. The picture is complicated by contemporary socio-political discourses in Gujarat that constrain the creation of archives of information relevant to the issue. The following discussion describes how these notions and discourses pose limitations on the sources available. These limitations pose unsurpassable constraints on what can and cannot be known about the instances of such violence during large-scale conflict.

One major limitation is the unavailability of authoritative statistics on the rate of sexual violence during episodes of inter-religious conflict. In several instances of brutal sexual violence, especially those that occurred during the 2002 massacre, the victim did not survive. Moreover, during the 2002 massacre the police was either unwilling to record cases of sexual violence against Muslim women due to communal bias and corruption, or complicity in the infliction of such violence.³⁸

A more local reason for the obliteration of the true scale of such crimes from records is that Gujarat has consistently maintained a façade of being a non-violent region as compared to other provinces in India. When I asked my (middle-class, upper caste) respondents about the incidence of violence against women in Gujarat, they almost invariably had two main responses. First, Gujarat is a safer place for women because they can travel alone without a male escort and with no fear of violence. Second, riots are temporary events with no long-term implications for women's lives. The conversation I had with a mathematics professor at Gujarat University, who also heads the media cell of the BJP in Gujarat, is illustrative³⁹:

SY: Women in Gujarat are very safe and independent, they drive their own kinetic scooters, they go everywhere alone, they are studying on merit in universities, they wear modern dress [sic]... they are out to capture the world.

MK: If women are so safe and independent why is there so much violence against Muslim women during the riots?

³⁸ A Citizens Tribunal set up in the aftermath of the 2002 violence concluded that the Gujarat police failed to 'fulfill their constitutional duty and prevent mass massacre, rape and arson - in short, to maintain law and order. Worse still is the evidence of their active connivance and brutality, their indulgence in vulgar and obscene conduct against women and children in full public view. It is as if, instead of being impartial keepers of the rule of law, they were a part of the Hindutva brigade targeting helpless Muslims'. Concerned Citizens Tribunal: Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Justice P. B. Sawant, Justice Hosbet Suresh, K. G. Kannabiran, Aruna Roy, K. S. Subramanian, Ghanshyam Shah, Tanika Sarkar, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. Findings and Recommendations*, Vol. II (Mumbai: CCT, 2002), p. 81. This report also recorded evidence of similar police misbehaviour in the previous riots, pp. 115-8.

³⁹ Interviewed at BJP office, Ahmedabad, 10/12/07.

SY: Riots are a different thing...In any case riots don't make much of a difference to women's lives...I don't think...they start and then they come to an end. In general Gujarat is a very safe place for women.

In such descriptions, the purported 'safety' of women 'in general' serves to invisibilize the gendered violence that occurs during riots. Since riots are considered momentary aberrations that 'start' and then 'come to an end', their long-term implications on the lives of women who survive sexual violence get obscured. These popular descriptions thus enact powerful erasures on official accounts of inter-religious conflict in Gujarat.

The difficulties of creating comprehensive descriptions of the events that occur during the riots are compounded by the lack of legal discourses. In Gujarat during the last fifty years only one case⁴⁰ of sexual violence that occurred during Hindu-Muslim violence has led to conviction. This points to the extent to which such crimes have been historically concealed and condoned. As a result, affidavits, verbatim transcripts of legal proceedings, official testimonies of the accused and the victims do not exist.

In order to compensate for the lacuna in police records and the partiality of contemporary socio-political and legal discourses, I approached the oldest Ahmedabad-based women's organization, Jyoti Sangh, for their records. Significantly, however, the counsellors at the organization informed me that due to the stigma associated with sexual violence, most survivors register their complaints under 'kidnapping and abduction' or 'domestic violence' charges. As a result, their records do not provide any indication on the rate of sexual violence. As a last resort, I approached three prominent women's organizations in Ahmedabad, and one each in Surat and Baroda. I had hoped their records would provide an indication of the rate of

⁴⁰ The case mentioned here is that of Bilkis Rasool, a young woman in her 20s, who was gang raped in Dahod district of Gujarat during the 2002 violence whilst being in advanced stages of pregnancy. The High Court of Maharashtra convicted 11 out of the 17 accused, and awarded them life imprisonment in 2008.

such crimes during the riots. However, I was not allowed to access their materials. It seemed that the heads of these organizations did not wish to aid research that would be critical of the Narendra Modi-led BJP regime out of fear of reprisal or of cuts in State funding. Their refusal could also, perhaps, be motivated by the desire to maintain their control over the data they had collected so that they could lay claim to national and international funding. This NGO-politics limited my access to detailed records on the rate of such crimes during conflict.

Consequently, I had to rely on non-official publications by civil society organizations and academics to provide some indication about the nature and scale of gendered violence. I also had to rely on the testimonies of my respondents to provide this information, whilst being cautious of the fractured and selective nature of memory, especially traumatic memories.

However, since the survivors were recollecting events that happened several years or decades ago, their memories were sometimes fragmentary or inaccurate. During my fieldwork the narratives of some survivors, especially of those who had been witness to more than one episode of communal violence, confused the events of different riots. Other survivors, who suffered utter devastation during the 2002 violence, understandably found it difficult to talk about their experiences in the previous riots coherently. Pain, suffering and loss overwhelmed their narratives. Although these two sets of testimonies uncover the toll that frequent and ghoulis violence takes on human life, they do not retain the coherence that would be necessary for reconstructing the past.

Significantly, however, I also came across people who remembered previous riots quite vividly; or as one survivor described it, 'like it was yesterday'. These survivors remembered the riots down to the most mundane details: the day on which the violence began and where, how they responded when their neighbourhoods were attacked, what they were

cooking at the time and whether the radio was on. It is this last set of testimonies that appear throughout this thesis. Even though these narratives were not immune to the selective processes of memory, their relative coherence made it possible to triangulate information.

Moreover, engaging members of Hindu nationalist organizations, who participated in the violence, in a conversation about sexual violence, in particular, and communal violence, in general, has been difficult. Firstly, most Dalit men (except two) whom I interviewed outrightly denied that they had participated in any violence even when their Muslim neighbours insisted that they ‘saw them with their own eyes’. The unwillingness of people to discuss their political affiliations, views on communal and sexual violence, and reasons for participation seems to have grown particularly acute in the aftermath of the 2002 massacre. Since the gaze of human rights organizations, academics (myself included), and legal practitioners continues to be firmly set on Gujarat, people deny any knowledge of violence out of a fear of legal reprisal. This denial made it impossible to access their interpretations first-hand.

IV. Chapter Divisions

This thesis has been divided into five chapters. Chapter I, entitled ‘Hindu Nationalist Ideology and Justification of Sexual Violence’, examines the writings and speeches of the founding ideologues of militant Hindu nationalism with respect to sexual violence. It argues that three elements of the ideological framework laid down by Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar combined to justify sexual violence against Muslim women. The first element was concerned with the construction of a carefully crafted historical narrative about the ferocity of the Muslim ‘enemy’. The second element involved the projection of the violence allegedly committed by Muslims against Hindus, especially Hindu women, as a symbolic humiliation

of the Hindu male. The third element of the ideology laid down by the ideologues insisted that Muslims pose a persistent threat to the future of Hindu women, and by implication, to the masculine pride of Hindu men. In order to avenge past atrocities and combat this threat these ideologues justified sexual violence against Muslim women. Through pre-emptive and retaliatory sexual violence against Muslim women, Hindu men could redeem their lost male pride and humiliate the Muslim male. This chapter thus argues that a justification of sexual violence against Muslim women is at the core of the ideology.

Chapter II, entitled 'The 1969 Riot in Ahmedabad', begins with an examination of the socio-political and economic landscape of the city. This examination argues that the rise of Hindu nationalist organizations in the city was facilitated by the socio-economic crisis of the 1960s and the wider political shift towards right-wing politics. Subsequently, during the events in the run-up to the riot, Hindutva outfits had little difficulty in securing greater popularity and legitimacy for their ideology. When the riot broke out, these outfits provided ideological instigation for sexual violence and organizational leadership to the rioters. In the industrial labour region, where Hindu nationalist organizations had mobilized Scheduled castes against Muslims throughout the 1960s, Muslim women were subjected to brutal sexual violence. Whilst arguing for the significance of Hindu nationalist ideology in motivating such crimes during the riot, this chapter argues that such violence was not motivated by this ideology alone. Patriarchal ideas that serve to normalize sexual violence as 'sex' also played a part in motivating attackers to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women. Moreover, through an examination of events at the neighbourhood level this chapter further challenges ideology-based explanations. It argues that the manifestation of Hindutva ideology and

patriarchal motivations in acts of sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties.

Chapter III, entitled, 'The 1985 Riot in Ahmedabad', begins by arguing that between 1970 and 1985 an intensification of the socio-economic and political crisis in Ahmedabad enabled a rapid growth of Hindu nationalist organizations across the city. This growth fuelled anti-Muslim hostility even further. When the 1985 communal riot began, Hindu nationalist organizations started a propaganda campaign invoking those tenets of their ideology that combine to justify sexual violence against Muslim women. In addition to this, Hindu nationalist outfits organized several events in which men inflicted verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women. However, during this riot similar violence was also inflicted against Hindu women. This violence was not motivated by Hindu nationalist ideology but rather by patriarchal ideas that conflate sexual violence with 'sex' and sanction the perpetration of such violence as a way to punish transgression of gendered norms. Moreover, despite the prevalence of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations during the riot brutal sexual violence was not reported in the riot. This chapter suggests that this absence was the result of strong neighbourhood ties that were forged between Harijans and Muslims in the form of a strategic alliance. Thus, this chapter shows how Hindu nationalist ideology and patriarchal ideas motivated verbal and visual sexual violence against women. However, it also argues that the strengthening of neighbourhood ties seems to have prevented these motivations from manifesting in extreme forms.

Chapter IV, entitled 'The 1992 Riot in Ahmedabad', focuses on the riot that followed the demolition of the Babri Mosque. It begins by arguing that the period between 1985 and 1992 saw the entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations across Ahmedabad and the

hardening of spatial boundaries between religious communities. Following this, the Sangh Parivar started the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation that led to repeated bouts of communal violence in the city. As the rhetoric of Hindutva acquired greater militancy, verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women during religious events became frequent. When the riot began, Hindu nationalist activists took an active part in orchestrating violence against Muslims and inflicting sexual violence in the form of verbal and visual abuse against Muslim women. However, in Ahmedabad, sexual violence did not take on the extreme forms it did during communal riots in Surat and Bombay. This chapter argues that a plausible explanation for the absence of brutal violence lay in the nature of neighbourhood ties. It shows that even though ties between Hindus and Muslims had been strained under aggressive communal mobilization, some ties endured. The preservation of these ties probably prevented the incidence of severe sexual violence against Muslim women. Thus, this chapter shows that while Hindu nationalist ideology manifested itself in the form of verbal and visual sexual violence against women, neighbourhood ties served to prevent the brutal sexual violence.

Chapter V, entitled the 'The Anti-Muslim Massacre of 2002' focuses on the worst episode of organized violence against religious minorities in the history of independent India. During this massacre, Muslim women were subjected to macabre sexual violence not only in Ahmedabad but also in other parts of Gujarat province. In order to contextualize this massacre, this chapter undertakes a detailed examination of the wider socio-economic and politico-ideological landscape of the city between 1993 and 2002. It argues that during the said period, Hindu nationalist organizations entrenched themselves firmly across Ahmedabad as well as in the State machinery. Following the arrival of their 'own government', the Sangh Parivar widely circulated and legitimized its gendered anti-Muslim rhetoric and orchestrated a

series of attacks against religious minorities. Subsequently, when the 2002 massacre began, the Sangh Parivar received extensive support from the State machinery in orchestrating violence against Muslim men and women. A belligerent propaganda campaign was organized that sought to project Hindus as the victims of an alleged sexual tyranny of Muslim men, which motivated Hindu men to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women. However, this chapter argues that the men who inflicted such violence were partly motivated by the patriarchal idea that serves to normalize sexual violence as 'sex'. Indeed it was this motivation that led some Muslim men to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women in the relief camps. Moreover, the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations in sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties between Hindus and Muslims.

CHAPTER I: HINDU NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY AND JUSTIFICATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Introduction

This chapter examines the ideological framework of Hindu nationalist movement as laid down by its founding ideologues. It analyzes the writings and speeches of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar. It argues that the founding ideologues of militant Hindu nationalism carefully constructed a narrative about the ferocity of the Muslim men and women, the historic humiliation of the Hindu male pride, and the ever-present Muslim threat. These elements of their ideology combined to justify retaliatory and pre-emptive sexual violence against Muslim women.

1.1 Hindu Nationalist Ideologues and Founding Texts

This first section provides a biographical sketch of the lives of these ideologues in order to situate their writings in the wider socio-political context in which they were produced. It also introduces the main writings of the three ideologues and identifies their target audience.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (May 28, 1883 – February 26, 1966) was born in Bhagur, a small town in the Nasik district of colonial Maharashtra, western India, into a Chitpavan Brahmin family.¹ After finishing primary education, Savarkar was sent with his elder brother to Fergusson College in Nasik. In 1899, Savarkar formed a secret society called *Mitra Mela* (Friends' Group), later known as *Abhinav Bharat* that was dedicated to violent insurrection against the British.² Congress leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak was impressed with Savarkar's

¹ Dhananjay Keer, *Savarkar and His Times* (Bombay: A.V. Keer, 1950).

² Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *A Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and*

revolutionary activities and helped him obtain the Shivaji Scholarship to read for the Bar exams in London in 1906.

While in London, Savarkar actively involved himself in Indian revolutionary groups. He translated Giuseppe Mazzini's *Life* into Marathi and was greatly inspired by the book.³ Exposure to the romantic nationalism sweeping Europe in the closing decades of the nineteenth century deeply impressed Savarkar and provided ideological coherence to him in two crucial ways. Firstly, reading about the life of nationalists like Mazzini led him to believe that an armed revolt was a necessary prerequisite for attaining freedom from colonial, or any alien domination. Secondly, he learnt that reconstructing the present by reaching back to the historical roots of the civilization is essential for the project of nationalism. This belief in the power of history and of armed rebellion led Savarkar to write his *The Indian War of Independence: National Rising of 1857*.⁴ In this book Savarkar recalled the history of 1857 to advocate an armed insurrection against the British in which Indians, irrespective of their religion, would co-operate. Even though an anti-Muslim sentiment in this first book was absent at best and ambiguous at worst, his hagiographers like Keer insist that his hatred for Islam followed a continuous course from childhood to political maturity.⁵

In 1910 the British government accused him of sedition and for being involved in the assassination of two British officers. He was sent back to India for trial and sentenced to two terms of imprisonment in the Andaman Jails, for twenty-five years each. Savarkar was

Hindu Revivalism (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), p. 17.

³ K. K. Choudhari, *Maharashtra and Indian Freedom Struggle* (Bombay: Director General of Information and Public Relations, Government of Maharashtra, 1985), p.41.

⁴ This book was published in London in 1909 and was instantly proscribed. Graham Shaw and Mary Lloyd (eds.) *Publications proscribed by the Government of India: A Catalogue of the Collections in the India Office Library and Records and the Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books*, British Library Reference Division (London: British Library, 1985), p. 19.

⁵ Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford: Berg; New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 79.

brought to Port Blair, the capital of the Andamans, on July 4, 1911. While in prison he wrote, in Marathi, his book *The Story of My Transportation for Life* that described in detail his experiences of years in imprisonment. The hardships of prison life took a toll on Savarkar's patriotic mettle and he submitted two petitions for clemency to the British government. These were accepted on the condition that he would not participate in any anti-colonial political activity.⁶ Soon after returning to Maharashtra however, he became a member of the Swarajaya Sabha or the Home Rule League formed by Tilak in 1916 at Surat after the split from Congress.

From the 1920s, however, a significant shift began to emerge in his ideology and he gradually moved away from his ideals of violent revolutionary Indian nationalism. This shift has to be seen against two broad discursive changes that were underway at the national and Maharashtrian regional level. On the one hand, the increasingly influence of Hindu revivalism on nationalist politics was escalating communalism⁷; on the other hand, anti-caste movements were threatening the hegemony of Hindu upper castes in Maharashtra.⁸ In response to these significant discursive shifts, Savarkar started propagating the idea of an exclusive Hindu nationalism for the creation of a Hindu *Rashtra* or a Hindu nation-state. This ideological shift

⁶ Abdul G. Noorani, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* (New Delhi: Leftword Books, 2002), pp. 49-50.

⁷ The ascent of Hindu revivalism in Punjab, Bengal and Maharashtra and the weakening and eventual collapse of the Congress Khilafat alliance led to widespread communalization of nationalist politics. Between 1922 and 1927, for instance, a massive wave of communal riots swept over India resulting in over 91 outbreaks. See Tapan Basu, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right*, Tracts for the Times, Vol. 1 (New Delhi: Leftword Books; London: Sangam, 1993), pp. 12-13.

⁸ Sumit Sarkar has informed us that lower caste groups, especially Dalits, had mobilized themselves against upper caste hegemony by the 1920s. In Maharashtra and in many other parts of southern India these movements were particularly strong because of the able leadership provided by leaders like Jyotirao Phule and later Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. These groups explicitly rejected Sanskritization and refused to lay claim to higher caste status. They developed alternative conceptions of regional history in which they projected themselves as natives of the land and upper caste Aryans as despicable alien conquerors. Politicization of these groups at the bottom of the Hindu caste hierarchy increasingly threatened the caste status quo. For more on this issue see Sumit Sarkar, 'Indian Nationalism and Politics of Hindutva', in David Ludden (ed.), *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 288-90.

resulted in the influential *Hindutva* and in his later writings on history – *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* and *The Maratha Movement (Hindu Pad Padashahi)*. He was an articulate writer-orator and publicly declared his hatred for Gandhi and his contempt for the inclusive, if muddled, idea of nationhood envisaged by the Indian National Congress. Savarkar became increasingly influenced by the politics of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Following the model of Provincial Hindu Sabhas in Bombay, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, he formed the Ratnagiri Hindu Sabha in 1924, spoke at Hindu Parishads all over the country and gradually ascended to the stage of national politics.⁹ In the mid-1920s, he became the ideological mentor of K. B. Hedgewar and actively involved himself in the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [National Volunteer Corps, henceforth RSS]. In 1933 he took over as the President of the Hindu Mahasabha; a post he retained until 1939. He was fascinated with Hitler's leadership and the latter's views on the 'Jewish question' and even associated with the Nazi party in Germany and the Fascist party in Italy in the 1930s and 40s.¹⁰ On 30 January 1948, a disciple of Savarkar and a member of the RSS, Nathuram Godse, assassinated Gandhi. Savarkar was accused of being involved in his assassination; however, there are no documents to prove this conclusively.¹¹ After being acquitted, Savarkar retired from direct political participation but continued to write until his death in 1966.

Keshav Baliram Hedgewar¹² (April 1, 1889 – June 21, 1940) was a Maharashtrian Brahmin and was influenced by the spiritualism of Swami Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghose. While studying for a degree in medicine in Bengal, he was active in secret

⁹ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, p. 153.

¹⁰ Marzia Casolari, 'Hindutva's Foreign Tie-Up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 January, 2000, pp. 218-28.

¹¹ Abdul G. Noorani, *Savarkar and Hindutva*, pp. 95-135.

¹² This account of Hedgewar's life is based on Hongasadra V. Seshadri (ed.), *Dr. Hedgewar The Epoch Maker: A Biography* (Sahitya Sindhu Prakashana: Bangalore, 1981) (Compiled by B.V. Deshpande and S.R. Ramaswamy).

revolutionary organizations like *Anushilan Samiti* and *Yugantar*. He also participated in Congress campaigns in the first half of his political career and was even imprisoned on the charges of sedition. In the early 1920s, Dr. N. S. Hardikar's *Hindustani Seva Dal* (Association for the Service of Hindustan) and Savarkar's *Hindutva* pamphlet influenced his political sensibilities.¹³ According to Hedgewar's hagiographer, H.V. Seshadri, 'Savarkar's...brilliant exposition of the concept of 'Hindutva', marked by incontestable logic and clarity, struck the chord of Doctorji's (Hedgewar) heart. If the Muslim onslaughts had shocked the Hindus out of their stupor, Savarkar's Hindutva fanned their dormant Hindu spirit into a national blaze'.¹⁴ Hedgewar became increasingly critical of Gandhian ideas of non-violence in particular and the politics of the Indian National Congress in general. He deplored the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity and believed that an armed resurrection against Muslims (not the British) was the only way to create an independent Hindu Rashtra.¹⁵

As a prelude to the formation of the RSS, Hedgewar set up a national wrestling school in Nagpur to 'discipline' young Hindu men, encourage paramilitary training in order to 'mould the character of the nation'.¹⁶ In 1924-6 Hedgewar formed the RSS in Nagpur and introduced physical training regiments, drills, marching, and training in the use of weapons like lathi, daggers, and rifles. Participants of this all-male organization were encouraged to attend *shakha* [neighbourhood cell] and *boudhik* sessions [ideological discussions] to discuss national affairs and read prescribed texts like *Hindutva*.¹⁷ The members of the RSS were permitted to participate in Congress campaigns although as an organization, the RSS remained detached from anti-colonial politics – it was to remain, as per Hedgewar's decision,

¹³ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 154-55.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 83.

a 'social organization'. Under the political and ideological guidance of Savarkar and Hedgewar, the RSS had developed a significant base in northern India.

In 1936, Hedgewar after much hesitation agreed to guide Lakshmi Kelkar to form a women's wing of the RSS - the Rashtra Sevika Samiti, committed to the militant Hindutva ideology. Like the RSS, the Samiti was a rigidly hierarchical organization, with positions of power heading downward from the national to the local level. Hedgewar wanted the RSS to remain a strictly male organization and wanted to establish a formal, institutional distance between the two organizations. For its institutional structure as well as the activities, the Samiti followed the example of the RSS and was meant to be subservient to its male counterpart.¹⁸ A difference in the prescribed gendered roles is built into the logic of the RSS as well as the Samiti. For instance, the physical training regiments prescribed in both since inception, has aimed at imparting skills for 'self-defence' among women and for 'defence of the nation' among men. This suggests that women (in the case of the Samiti, invariably Hindu women) are capable of defending only themselves, while the onus and the capacity of protecting the nation and 'its' women lies with Hindu men alone. Moreover, as Tanika Sarkar has pointed out, there is a small, yet significant difference between the two organizations manifested in the difference in appellation. While the 'Rashtriya Swayamsevak' means 'nationalist volunteers', the term 'Rashtra Sevika' denotes women who serve the nation. The sense of autonomy and self-choice associated with the work of a 'volunteer' is conspicuous by its absence in the latter name.¹⁹ Nevertheless, both the RSS and the Samiti aim at the creation of a Hindu Rashtra.

¹⁸ Tanika Sarkar, 'The Woman as Communal Subject: Rashtrasevika Samiti and Ran Janmabhoomi Movement', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35 (35), 31 August, 1991, pp. 2057–2062, p. 2057.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (February 19, 1906 – June 5, 1973), born near Nagpur, was a Brahmin like Hedgewar and Savarkar, and inclined towards Hindu spiritualism. He went to Banaras Hindu University and pursued a degree first in science and then in law. He was greatly influenced by Madan Mohan Malaviya and joined the RSS in 1931.²⁰ In 1933 he returned to Nagpur during which time he came under the influence of Hedgewar. In 1939, he wrote his infamous *We or Nationhood Defined*.²¹ Written when forces of Nazism and socialism were ascending and a Second World War was imminent, the book's most notorious aspect was the unabashed admission of admiration for Hitler's anti-Semitic policies. This was expressed in the following words:

German national pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by purging the country of the Semitic races, the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into a united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.²²

In their admiration for Hitler, the leadership of the RSS adopted a modified version of the Nazi salute for their *shakhas* [branches]. After Hedgewar's death in 1940, Golwalkar took over as the supreme philosopher-guide, or *sarsangchalak*, of the RSS, a position he retained until his own death in 1973. During the partition riots of 1946-47, the RSS, which had spread

²⁰ Madhav S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Third edition) (New Delhi: Sahitya Sindhu Prakashan, [1966] 1996).

²¹ Due to the pro-Nazi sentiments and anti-religious minority sentiments unabashedly expressed in this book, considerable controversy surrounds the issue of its authorship. Recently, the Sangh has argued that its contents were not written by Golwalkar but were merely a translation of the Marathi work *Rashtra Mimansa* by Babarao G.D. Savarkar (brother of V.D. Savarkar). [As claimed by a senior official of the RSS-run Deen Dayal Upadhyay Research Centre in Delhi in *Jansatta*, Delhi edition, 7 January 1993]. Although RSS detractors argue that the authorship of this work is beyond dispute. For, in the Preface to the first edition of the book in 1939, Golwalkar expressed his gratitude to G.D. Savarkar's work as his "chief source of inspiration and help" (p.4). See his *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Fourth edition) (Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan [1939]1947). See Sitaram Yechuri, 'What is this Hindu Rashtra: On Golwalkar's Fascistic Ideology and the Saffron Brigade's Practice', *Frontline*, 12 March, 1993 issue for more on this controversy.

²² Madhav S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1939), p. 37.

to many parts of colonial India, got actively involved in virulent communal propaganda, relief work in Hindu camps, killing, looting and rioting.²³ In 1948, along with Savarkar, Golwalkar was also accused of being complicit in Gandhi's murder although no charges could be proved. From the 1950s Golwalkar committed himself to the development of the RSS. According to Chetan Bhatt, it was under his leadership that the ideological content and methodological orientation of the organization was refined.²⁴ He developed the one-hour daily shakha system: the strategy that is largely responsible for the success of the RSS.

Despite having extremely active political careers these ideologues, especially Savarkar and Golwalkar, dedicated significant amounts of time to writing. This endeavour must be understood in the light of the fact that from the 1920s, print capitalism provided a new way to articulate and disseminate ideas about the nation, community, and religion.²⁵ Savarkar for instance, published five books on historical themes, two autobiographical accounts of his time in the Andaman prisons, four works of fiction, several nationalistic poems and numerous newspaper articles. Golwalkar produced four lengthy tracts, gave countless public speeches, and was a regular contributor to newspapers.

This study, therefore, draws on a rich pool of sources, which include Savarkar's *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu* (1923), *The Indian War of Independence* (1909), *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* (1970), *The Maratha Movement* (1925) along with two important collections of his speeches *Hindu Sanghathan* (1940), and *Whirl-wind Propaganda* (1941). Golwalkar's *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939), *Bunch of Thoughts* (1966) and his speeches compiled in *Spotlights* (1974) and *Truth Triumphs* (1997) are also important. For an

²³ Urvashi Butalia, 'Muslim and Hindus Men and Women'.

²⁴ Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism Hindu Nationalism*, p. 125.

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) and Lisa Trivedi, 'Visually Mapping the "Nation": Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930', in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 26 (1), February, 2003, pp. 11-41, p. 23.

account of Hedgewar's ideas, I draw on his *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh – Elements and Activities* (1972).

Stylistically, these texts occupy a place between popular propaganda and sophisticated elite literature. On the one hand, they are all repetitive and rhetorical in character. 'Historical' narrative is interspersed with long monologues on (real and imagined) personal experiences with Muslims. This makes it very difficult for the reader to separate historical accounts from personal opinions. Just as in propaganda, the narrative traverses popular stereotypes and common prejudices.²⁶ On the other hand, however, most of these works have been conceptualised in complete isolation from the political reality of the period in which they were written, ostensibly to project them as elite literature. Take for example, Savarkar's, *Six Glorious...* in which he describes the 'epic Hindu-Muslim war'. Although this text was written when the violent and dynamic anti-colonial struggle was at its peak, the absence of a single reference to this struggle is conspicuous. This stylistic device not only serves to emphasize the timelessness of Hindu-Muslim antagonism²⁷, but also helps the author to pass this book off as an objective documentation of Indian history. By writing books on subjects not related directly to their specific political work, the ideologues partially succeeded in distinguishing their works from the ordinary political propaganda that was in wide circulation at the time.²⁸

²⁶ Roger Chartier, 'Intellectual History or Sociocultural History?', in Dominick LaCapra and Steven L. Kaplan (eds.), *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 32-6.

²⁷ Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism*, p. 91.

²⁸ Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001) for United Provinces, Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation. Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001) for Bengal, and Papiya Ghosh, 'The Virile and the Chaste in Community and Nation Making: Bihar 1920's to 1940's', in *Social Scientist*, 22 (1/2), January-February, 1994, pp. 80-94 for Bihar.

It is important to note that even though the texts borrowed some stylistic features from propaganda material, the ideologues intended the primary audience of these texts to be the upper caste, Hindu, male elite. Evidence in support of this assertion emerges from a stylistic feature of the texts themselves. For instance, Puranic and Vedic verses bearing little relation to the specific object of comment were frequently inserted into the text of *Six Glorious...*, *Bunch of Thoughts* and *We or Our...*. These verses were used as a validation of their political ideology and proof of the historical continuity of Hindu nationalist struggle. By implying that these edicts are undisputable, timeless truths, Aryan men were projected as the historical leaders of Hindu nationalism. This is what Quentin Skinner has called the ‘act in utterance’ wherein the intention of the speaker/writer can be ascertained not from the actual meaning of the words being uttered but from the context in which they are uttered.²⁹ Since these Puranic and Vedic edicts have largely been, and continue to be, a reserve of upper caste Hindu men, the latter were projected as the natural leaders of the contemporary Hindu struggle against Muslim tyranny today. This kind of ‘act in utterance’ brings to light the ideologues’ intention to target educated upper caste Hindu men. Furthermore, since most of the texts were translated into English and not into other vernacular languages their reach was largely confined to that group.³⁰

To what extent, numerically speaking, the books did reach their target audience is

²⁹ Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Cambridge & Oxford: Polity and Blackwell, 1988), p. 30.

³⁰ In 1931, out of the total number of people who were literate in English, Hindu men comprised a staggering 58.52 percent as opposed to 15.18 percent Muslim, 8.27 percent Christian and 1.43 percent Sikh men. Of the literate Hindus, the overwhelming majority also belonged to the upper castes. For instance, in 1931 Brahmins comprised 4.73 percent of the total Hindu population but 18.28 percent of the literate and 30.09 percent of the English literate population. Since Brahmin women’s literacy was only at 4.5 percent, the majority of Brahmins literate in the English and the vernaculars were men. Although literacy was quite low across the different religious, caste and gender groups, it is clear from this statistics that upper caste Hindu men stood in the strongest stead. Figures compiled from *Census of India 1931* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1933), p. 424, p.426, p.452, p.454 and p.470.

difficult to determine. This is so because information regarding the number of copies that were distributed, or editions these texts ran into, is unfortunately unavailable. One can say with some confidence, however, that these books reached a wide audience for the following reasons: a) Almost all of the texts mentioned above were translated into English from their original Marathi versions, indicating not only the aspirations of their writers and publishers but also their extensive pan-Indian popularity; b) The texts written by these ideologues were almost instantly proscribed by the colonial government, which indicates their potential to draw audiences and exercise political influence; c) Savarkar, for instance, referred to his writings several times during his public speeches giving the texts massive publicity; and d) These books were circulated by organizations like the Ghadar Party, the Hindu Mahasabha and of course the RSS, providing these documents extensive readership.³¹ Furthermore, readership refers to not only those who know how to read and write but also to those who have access to the written word through oral traditions.³² Therefore, the large numbers of people who accessed the ideology through these authors' public speeches also constituted an important 'readership' of these texts.

1.2 Creation of the Self and the Other

The primary aim behind scrutinizing the texts written by the three ideologues is to examine how they justified sexual violence against Muslim women. This justification emerges out of three elements of the Hindu nationalist ideology. The first element is the creation of an image of the self and the other.

The question of how the 'we' of a possible Indian nationhood might be constituted

³¹ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* (Delhi: Rajdhani Granthagar, 1970), Preface.

³² Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

was barely resolved by the end of the nineteenth century when it came to be challenged again by the proponents of Hindu and Muslim nationalism in the 1920s.³³ On the one hand, Muslim communities that benefited from advances in communication and economic opportunities attempted a self-definition.³⁴ On the other, Hindu nationalists also tried to establish who was included and who was excluded from the nation. The ideology of Hindu nationalism was obliged to define who a Hindu was.

Savarkar, probably the most articulate among all proponents of exclusive Hindu nationalism, was obsessed about providing a comprehensive definition of what constituted 'Hindu identity'. He rejected the idea that a person who followed Hinduism, believed in the tenets of Hinduism, and practiced its rituals is a Hindu. Instead, he defined a Hindu as a 'person who regards the land of Bharatvarsha from the Indus to the Seas as his Fatherland (*pitribhumi*), as well as his Holyland (*punyabhumi*) – that is the cradle of his religion'.³⁵

By defining Hindus as such, he collapsed all caste, regional as well as religious differences among all people living in India who could identify their 'Holyland' with the 'Fatherland'. Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs, for instance, were homogenized under the inclusive category of 'Hindu'. The only people who were left out were Muslims and Christians because despite being born in India their Holyland were situated outside India.

This definition could not have come at a more opportune time for the votaries of Hindu nationalism who instantly adopted and actively propagated the idea. The publisher's preface to the fourth edition of *Hindutva*, published in 1949, stated how the definition had

³³ Gyandendra Pandey, 'Hindus and Others: The Militant Hindu Construction', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26 (52), 28 December, 1991, pp. 2997-3009, p. 2999.

³⁴ David Gilmartin, 'A Magnificent Gift: Muslim Nationalism and the Election Process in Colonial Punjab', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40 (3), July, 1998, pp. 415-36.

³⁵ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Fourth edition) (Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Sadan, [1923] 1949), pp. 3-4.

provided ‘organic order where chaos of caste and creed ruled’.³⁶ Shradhanand, the leader of the Arya Samaj and a close associate of Savarkar, commented: ‘It must have been one of those Vaidik dawns indeed which inspired our Seers with new truths, that revealed to the author of ‘Hindutva’ this Mantra...this definition of Hindutva’.³⁷

After providing a distinction between Hindus and non-Hindus, which could easily be understood as such by a wider public, Savarkar went on to define Hindu sexuality. Sexuality for him was integrally tied up with the issue of nationalism and a nation’s history. Admittedly, Savarkar was not alone in trying to redefine sexuality through the lens of nationalism and vice versa. Many colonial critics invoked the issue of Indian male and female sexuality as a marker of India’s moral ability to be an independent nation.³⁸ In several colonial accounts, the characterization of the colonized race was similar in almost every respect to the so-called sexual degenerate.³⁹ Thanks to the popularity of social Darwinism, the contrast between masculinity and effeminacy were understood to reflect normalcy and abnormalcy, and chances for regeneration and degeneration, survival and extinction.⁴⁰ In much of colonial discourse, Indian men featured as ‘effete’ people devoid of masculine vigor and daring: the virtues necessary for building an independent nation. British officials and missionaries in India, owing to these conceptions, often projected themselves as the ‘manly’ protectors of helpless Indian women.⁴¹

To counter the allegations made by colonial critics, Indian political and religious

³⁶ Preface, Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, p. iv.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. vi, cited in Gyandendra Pandey, ‘Hindus and Others’, p. 2998-9.

³⁸ Rosalind O’ Hanlon, *Introduction to A Comparison between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the critique of gender relations in colonial India* (Oxford, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁹ George L. Mosse, ‘Nationalism and Respectability: Normal and Abnormal Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17 (2), Sexuality in History, April, 1982, pp. 221-246, p. 230.

⁴⁰ Mike Hawkins, ‘Social Darwinism and European Thought 1860 -1945’, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 61 (2), April, 2000, pp. 223-240, p. 237.

⁴¹ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 44.

leadership, across the ideological spectrum, were also obsessed with redefining sexuality and preventing degeneration. For instance, the revolutionary literature of the nineteenth century also advocated chastity amongst young recruits and argued that sexual ‘excess’ would compromise the prospects of a nationalist revolution.⁴² Another very important response to colonial discourse on sexuality and nationalism came from Gandhi who believed that over the centuries, a once rich and creative civilization had fallen easy prey to successive colonization because it had become corrupt and degenerate. He advocated sexual abstinence so that human ‘energy’ could be ‘conserved’ and ‘converted’ into political power for a non-violent struggle against the British.⁴³

Gandhi’s emphasis on non-violence met with bitter criticism from the proponents of Hindu nationalism (more or less exclusive). Hindu nationalists like Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya criticized him for apparently ‘wasting the energies’ of the nation by asking ‘able-bodied men to sit spinning like women’ instead of letting them fight for freedom with ‘manlier weapons’.⁴⁴ Instead, they advocated that the school curriculums be reinvigorated and Hindus be regenerated through martial training and moral education.⁴⁵ Savarkar traced his ideological lineage to such leaders, and their ideas influenced his description of male and female, Hindu and Muslim sexuality.⁴⁶

As mentioned earlier, after the 1920s Savarkar considered Muslims the principal enemy of the Hindu people, the ‘Hindu nation’, and the Hindu religion. Like Gandhi, Savarkar did not have a clear conception of a positive ideal of Hindu sexuality in and of itself.

⁴² Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi’s Political Discourse* (Sage Publications: New Delhi, 1989), p. 184.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.172-80.

⁴⁴ Madhu Kishwar, ‘Women and Gandhi’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20 (40), 5 October, pp. 1691-702 and 20 (41), 12 October, 1985, pp. 1753-8, p. 1691.

⁴⁵ Carey A. Watt, ‘Education for National Efficiency: Constructive Nationalism in North India, 1909-1916’, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 31 (2), May, 1997, pp. 339-74, pp. 342-8.

⁴⁶ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious*, p. 184.

As a result, Savarkar adopted a more reactionary approach. This approach entailed a careful construction of an image of the ‘enemy’ so that a Hindu self could be forged as an inverted mirror image of his adversary. And this sentiment was carefully clothed in a historical narrative. Savarkar took great pains to provide a description of Muslims. He spent fourteen chapters, out of a total of twenty, in his book on ‘Indian history’ entitled *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* describing the ‘essence’ of ‘Muslim identity’. He began by describing Muslims as invaders, looters and iconoclasts who were obsessed with destroying Hindu property and converting all Hindus to Islam. In his description of the earliest episodes of the ‘Muslim invasion’ of India he said:

[T]hese new Islamic enemies not only aspired to crush the Hindu political power and establish in its place Muslim sovereignty over the whole of India, but they also had seething in their brains another fierce religious ambition...of destroying... the Hindu religion which was the lifeblood of the nation.⁴⁷

Furthermore, he littered his book with provocative titles like ‘Peculiar Nature of the Muslim Atrocities’, ‘Tipu Sultan the Savage’, ‘Fanaticism of Akbar’, and ‘Massacres of Hindus’ that contain his argument in them. However, Savarkar did not stop at writing a provocative history of people who were Muslims. He essentialized Islam, the religion as a whole, to argue that it is Islam itself that encourages its believers to kill, loot, invade, and convert non-believers. This was to suggest that the destruction and violence carried out by Muslims should be understood as the traditional duty of all those believing in Islam and not as the actions of a few individuals.

True to the usual Muslim tradition, Tipu performed his duty as a Sultan announcing publicly in the very first session of his court (Durbar) that he would see to it that all Kafirs (non-believers) were made Muslim willy-nilly. He commanded all the Hindus in his state to embrace Islam.⁴⁸ (emphasis added)

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 170.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 224.

The next set of ideas on the ‘enemy’ conveyed in Savarkar’s writings were concerned with Muslim sexuality. He described them as sexually promiscuous, hyper-virile, rapists. Savarkar’s ideas dangerously approximated the stereotypical colonial notion of the ‘aggressive, rapist’ Muslim. The sentiment that Muslims were the ‘repellent others’ and Islam a ‘demonic faith’ was present from the earliest writings on Indian history by European writers.⁴⁹ A typical passage in Savarkar’s writing on the alleged ‘sexual immorality’ of the Muslims reads thus:

With shameless religious fanaticism, the highly aggressive Muslim of those times considered it their highly religious duty to carry away women of the enemy side, as if they were commonplace property, to ravish them, to pollute them, and to distribute them all and sundry, from the Sultan to the common soldier... almost every Muslim kept at least three or four such forcibly polluted women.⁵⁰

Once the image of the Muslim male was complete, he was able to describe what he thought was an ideal Hindu male. In contrast to the ‘rapist’ and ‘savage’ Muslim, Savarkar also constructed the image of ‘civilized hence milder and feebler’ Hindu males. He wrote:

Muslim women never feared retribution or punishments at the hands of any Hindu for their heinous crimes...Muslim women were sure that the victor Hindu chiefs, nor any of the common soldiers nor even any civilian would ever touch their hair.⁵¹

Savarkar described Hindus as being excessively virtuous – an excess bordering on perversion – which is responsible for the defeat and degeneration of the Hindu race and the Hindu nation. In one of his chapters entitled ‘Perverted Conception of Virtues’, Savarkar laid out this idea in the following words:

⁴⁹ Mushirul Hasan, ‘The Myth of Unity: Colonial and National Narratives’, in David Ludden (ed.), *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Delhi, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 187.

⁵⁰ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious*, p.176.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-5.

Far greater than the Muslim could ever attempt were the defeats inflicted on themselves by these morbid, virtuous Hindus! If a comparatively mild term is to be used for this infatuation, this mental imbalance of the Hindus, which caused disastrous losses for themselves, we have to call it a perverted sense of Hindu virtue.⁵²

Savarkar was cautious in his criticism of virtues. While he continued to speak of their relevance and desirability, he was quick to emphasize their relativity as well. This aspect is clear from his account of the ‘ungrateful Muslim kings’ like Mahmud of Ghori and Rohila Najibkhan who supposedly repaid the generosity of Hindu kings with treachery:

Having only learnt by rote the maxim [that] to give food to the hungry and water to the thirsty is a virtue, the Hindus went on giving milk to the vile poisonous cobras and vipers. Even while the Muslim demons were demolishing Hindu temples and breaking to pieces their holiest of idols like Somnath, they never wreaked vengeance upon those wicked Muslims, even when they had golden opportunities to do so, nor did they take out a single brick from the walls of the Mosques, because their religious teachers and priests preached the virtue of not inflicting pain on the offenders.⁵³

By describing the violence that was supposedly perpetrated by the Muslims against the Hindu community, the Hindu nation and the Hindu religion – a provocative repertoire of images was formulated. If the Muslim male foes were iconoclastic and violent, Hindu men would have to be respectful of all religious traditions and inherently peace loving and friendly.

Female sexuality was as important to the nationalist project as masculinity. Colonial rule, as mentioned earlier, had placed gendered norms in the heart of the public sphere as a justification of their domination of the subcontinent and a proof of their racial superiority. In the pursuit of claiming their place in the Empire, British suffragettes and the missionaries

⁵² Ibid., p. 167.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 168-9.

further emphasized the predicament of the ‘brown woman’.⁵⁴ In response to this criticism, in as early as the nineteenth century religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayanand Saraswati purported to be the champions of the ‘women’s cause’.⁵⁵ In the twentieth century, the new nationalist world-view imagined the family as a contrast to and a critique of alien rule. The colonized Hindu male was understood as being forcefully subjected and dispossessed by alien rule, whilst the Hindu female was projected as having willingly surrendered to her husband’s authority within the home.⁵⁶

A similar conception of voluntary surrender by Hindu women, borne out of devotion, (non-sexual) love and sacrifice featured strongly in the Gandhian discourse as well.⁵⁷ Muslim women too were projected, by nationalist Muslim leaders, as custodians of tradition and custom responsible for the preservation of the sanctity of their own home and their menfolk.⁵⁸ There was a striking similarity between the discourses on Hindu and Muslim women in much nationalist and even colonial politics. In the writings of the founding ideologues of the RSS, however, Hindu women were placed in sharp contrast to Muslim women.

In their texts, the chaste Hindu woman was pitched against an essentially immoral, sexually promiscuous Muslim woman. These ideas were fuelled by the census data which these Hindu nationalist readers read as proof of Muslim women’s hyper-fertility and by implication, hyper-sexuality. Savarkar, for instance, described Muslim women as being

⁵⁴ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 7.

⁵⁵ Lata Mani, ‘Contentious Traditions: The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India’, in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989) and Tanika Sarkar, ‘The Hindu Wife and the Hindu Nation: Domesticity and Nationalism in 19th century Bengal’, in *Studies in History*, 8 (2), 1992, pp. 213-35.

⁵⁶ Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation. Community*, p. 198.

⁵⁷ Madhu Kishwar, ‘Women and Gandhi’, p. 1691.

⁵⁸ Papiya Ghosh, ‘The Virile and the Chaste’, p. 80 and Faisal F. Devji, ‘Gender and the politics of space: The Movement for women’s reform in Muslim India, 1857-1900’, in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 14 (1), 1991, pp. 141-153, p. 151.

actively involved in instigating all the ‘immoral’ acts that were carried out by their male counterparts. Savarkar wrote:

No Muslim woman whether a Begum or a beggar, ever protested against the atrocities committed by their male compatriots; on the contrary they encouraged them to do so and honoured them for it. Not only in the troubled times of war but even in the intervening periods of peace ...they enticed and carried away young Hindu girls locked them up in their houses, or converted them...in Masjids and Mosques. Muslim women all over India considered it their holy duty to do so.⁵⁹

By writing thus, Savarkar contrasted the inherently ‘innocent’ Hindu women with the ‘immoral’ Muslim women who assisted their men in instigating sexual and other forms of violence against Hindu women; all as a result of their faith. He assumed both that Islam prescribes such behaviour and that, if it did, Muslim men and women, whatever their sectarian belief or class allegiance, completely submitted themselves to its dictates.

Having meticulously laid down the groundwork for understanding the ‘barbaric other community’, the description of the ideal ‘civilized Hindu woman’ was easy. Most Hindu women, according to him, have been and should aspire to be chaste and brave nationalists who prefer death to rape (or conversion) by ‘Muslim fanatics’. This facet of Savarkar’s writing becomes clear in his account of Akbar’s attack on the kingdom of Gondwana in medieval India where he described:

...The dowager Queen Durgawati, [who] decided not to surrender but to fight the well-equipped imperial army of Akbar, and offered such a tough resistance that for a while the invaders were astounded. She bravely defended the cause of Hinduism till she was overwhelmed by the vastly superior numbers of the Muslim emperor...Knowing fully well from hundreds of such cases how these Muslim wolves ill-treated and molested the royal Hindu ladies who fell captives in their hands, Rani Durgawati offered her body, along with many other ladies of the court, to the sacred fire of the battle. She left strict orders to her attendant to burn her dead body and not to let the Muslim infidels touch it.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious*, pp. 177-8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

Two complementary ideas are contained in these lines. Firstly, there is the image of an aggressive, brave, Hindu nationalist woman who would not surrender to the enemy no matter what the odds. Secondly, there is the image of a chaste Hindu woman for whom her sexual purity is more important than life itself. There is also an implicit prescription here: Savarkar relays to the (upper caste Hindu male) reader that women are symbols of honour of the family, the community and the nation and that any violation of their bodies must be construed as an injury to male pride. And that women, if ever faced by such a predicament like the Queen Durgawati, must choose death rather than let the masculine actors of the 'other' community defile them or worse, convert them. Elsewhere, Savarkar made the connection between the female body and the honour of the Hindu race and religion more explicit. In his story about the daughter of a Hindu Rajput king, he lamented that the Hindu woman chose to marry the Muslim king who attacked her kingdom. He wished that she had committed suicide instead and preserved Hindu honour. Savarkar wrote:

Had she swallowed fire like some [other Hindu queens and princesses]...and followed the path of martyrdom for the sake of religion, her life and her family tradition would both have been forever glorified!⁶¹

This description completed the image of the enemy and the self: the Muslim male was described as a violent iconoclast, a blood-thirsty, sexually promiscuous, rapist and the Muslim female was shown as sexually perverse, aggressive and as being complicit in the violence perpetrated by her male counterpart. If the enemy was given to sexual promiscuity and raping women, then the Hindu male is peace loving, sexually abstinent, monogamous and respectful to women. Likewise, if the female actors of the enemy community are immoral, aggressive and impure, the Hindu female is chaste, devoted to religious duty, passive, caring and a loving

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 327.

mother, daughter and wife. This brings us to the second element of Hindu nationalist ideology that contributed to the justification of sexual violence against Muslim women.

1.3 Masculinized Humiliation: Female Bodies and Male Violations

This element of Hindu nationalist ideology is concerned with establishing how the imagined destruction caused by Muslims was directed chiefly at the bodies of Hindu women and led to the extreme humiliation of the Hindu male. This facet of Hindu nationalist thought has to be understood in the context of existing patriarchal and nationalist world-views where women were, and continue to be, perceived as symbols of honour, markers of cultural boundaries, property, and biological reproducers, of the family, the community and the nation.⁶²

In most of his writings, Savarkar expressed his worry about the forced conversions and abductions of Hindu women by fanatical, libidinous, rapist Muslims. He was concerned not with women's experience of violation but the decrease in the number of women capable of reproducing Hindu progeny. Lamenting the forced abductions of Hindu women, he said:

Our woman-world... suffered such a tremendous numerical loss, which means their future progeny [has] been lost permanently to Hinduism... Without an increase in their womenfolk the Muslim population would have dwindled into a negligible minority.⁶³

These lines reveal that Savarkar believed that a Hindu woman's normative role, as part of the community, is to produce children from a Hindu man. According to him, the tradition and religion of the impregnating male is what determines the tradition, the religion and national allegiance of the offspring. Admittedly, in lamenting the loss of Hindu wombs, Savarkar was echoing the concerns of several nationalist leaders of his time who were

⁶² Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997).

⁶³ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs*, p. 180.

paranoid about an alleged reduction in the Hindu population.

This paranoia stemmed in part from Census information. According to the 1921 Census, for example, ‘both relatively and absolutely Hindus have lost...Hindus have decreased during the last decade by 347 per 10,000, or just under 3.5 per cent’.⁶⁴ The 1911 Census for the United Provinces also suggested that Muslims were proliferating fast because they were ‘more fertile than Hindus’⁶⁵ and that the Hindu decline was partly due to the restrictions on widow-remarriage amongst Hindus.⁶⁶ Consequently, the desire for genuine reform of women’s lives got deeply entangled with the agenda of trying to increase the population of Hindus.⁶⁷ That Savarkar shared these concerns is evident from his Presidential address at the twentieth session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha in Nagpur in 1938 where he described why the Muslim population was allegedly ‘growing in every successive census report’.

What is to be especially noted...is the fact that some of our Hindu superstitions and suicidal social customs like the untouchability, the ban...on widow remarriages, etc...offer them a fertile field for Moslem proselytization and conversion.⁶⁸

With the sole intention of ensuring the increase in the Hindu population, Savarkar combined three different ideas. First, the end of untouchability against lower caste Hindus would prevent them from being seduced by Islam and Christianity and keep them in the

⁶⁴ Census report of 1921, quoted in Charu Gupta, ‘Censuses, Communalism, Gender and Identity: A Historical Perspective’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 25, 2004, pp. 4302-4, p. 4303.

⁶⁵ Census report of 1911 for UP, quoted in Ibid.

⁶⁶ Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, p. 301.

⁶⁷ From the nineteenth century, the control over a Hindu widow’s sexuality had become crucial for Hindu patriarchy. However, concern became a political issue only in the twentieth century. See Lucy Carroll, ‘Law, Custom and Statutory Social Reform: The Hindu widows’ Remarriage Act of 1856’, in Jayasankar Krishnamurthy (ed.), *Women in Colonial India. Essays on Survival, Work and the State* (Delhi, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Rosalind O’Hanlon, ‘Issues of Widowhood: Gender and Resistance in Colonial Western India’, in Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash (eds.), *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday social relations in South Asian* (Delhi & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) for a discussion on the regional variations.

⁶⁸ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Hindu Sangathan. Its Ideology and Immediate Programme - A Collection of his three Presidential Speeches at Karnavati, Nagpur and Calcutta* (Bombay: N.V. Damle, 1940), p. 61.

Hindu fold. Second, by popularizing *shuddhi* [ritual purification] Muslim and Christian converts could be reconverted into Hindus and subsequently add to Hindu numbers. Third, by encouraging widow remarriage many more Hindu wombs could be put to the task of reproducing Hindu progeny. The use of the words ‘suicidal’ in contrast to ‘fertile’ is particularly notable for it captures Savarkar’s obsession with declining Hindu numbers and the proliferation of the Muslim population. Here it is also important to note that the primary task Savarkar, like other nationalists, could envisage for women was that of reproduction. Given that reproduction was at the heart of any conception of Hindu female sexuality it follows logically that any deviance on part of the woman from the norms laid down for her would be construed as a violation of the Hindu male right.

Moreover, the body of a Hindu female was perceived as a marker of cultural and traditional boundaries in that the access to Hindu women was seen as restricted to Hindu men. The attempt was to rigidly mark boundaries between different communities as personified by the bodies of women. It further denoted the ‘otherness’ of Muslims. Any break from this tradition could then be construed as a violation of the rights of Hindu men and as a violation of their patriarchal right to control, use and enjoy their property, the Hindu female.

The alleged continued appropriation by Muslims of the symbols of honour, biological reproducers and property of Hindu men was seen as a threat to Hindu manhood and sometimes as a sign of their weakness and impotence. Hindu propagandists often lamented that if only they could have controlled/protected Hindu women’s bodies, then Muslims would not have appropriated the property of Hindu men and brought dishonour upon the Hindu community and the nation. Vernacular newspapers carried innumerable reports on abductions and their implication for Hindu masculinity throughout the 1920s, 30s and 40s. They

projected these alleged abductions and conversion of Hindu women by Muslims as a 'challenge to Hindu manhood'.⁶⁹

The occupation of a Hindu male's sexual and reproductive property by the masculine actors of the Muslim community seemed to threaten the masculine pride of Hindu men. For the RSS ideologues however, this situation did not merely present a 'challenge' to Hindu men today. The persistence of these alleged abductions and conversions was actually a sign of historic Hindu male weakness because they had failed to protect/control Hindu women. And this weakness, equated with impotence, was responsible for the degeneration of the Hindu race and the Hindu nation leaving it susceptible to successive colonization first by the Muslims and then by the British. This sentiment led Hedgewar to say that the forceful appropriation of Hindu women by Muslims had violated and weakened Hindu men. He lamented:

If I start describing the atrocities committed against Hindus and the rapes perpetrated against our daughters and daughters-in-law to forcefully convert them to Islam, then I will not be able to control my emotions. The Christians also regularly perpetrate similar kinds of violence against us... [Such] innumerable difficulties have befallen us. Even then we continue to remain weak. *We can neither protect our women, nor save our daughters from being humiliated.* [Here *humiliation* refers to sexual violation because in the original text Hedgewar has used the term 'laj' which, in India mostly refers to sexual purity] They have come to believe that Hindu wives-daughters are *their* property. It is because of *our weakness* that they don't feel the need to be scared of us...From now on we shall not commit this sin. *It is because of this sin that our body parts have been cut....*⁷⁰ (emphasis added)

Here too women are understood as indisputable property and symbols of honour of the masculine members of the community. What is even more interesting here is that the bodily violation of a woman is perceived as being tantamount to a bodily violation of the men. The

⁶⁹ Papiya Ghosh, 'The Virile and the Chaste', pp. 85-6.

⁷⁰ Keshav B. Hedgewar, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh - *Tatva Aur Vyavhar* (Lucknow: Lokhit Prakashan, 1972), pp. 9-12.

alleged violence perpetrated against women is displaced from being a woman's experience to a man's. The woman's body becomes a site of desecration (or veneration) any attack against which is understood as the violation of her menfolk, her family, the nation and the community. Moreover violence against women is also interpreted as an undisputed sign of weakness (used as a synonym for impotence) of her menfolk. Taken further, this would mean that the protection/control of women is mandatory to protect male pride, save them humiliation and to prove their masculine prowess. Any call for the protection of women would then be underpinned by the desire to prove the potency of the humiliated Hindu male.

In both the texts and the speeches, the narrative has been carefully constructed to relay to the reader the ferocity of the enemy, especially the Muslims and to inform the reader about the forms and scale of violence they have allegedly perpetrated and what implications it has for the Hindu community.

The rhetorical, repetitive style and loose chronological order of their 'historical' accounts are meant to leave the reader not just with a version of history or anti-Muslim messages – but actually with a repertoire of memories. These repetitions are intended to make these 'memories' personal– as though they were the memories of the reader *himself*. This leads us to the third element of Hindu nationalist thought.

1.4 Threat of Further Masculinized Humiliation

Hindutva ideologues wished to project the 'Muslim threat' as a contemporary reality rather than as past history. The idea that the threat of Muslim aggression is very much a part of current affairs rather than 'history', stemmed primarily from two worries: first, the presence of a small and predominantly poor, yet significant, Muslim population within India;

and second, the creation of Pakistan as a separate Islamic State with a large Muslim population. According to the ideologues, the former represented an internal and the latter an external threat to the future of Hindus and their Hindu nation.

As far as the internal situation was concerned, the mere presence of a negligible Muslim population in India, according to Hindu nationalists, was enough to pose a serious danger to their Hindu India. In order to make this threat seem significant enough for all Hindus in India to be seriously concerned, the ideologues used a brilliant tactic – they equated the presence of Muslims with a disease and an infection present in the body of the nation. Consider the following lines penned by Golwalkar written in this context:

If the blood-stream in the body is infected with germs, boils will erupt all over the body. If you treat and bandage them at one spot it will appear at another place. The basic remedy would be to purify the blood-stream itself. So also is the case with the body-politic of society.⁷¹

The use of the ‘diseased body’ metaphor assumes great significance because it makes the threat of the Muslims seem a lot more invasive, intimate, and dangerous. The employment of a metaphor borrowed from Western medicine is striking.⁷² Despite their anti-western pronouncements, these neo-traditionalist ideologues and many nationalist leaders were strongly influenced by western knowledge. Moreover, the use of this metaphor in the context of Hindutva ideology has to be understood as strategic and not an incidental occurrence. For, the replacement of an abstract notion of ‘threat’ with a more concrete and common idea of disease would make it easier for the Hindu reader to understand what *he* is up against.

⁷¹ Madhav S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 230.

⁷² The germ theory of disease is central to western medicine not to the more indigenous traditions of Ayurveda, which also has no surgical knowledge. In Ayurveda homeostatic concept lies behind a humoural physiology and pathology based on the three body fluids of air, bile and phlegm. See Ralph Croizier, ‘Medicine, Modernization, and Cultural Crisis in China and India’, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 12 (3), July, 1970, pp. 275-291, pp. 278-9.

The persuasive power of the body metaphor assumes even more significance when the ideologues repeatedly drew parallels between the body of the nation and the body of a mother. In his 1905 pamphlet, *Vande Mataram*, Savarkar explained his conception of the nation by saying:

Brothers, we are, children of Mother Bharat [Mother India]. Our memorable ancestors were the sons of Mother Bharat The children to be born in this land in the future would be Mother Bharat's sucklings, nestling in her arms... Does not Mother strike you as the granary of all grace and beauty...To this land made fertile by these sacred rivers we bow, O Mother...Like the swelling breasts of Parvati, the mangoes of India are. Like the sweet un-kissed lips of the heavenly damsels, the grapes are. And the grape-vines bend like loving mother bending to suckle her baby.⁷³

Like many other writers of his time, Savarkar conceived India as a 'motherland' that took the form of a woman's body - one that was young, fertile, graceful, beautiful, compassionate, and sensual.⁷⁴ 'Motherland' was imagined as a woman who gives life to brave men and provides nourishment on the one hand, and is pleasing to heterosexual male senses with its subtle sensuality on the other. Then, the presence of an infection in this graceful body of the mother, could lead to the loss of her beauty and even her life. The fear and pain associated with the death of one's mother could be transferred on to the mother nation. Moreover, it is also possible that the mother could transfer the infection to her male children through her milk leaving behind a diseased child incapable of defense in the face of aggression. This would only lead to more humiliation. Thus, this nexus between a feminized nation and a bodily disease served to make the Muslim presence in the 'body-politic' of India instantly more repulsive and provocative.

⁷³ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Vande Mataram* (Madras: Spectra, [1905] 1983), pp. 1-4.

⁷⁴ Like much of gender-national/colonial politics, Mother India belonged within a long tradition of imperialist propaganda that cynically exploited the condition of women against the political demands of nationalists in India. See Mrinalini Sinha, 'Refashioning Mother India: Feminism and Nationalism in Late-Colonial India', in *Feminist Studies*, 26 (3), Points of Departure: India and the South Asian Diaspora, Autumn, 2000, pp. 623-644, p. 627.

This strategy depended on a displacement of ‘Fatherland’ with ‘Motherland’ in describing Hindu nation in contemporary times. In *Hindutva*, Savarkar defined a Hindu as ‘a person who regards the land of Bharatvarsha from the Indus to the Seas as his Fatherland (*pitribhumi*), as well as his Holyland (*punyabhumi*) – that is the cradle of his religion’. Here, the ‘Fatherland’ appeared, as something to which one owes allegiance, in sharp contrast to the feminine ‘Motherland’ that had to be protected. In other words, the historic, unconquered, powerful nation assumed the body of a man as *pitribhumi*, while the colonized, weak, helpless Hindu nation was imagined as the body of a woman and became *matrubhumi*. These ideologues propagated this idea not only in their writings and speeches but also introduced it in the prayers RSS recruits have been singing in their day-class or shakhas for several decades. One such prayer reads thus:

Affectionate Motherland, I eternally bow to you/ O Land of Hindus, you have reared me in comfort/O Sacred Land, the Great Creator of Good, may this body of mine be dedicated to you/ I again and again bow before You/ O God Almighty, we the integral part of the Hindu Rashtra salute you in reverence/For Your cause have we girded up our loins/Give us Your Blessings for its accomplishment.⁷⁵

Several complementary tasks were successfully accomplished through this rhetorical usage of ‘Motherland’. Firstly, this usage reinforced patriarchal notions that consider men powerful and heroic, and women weak and in need of male protection. Secondly, the conflation of Motherland with the body of a Hindu woman made it possible to accuse Muslim men of perpetrating sexual violence. Thirdly, through the image of a vulnerable, helpless woman these ideologues could advocate the inculcation of a martial spirit mandatory for the preservation and redemption of masculine pride. Lastly, they could argue that the presence of a supposedly aggressive, and therefore masculine, Islamic State of Pakistan, which could

⁷⁵ Quoted in Shamsul Islam, *The Freedom Struggle and The RSS: A Story of Betrayal* (New Delhi: Joshi-Adhikari Institute of Social Studies, 2000), p. 13.

further ravage the vulnerable Hindu motherland should be a matter of concern for Hindu men. The threat of further masculine humiliation looms large over the heads of Hindu men.

Golwalkar often reminded the readers that the existence of Pakistan as a separate state was a cause for much humiliation for Hindu men. It was humiliating because the nation, or the body of the mother, had been cut into pieces and her sons had been unable to prevent it. He expounded:

There are some who tell us, “Bygones are bygones. What is the use of raking up old dead issues? After all, Partition is now a settled fact,” How is this ever possible? How can a son forget and sit idle when the sight of his mutilated mother stares him in the face every day? Forget? No true son can ever forget or rest till she becomes once again her complete whole....
The tearing away of the limbs of our mother and the gory blood-bath of millions and millions of our kith and kin is the price that we have paid for that ignoble attitude.⁷⁶

The invocation of an image of a wounded, mutilated mother was intended again to incite feelings of personalized humiliation and extreme hatred against Muslims living in India and in Pakistan. No matter how detailed one may make the description of territorial division, it could not exercise the same psychological influence on the minds of the reader as the description of a mutilated body, and that too of one’s mother. Also, the call here was only to ‘sons’ of the motherland suggesting firstly, that protection of territorial borders is a male reserve and secondly, that failure to protect the mother/nation is tantamount to further male humiliation and another visible sign of their weakness.

Golwalkar also conveyed the idea that the partition has not settled the matter permanently. Pakistan was projected as a potential future threat to the masculine pride of Hindus because of Pakistan’s alleged expansionist designs. Golwalkar exclaimed that, the ‘Muslim menace has increased a hundredfold by the creation of Pakistan which has become a

⁷⁶ Madhav S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 93.

springboard for all their future aggressive designs on our country'.⁷⁷ The two Indo-Pakistan wars, first in 1965 and then in 1971 fuelled these rumours even further. A constant sense of emergency and threat was relayed, necessitating the protection/control of women/Mother nation/India so that the honour of Hindu men would not be threatened.

This brings me to the last part of this chapter where all the three elements of Hindu nationalist ideology discussed so far converge to justify, legitimize and even advocate the use of sexual violence. The careful construction of images of Hindus and their Muslim 'enemy', the meticulously written 'history' of Hindu male humiliation and the possibilities of further injury to Hindu masculine pride all gave rise to an ideological justification of sexual violence against Muslim women.

1.5 Three Elements of Hindu Nationalist Ideology and Justification of Sexual Violence

RSS ideologues believed that if Hindus were to become a powerful race and create the Hindu nation of their dreams they needed to avenge past crimes, destroy and humiliate the Muslim community and leave Muslims incapable of any future acts of aggression.

Retribution for the crimes allegedly committed by Muslims in the past, according to both Savarkar and Golwalkar, would be possible only if Hindus committed the same crimes against the Muslims. For this, the detailed description of the forms of violence perpetrated by the Muslims against Hindus came in useful. Just as Muslims had done in the past, Hindus should desecrate mosques and shrines, loot and destroy their property and humiliate Muslim women. Savarkar argued that it is important to pay back the Muslims in the same coin:

In order to reward the meritorious services of the choicest [Hindu] warriors in this Hindu-Muslim war at least as many young and beautiful Muslim girls

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 178.

should be captured, converted to Hinduism and presented to them.... Thereafter, the thousands of Muslim rascals and scoundrels [should be treated] with equal ferocity and with the harshest punishment.⁷⁸

Though these ideologues were quite explicit in rendering legitimacy to the use of violence against women they were, nevertheless, mindful about the implications of what they were advocating. In order to counter any ethical constraint a Hindu man may feel, they provided an antidote. They argued that *ahimsa* [non-violence], kindness, chivalry even towards the enemy women, protection of an abjectly capitulating enemy and religious tolerance were all virtues no doubt, but their relativity should be borne in mind. Savarkar stated:

[I]t is blind and slovenly – even impotent – adoption of all these very virtue irrespective of any consideration given to the propriety of time, place or persons, that so horribly vanquished the Hindus in the millennial Hindu-Muslim war on the religious front. For every virtuous act done without the least regard to the propriety of the persons concerned – without the least thought whether the other person concerned deserves such noble treatment or not – becomes a glaring vice most harmful to the true religion.⁷⁹

According to him, the decision about which virtues to adopt should be based upon the nature of the enemy. Since these ideologues left no doubt about the nature of the Muslim enemy, the readers could then be encouraged to think that although the use of sexual violence is not, in general, virtuous, in the case of Muslims it would be justifiable. As if to break the last shackles of ethical doubt, the ideologues employed religious imagery borrowed from the mythological epic the *Ramayana* to instil this idea of the relativity of virtues into the minds of the reader. Describing the mythic incident of the kidnapping of the Hindu queen Sita, wife of Ram, by the demon king Ravana, Golwalkar declared:

Sri Rama was aware of his ultimate duty of establishing the rule of righteousness by destroying the wicked. The slaying of an innocent woman is

⁷⁸ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs*, p. 245.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.189.

sinful but the same principle cannot be applied to a demon. The technique of fighting also varies according to the nature of the enemy. This is the right understanding of [warrior] dharma and Sri Rama followed it. To abduct and rape the womenfolk of a violent enemy is not irreligious.⁸⁰

By invoking the episodes of the *Ramayana*, a text revered by most believing (caste) Hindus at least in northern India, Savarkar and Golwalkar provided the ultimate moral sanction to the use of rape as a justifiable tool in the struggle between Hindus and Muslims. Sexual violence, whether against Hindu or Muslim women, was understood and justified as one of the ways in which men could settle their differences. Although all the actions were supposed to be performed on the bodies of women, their meanings were applicable for men. The struggle for the creation of the Hindu nation by destroying the Muslim ‘enemy’ was understood mainly as a male affair – a contest between them and for them.

Apart from avenging past sexual crimes of the Muslims, these ideologues believed that pre-emptive rape against Muslim women would deter the Muslims from attacking Hindu women in the future. Savarkar described:

[I]n the event of a Hindu victory our molestation and detestable lot shall be avenged on the Muslim women. Once they are haunted with this dreadful apprehension that the Muslim women too, stand in the same predicament in the case the Hindus win, the future Muslim conquerors will never dare to think of such molestation of Hindu women.⁸¹

Similarly during a presidential address that Savarkar delivered at the 20th Session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha held at Nagpur in 1938, he thundered:

If a Hindu girl is molested in any part of the land by a Moslem gunda such a condign punishment will promptly be inflicted on him as to render all Moslem gundas tremble to touch any other Hindu girl as in the case of molesting an English girl.⁸²

This message to the reader was clearly intended to encourage pre-emptive and

⁸⁰ Madhav S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 286.

⁸¹ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs*, p. 179.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

retributive sexual violence against Muslim women. Through such pre-emption, as per these ideologues, Muslims could be cautioned against attacking Hindu women and would fear Hindu men just as they fear English men.

This justification of rape is predicated on the idea of women as property, symbols of honour, carriers of history and biological reproducers. As described earlier, by raping Hindu women, Muslims had stripped Hindu men of their honour. By raping Muslim women, Hindu men would be able to humiliate the entire Muslim community, just as the Muslims had supposedly done to Hindus in the past.

Sexual violation of the Muslim female's body was also seen by these ideologues as a way to redeem the Hindus' lost masculine pride. The history of Hindu masculine humiliation narrated to the reader in the texts paved the way for this prescription. From as early as the 1930s, Savarkar and Hedgewar started advocating militarizing Hindudom and asking Hindu men to join body-building gymnasiums and take training in the use of arms and swords to cultivate a martial spirit. They firmly believed, that 'he wins half the war who takes the offensive – who is aggressive.'⁸³ According to them, the Gandhian practice of non-violence was leading to the 'emasculatation of the Hindu community' and making it a community that would be incapable of creating a powerful, independent Hindu nation.⁸⁴ Here Savarkar equated non-violence with weakness and impotence and, violence with power and male honour. In the Hindu nationalist ideology violence in general and sexual violence against women in particular was seen as a way to humiliate or redeem the pride of men.

The rape and slaughter of Muslim women, to these ideologues, may also have seemed like an effective way to reduce the 'threat' Muslims living in India supposedly pose to the

⁸³ Savarkar (not dated) quoted in Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism*, p. 103.

⁸⁴ Tapan Basu *et al*, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*, p. 23.

future of the Hindu people and the Hindu nation. By targeting the reproductive organs of Muslim women, a Hindu nationalist male could ensure that the women are unable to reproduce Muslim progeny. The anxiety over the supposedly ever-increasing Muslim population and the decreasing Hindu numbers could be assuaged by the occupation of the Muslim womb. Raping Muslim women could then also lead to their impregnation by the seed of the ‘superior and pure Hindu race’ and eventually increase the Hindu population.⁸⁵ There would be a gradual drop in the number of Muslims that would, by implication, also mean a slow reduction in the infection in the body of the mother nation.

In terms of the external threat posed by Pakistan, a simple increase in the number of Hindus would not be enough to ensure the safety of Hindus, according to Golwalkar. He contended:

[R]eal national regeneration should start with the moulding of ‘man’, by instilling in him the strength to overcome human frailties and to stand up as a shining symbol of Hindu manhood...We should unfailingly keep this vision, this real essence of our glorious nationhood, before our eyes so that we can again rise to our original pedestal of the world preceptor.⁸⁶

Once Hindu men embody the ‘virtues’ propagated by the RSS, they would dedicate themselves to restoring the glory of the Hindu nation. Since the glory is possible by ridding the nation of its ‘Muslim problem’, sexual violence would become one of the ways to accomplish the task. Indian and Pakistani Muslims would no more threaten Hindus and the mother nation would be restored to its lost glory.

⁸⁵ Nothing substantial is said in any of the texts about the children born of such a union.

⁸⁶ Madhav S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 48.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar carefully constructed a historical narrative about the ferocity of the masculine and feminine actors of the enemy community, the humiliation of the Hindu male, and the ever-present Muslim threat, which contributed to a justification of sexual violence against Muslim women. In providing this ideological justification, these founding ideologues also created a powerful language in which the need for the cultivation of an aggressive Hindu male sexuality could be articulated. Pre-emptive and retaliatory sexual violence against Muslim women could then serve to assert Hindu power and virility. Simultaneously, the ultimate test of this rejuvenated Hindu masculinity would be the ability of Hindu men to avenge past crimes. Since the distinction between past and present, history and future was so creatively blurred in these texts, the insertion of an alternative moral code for current application was also made possible. Under this new moral code sexual violence against one's perceived enemy was a justifiable and even commendable act.

Although insensitivity and injustice towards women is implicitly condoned by many political worldviews, rarely is the sexual violation of women overtly rationalized. Hindutva ideology, however, since its formulation, has had an explicit justification of sexual violence against 'enemy' women at its very core.

CHAPTER II: THE 1969 RIOT IN AHMEDABAD

Introduction

The 1969 riot started on 18 September and continued until 30 September. Although Ahmedabad was the epicentre of the riot, violence spread to the districts of Baroda, Kheda, Mehsana, Anand, Gandhinagar, Banaskantha, and Sabarkantha. By the time violence was brought to a halt at least 660 people had been killed, 1074 grievously injured, over 48,000 rendered homeless, and property worth 42 million rupees destroyed in Ahmedabad alone. Muslims were the overwhelming majority of the victims of this riot. 430 of those slain and 592 of those injured were Muslims and 32 million rupees worth of property that was looted, destroyed and burnt belonged to them as well.¹

According to Ghanshyam Shah neighbourhoods across eastern Ahmedabad such as Khokhra-Mehmadavad, Amraiwadi, Raipur, Bapunagar, Chamanpura and New Mental Health Colony were the sites of unspeakable sexual violence against Muslim women during the riot. Here, he reports, Muslim women were raped, stripped, paraded naked on roads in front of their families and children, their breasts were cut and their sexual organs mutilated and torn.² During fieldwork, I met with several survivors of 1969 riot who recounted their own experiences of sexual violence and that of their family members and neighbours.³ For instance, Amina Bano suffered verbal sexual violence during the riot and barely escaped gang

¹ Commission of Inquiry, Mr. Justice P. Jaganmohan Reddy, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad and other places in Gujarat on and after 18th September 1969*, Report and Appendices (Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1970), pp. 179-82.

² Ghanshyam Shah, 'The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad', p. 190.

³ Interviews with A. Bano at her residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 29/11/07; R. Bano at her residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 29/11/07 and 30/11/07; F. Iqbal (from Bapunagar) and S. Khurshid (from Chamanpur), at a Muslim women's meeting near Lal Darwaza, Ahmedabad, 28/10/07; Q. Amin (from Chamanpur) at her residence in Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad, 12/12/07.

rape. F. Iqbal, a resident of Bapunagar, narrated the experience of her maternal aunt who was gang raped in the courtyard of her own house during the riot. The extent of destruction and violence during the 1969 riot was unprecedented in the post-Partition history of India.

Owing to the scale of this riot, the Indian State appointed an official Commission of Inquiry (hereafter CoI) to investigate the riot. With Supreme Court Justice P. Jaganmohan Reddy as its chairperson, the CoI included two judges from the Gujarat High Court, Justice Nusserwanji K. Vakil and Justice Akbar Sarela. The CoI published its final report in 1970. In this report, the CoI published not only its findings and recommendations, but also reproduced Hindu nationalist propaganda materials, affidavits filed by various political parties and social activists, transcripts of the speeches made by politicians before the violence began, newspaper reports and police records. These documents constitute an important source for the study of the riot.

It is important to mention at the outset that in its final report, the CoI did not record a single incidence of sexual violence that took place during the riot. This failure was born out of the limited purview of the CoI. Its aim was to investigate the role played by the State administration in the riots and to determine whether or not it took adequate measures to prevent and quell the violence.⁴ What the CoI was not aiming to investigate were differences in the forms of violence perpetrated against men and women. Consequently, CoI typically gathered statistics under the headings, 'properties damaged', 'religious places damaged', 'persons injured', 'persons killed' and 'persons rendered homeless'.⁵ The CoI did not attempt to disaggregate the information on the basis of gender (or for that matter age, caste, occupation or class). In the context of communal riot, it was assumed, religious identity alone

⁴ Commission of Inquiry, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-181.

qualified as a category for analysis. Having said that, it is also important to bear in mind that in the 1960s and 1970s hardly any official documents were sensitive to issues of gender.

The problem of evidence is particularly acute in the case of the 1969 riot because few women's organizations were engaged in grass-root level community work at the time, which means that reports of non-governmental organizations are unavailable for consultation and corroboration.⁶ Jyoti Sangh, by far the most prominent women's organization working in Ahmedabad, however, as mentioned earlier, does not have any records on the incidence of sexual violence during the riot. In fact, the organization does not have any record on the rate of rapes in the city before 1981. Counsellors at Jyoti Sangh informed me that due to the 'dishonour and shame' associated with sexual violence, they have historically recorded such incidents under the category of 'kidnapping and abduction' or 'domestic violence'.⁷ Although the organization received 10 complaints of 'kidnapping and abduction' and 212 complaints of 'domestic violence' during 1969, it is impossible to ascertain how many of these were actually riot-related cases of sexual violence against Muslim women.⁸ Owing to this lack of numerical statistics on the scale of sexual violence, therefore, this chapter draws on testimonies of survivors to piece together information on the nature of such violence that took place during the riot.

The aim of this chapter is to examine whether the incidence of sexual violence during the 1969 riot can be understood in terms of Hindu nationalist ideology alone. In order to do so, this chapter has been divided into five sections. The first section focuses on the socio-economic and political developments that took place between 1960 and 1970 that paved way

⁶ M. Mansuri, a veteran women's rights activist, stated that although she was involved in relief work in the aftermath of the 1969 riot she did not keep any records of her work. Interview at Gujarat Mahila Sewa Trust office, Ahmedabad, 4/11/07.

⁷ Interview with T. Shah and D. Sethi at Jyoti Sangh, Ahmedabad, 2/10/06.

⁸ Source: Annual Records of Jyoti Sangh (1937-2005), Jyoti Sangh Archives, Ahmedabad.

for the rise of Hindu nationalism in Ahmedabad. The second section examines the events that took place in the immediate run-up to the riot that served to give Hindutva ideology widespread circulation and legitimacy. The third section analyses the events that acted as catalysts to the eruption of communal rioting in September 1969. It investigates how Hindu nationalist organizations provided ideological instigation for sexual violence and organizational leadership to the rioters. The fourth section examines how the patriarchal idea that normalizes sexual violence as ‘sex’ also motivated the rioters to inflict sexual violence. The final section of this chapter explores the incidence of such violence at the neighbourhood level.

2.1 Rise of Hindu Nationalism: 1960 - 1970

Sprawled on either side of the river Sabarmati, Ahmedabad was home to over 2 million people in 1961. In the decade that followed the river came to mark a divide between the affluent section of Ahmedabadi population, living west of the river, and the lower income groups and industrial labourers, living east of the river. Due to this disparity, the nature of Hindu nationalist mobilization in these regions differed significantly as well. Accordingly, this section explores the rise of Hindu nationalism in each of these areas in turn.

Eastern Ahmedabad

Eastern Ahmedabad consists of the historic walled city located on the riverbank and the industrial labour region that is spread along its periphery. In eastern Ahmedabad the rise of Hindu nationalism has to be seen in the context of the socio-economic turmoil of the period. The onset of an economic crisis and a shortage of affordable housing in the 1960s led to increased tensions between Hindus and Muslims. These tensions in turn facilitated the growth

of Hindu nationalist organizations. The following paragraphs explore the nature of this process.

In 1960, 141,347 male workers, almost a quarter of the urban labour force, depended directly on the city's famous textile mills for their livelihood. Another substantial proportion of workers found employment in factories auxiliary to the mills such as construction, chemical plants and mining.⁹ Although Scheduled Castes¹⁰ and Muslims comprised a mere 10.83 percent and 7.9 percent of the city's residents respectively, men from these communities comprised an overwhelming majority of the workers who powered the mills. Since women had been steadily driven out of jobs in the mills, the vast majority of the workers on their payroll were men.¹¹ As a result, in 1960, women comprised only 5,437 of the mill workers.¹²

In these textile enterprises, discrimination based on caste and community was rife. Even though the mill workforce comprised of people from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and rural Gujarat, the work was determined by their caste and religious identities. Muslims and upper castes dominated the weaving departments while Scheduled Caste communities such as Vankars and Chamars ran the spinning shops. Such a division of labour worked to the detriment of lower caste communities such as the Vankars, who are traditionally hand-

⁹ *Census of India 1971, Gujarat District Census Handbook, Ahmedabad*, Government of India, 1976, Series 5, Table 7.1 – Number and Types of Working Factories Showing Average Employment, 1960, 1965 and 1970, pp. 24-5.

¹⁰ Scheduled Castes are the former untouchables. In Gujarat they are hierarchically organized as Garodas (Scheduled Caste Brahmins), Vankars (hand weavers), Chamars (a leather tanning castes) and Bhangis (scavengers). In line with the official documents of the time, the term 'Scheduled Castes' will be used to refer to untouchables in this chapter.

¹¹ The process of expelling women from mills was not an overnight development. It had started in the late 1920s and 30s following the economic recession in the inter-war decades. Jan Breman, *The Making and Unmaking of an Industrial Working Class: Sliding Down the Labour Hierarchy in Ahmedabad, India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.134.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 82.

weavers.¹³ This bias had been an enduring source of hostility between Scheduled Caste and Muslim workers. Moreover, since the former are considered ritually impure they were prohibited from entering the premises of weaving shops to prevent them from ‘contaminating’ the textiles.¹⁴ This spatial segregation fuelled the animosity between the groups.

From the mid-1960s relations were strained yet further with the onset of a wider economic decline all over India and stagnation in the textile industry in Ahmedabad. While an incessant influx of migrant labour into Ahmedabad continued, the total number of workers employed in the mills plummeted from 147,651 in 1965 to 132,803 in 1970.¹⁵ This decline hit lower caste and Muslim workers hardest. They were forced to seek employment in poorly paid, unskilled or semi-skilled sectors, which also offered them dismal working conditions.¹⁶ As secure sources of income became harder to come by for men, the expulsion of women from the formal sector gathered more pace. Between 1961 and 1971, women’s participation in the formal sector plummeted from 491 per thousand male workers to 231, in Gujarat.¹⁷ In Ahmedabad the situation was worse. Out of the total 854,239 workers, women constituted less than 10 percent of the permanent workforce.¹⁸ Failure to find work in such factories or

¹³ Kenneth Gillion, *Ahmedabad: A Study in Urban History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 17.

¹⁴ Jan Breman, *The Making and Unmaking of an Industrial Working Class*, pp. 15-17.

¹⁵ *Census of India 1971, Gujarat District Census Handbook, Ahmedabad*, Table 7.1– Number and Types of Working Factories Showing Average Employment, 1960, 1965 and 1970, p. 24.

¹⁶ Workers sought work in metal industries, wood and paper manufacturing enterprises, electric power plants, gas manufacturing and distribution factories, and small workshops which carried out repairs and alterations of general items such as bicycles, watches etc. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5.

¹⁷ *Census of India 1961, Gujarat District Census Handbook, Ahmedabad*, Series 5, Subsidiary Tables – Workers from 1901/11 to 1961, by States Union Territories and by Cities, Register General, p. 7.

¹⁸ In 1971 they constituted 14.2 percent of construction workers, and 22.4 percent of agricultural labourers, but only 4.3 percent of the workforce formally employed in the manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs industries, a meagre 3.5 percent of those working in trading and other commercial establishments. Source: Table 3.3 Distribution of population according to industrial classification – Total, Section 3 Area and Population, in Government of Gujarat, *Handbook of Basic Statistics Gujarat State 1969 to 1976* (Gandhinagar: Bureau of Economics and Statistics, 1978), Vol. I, pp. 88-91.

other marginal and menial jobs, forced some women into the ‘flesh trade’ or sex work.¹⁹ Declining economic security and social respectability became a further source of hostility and competition between Scheduled Castes and Muslims.

The economic crisis was paralleled by a housing crisis. In the labour region, workers lived in close proximity to the factories and industries. Here, a significant proportion of the waged labourers, who constituted almost a quarter of Ahmedabad’s population, lived in dilapidated *chawls* and slums. Built on either side of dead-end alley-ways, chawls were one or two room tenements that lacked even the most basic civic amenities like water, electricity and sanitation. An overwhelming majority of chawl dwellers (i.e. 71 percent) were migrants from rural Gujarat while the rest hailed from other northern and western provinces of India.²⁰ Here, Scheduled Caste and Muslim workers lived separately but in close proximity to one another. Most of the chawls were built by the mill owners in the 1930s and 1940s and were made available to the workers on subsidized rents. However, in the 1960s the stagnation in the textile industry slowed down the construction of new chawls.

This, combined with the rising demand for housing, due to the continued influx of migrant labour, forced ever-growing numbers of people to live in the slums surrounding the chawls. They provided housing to the mill workers and those engaged in the manufacturing and repairs industry.²¹ Over 83 percent of the slum dwellers were lower and backward caste migrants from rural Gujarat who lived in mixed, but not intermixed, localities with Muslims.²²

¹⁹ Since sex work is illegal in India reliable statistics are unavailable. However, according to the records of Jyoti Sangh, the oldest women’s organization in Ahmedabad 192 women were involved in sex work between 1960 and 1970, as opposed to 142 in 1950-1959, 161 in 1940-49. Computed from the Annual Records of Jyoti Sangh (1937-2005), Jyoti Sangh Archives, Ahmedabad.

²⁰ Mahesh Bhatt and V.K. Chawda, ‘Housing the Poor in Ahmedabad’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11(19), 8 May, 1976, pp. 706-11, p. 709.

²¹ Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, *Report of the Census of Slums Ahmedabad City, 1976* (Ahmedabad: Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, 1976), Table 18, 19, pp. 21-2.

²² Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p. 36.

As secure means of livelihood and chawl housing slowly slipped out of reach, lower and backward castes workers competed with their Muslim counterparts in the industrial region over jobs as well as homes.

Outside the industrial belt, workers and lower income groups were housed in pols in the walled city. *Pols*, an architectural style unique to Ahmedabad, are dense and elongated wooden housing areas in which multi-storey buildings surround a quadrangular courtyard with common water and sanitation facilities. Most of these pols have strong wooden gates at their entrance providing a measure of protection to the residents, and making each pol self-contained. In the pols, as in the chawls and the slums, residential space was organized along caste and community lines. Upper castes, Muslims and Scheduled Castes lived in separate localities but in close proximity to one another. A vast majority of the upper castes living in the pols were migrants from neighbouring provinces, while the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes were migrants from rural Gujarat. In Muslim dominated pols, the residents were further divided into religious and occupation-based groups; each dominated by a specific *Jammat*.²³

Within each pol, a Panch (head), invariably male, adjudicated social and economic disputes amongst the residents, whose caste and occupational background was identical.²⁴ Although spatially segregated on the basis of caste and religious affiliations, the more affluent residents lived along with poorer families. The onset of economic decline and rapid

²³ Jammats are religious and occupational based associations, which adjudicate over religious and everyday disputes between its members. Different Jammats dominated each Muslim pol. For instance, the Qureshi *Jammat*, members of which worked as butchers, dominated the Mirzapur pol. For a more detailed analysis of different Jammats see Rubina Jassani, 'Communal Violence, Displacement and Muslim Identities: Negotiating Survival and Reconstruction in Ahmedabad, Western India' (University of Warwick: Unpublished Thesis, 2007), p. 61.

²⁴ Sujata Patel, 'Urbanization, Development and Communalisation of Society in Gujarat', in Takashi Shinoda (ed.) *The Other Gujarat: Social Transformations Among Weaker Sections* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2002), p. 210.

urbanization led to conflict between upper castes, lower castes and Muslims over jobs and social space. Upper caste Hindus who could afford to buy property in the western part of the city moved out of the pols. However, as affluent families moved out, migrant upper caste Hindus from lower income groups moved into the vacated houses. From the mid-1960s, conflict between old Muslim residents and new Hindu entrants escalated.²⁵

Economic decline and, in the case of the industrial labour region, the housing crisis thus became an enduring source of competition and hostility in eastern Ahmedabad. Since Muslims lived in close proximity to Scheduled Castes and upper castes, the latter two groups became increasingly susceptible to communal mobilization.

Members of these groups actively participated in RSS shakhas (or branches) set up across eastern Ahmedabad. In each shakha all-male members would meet regularly at the same place to take part in the RSS regimen: physical exercise, drills, marching, games, training in weapons like *lathi* (sticks) and swords.²⁶ They would engage in intellectual discussions and listen to commentaries on the ‘history’ of the ‘glorious Hindu nation’, Shivaji’s contribution to the ‘Hindu renaissance’ and accounts of ‘Muslim atrocities against Hindu women’. In providing this training to volunteers, the main aim of the RSS was to ‘mould the character of men’: to make them virile, disciplined and devoted to combating the ‘Muslim threat’ and restoring the imaginary Hindu nation to its lost glory.²⁷ By the late 1960s, the RSS had successfully recruited at least 8,600 men for this cause in Gujarat.²⁸

²⁵ Kenneth Gillion, *Ahmedabad*, p. 212.

²⁶ In recent years there have been several studies on the RSS. However, the most comprehensive account is available in Walter Andersen and Shridhar Damle, *A Brotherhood in Saffron*.

²⁷ The shakha system was devised by Hedgewar in 1925 at the inception of the RSS, and has since been at the core of the RSS organization and the primary reason for its success. See Chapter I for more details.

²⁸ *Gujarat Samachar*, 4 September 1969, p. 9. However, this figure is probably an under estimation because the RSS had set up its branches in Gujarat from the 1940s, when the province was still part of the Bombay Presidency. In the Presidency alone its membership had risen from 20,000 in 1943 to 60,000 in 1948. By 1979

Before the 1969 riot began, the RSS had established themselves so firmly in eastern Ahmedabad that it was selected as the site for its mass rally in 1968. The three-day rally was organized in Maninagar on 27-29 December under the aegis of the supreme leader of the RSS, Golwalkar. Since over 1,600 volunteers turned up to participate in this rally and listen to Golwalkar's virulent speeches, the CoI concluded that these events significantly worsened the 'communal atmosphere of the city'.²⁹

This subsection has described the way the socio-economic crisis in eastern Ahmedabad in the 1960s afforded militant Hindu nationalist organizations the opportunity to mobilize lower income upper castes and Scheduled Caste labourers against Muslims. By contrast, support for Hindu nationalist organizations in the western part of the city had more to do with the political turmoil of the 1960s than with socio-economic concerns. The following subsection will explore the landscape of western Ahmedabad and the ideological shift towards right-wing politics.

Western Ahmedabad

Western Ahmedabad was the financial and cultural capital of the city. An overwhelming majority of the residents were upper caste Hindus who lived in high-rise apartments and bungalows. The region was rapidly developing into a posh enclave where residential buildings were interspersed with educational institutes, offices, restaurants and university buildings. Upper caste communities of Brahmins, Patels, and Banias dominated the area although a small number of affluent Scheduled Castes and Muslim families also resided there. A

the outfit had 13,000 shakhas all over the country and a million members: a 66 percent increase since 1948. Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Sangh Parivar: a Reader* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.3.

²⁹ Ibid.

majority of the people were in the service industry, while others ran their own businesses.³⁰ These residents of western Ahmedabad had access to civic amenities, education and well-paid, secure jobs. A majority of affluent women were allowed school-level education, although their access to university and professional colleges was severely restricted in the 1960s.³¹ Unlike women from working class backgrounds, a majority of women from affluent upper caste communities did not work outside the house.³² Indeed, these deeply religious and unabashedly capitalist communities discouraged women's work beyond the confines of the regulated domestic space.

These socially conservative affluent sections were politically conservative as well. Upper caste communities, especially the land-owning Patel groups, dominated the Congress party in Gujarat. According to one of the most political commentators in Gujarat, under their leadership, the Congress had historically led an anti-Scheduled Caste, anti-Muslim and anti-women government in the province.³³ From the 1960s, however, these communities started leaning towards more obviously right-wing politics. This shift in the political orientation of politically-dominant upper castes was born out of the changes in the Indira Gandhi-led Congress party in New Delhi. Under her leadership, the Congress started orienting itself towards a more socialist growth and pro-poor economic policies. This was unacceptable to the conservative old guard of the Congress in Gujarat. Fissures within the Congress ranks led to two inter-related developments. First, the party split into Congress (Indira) and a conservative

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Between 1968-69, 62.7 percent women were enrolled in primary schools and 24.7 in middle schools in Gujarat. However, women constituted only 0.21 percent of university students and 0.04 percent of those attending professional and special colleges. Computed from Table XXI: Enrolment (Percentage of Girls in relevant age groups) by State of Education for girls. Comparison between 1956-57 and 196-69 and Table XXII. Enrolment Ratios (Percentages) by Stage of Education for girls Comparison between 1956-7 and 1968-9, p. 267-8 in Government of India, *Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1974).

³² Ibid.

³³ Interview with Girish Patel at his residence, Ahmedabad, 27/11/06.

Congress (Other), led by the veteran Gujarati Congressman Morarji Desai, in 1969. Second, some disgruntled Congress leaders in the province threw their political weight behind the right-wing Swatantra Party on the one hand, and the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Jan Sangh on the other. Subsequently, during the 1960s the political appeal of the BJS in Gujarat rose markedly. While the party had managed to win only 1.33 percent of the vote in the 1962 Legislative Assembly elections, by 1972 it had successfully gathered 9.29 percent of the vote.³⁴

As the political support for the BJS was gradually rising, the vernacular mouthpiece of RSS, *Sadhana*, worked towards gaining the ideological support of upper castes for Hindutva. Set up in 1956, this weekly Gujarati news-magazine reported extensively on the work of the RSS and its leaders across the country. Its publications focused on the ‘Muslim problem’, the ‘Pakistan threat’ and reminded the Gujarati public of the horrors inflicted by Muslims on the ‘beloved motherland’ during the Partition. An article published on 28 January 1968, a few years after the India-Pakistan war of 1965, provides a revealing illustration:

...in our history the motherland is considered the mother of the world...and is treated as such. Here when you touch the earth you are cleansed of all your ill-habits and all your sins are forgiven...

Enemies have surrounded the motherland on all four sides and are threatening to attack.... Twenty years ago this land was partitioned and we were unable to stop it....do we see people hurting over any of this....It is because of the lack of self-belief and self-respect that this country is facing so many dangers and will continue to face more in the future...

Such articles helped to keep Hindutva ideology relevant to the contemporary world whilst being faithful to the core tenets of the ideology laid down by the founding ideologues: the conflation of territory with one’s mother, the ever-present threat from Indian Muslims and Pakistan, the projected lack of a martial spirit amongst Hindus, which was disguised under

³⁴ Government of Gujarat, *General Elections: Gujarat Legislative Assembly 1962-1980* (Gandhinagar: Chief Electoral Officer, 1982), pp. 10-11.

terms such as ‘self-belief’ and ‘self-respect’, and the supposed historic humiliation of Hindus. Commanding a weekly circulation of over 2,500 copies by 1968, *Sadhana* significantly contributed to making the RSS ideology accessible to educated Gujaratis.³⁵

This section has shown that owing to the differences in the socio-economic and political ethos of western and eastern Ahmedabad, the reasons for the rise of Hindu nationalism in these areas also differed. While the socio-economic turmoil of the 1960s drew lower income groups and industrial labourers to Hindu nationalism, amongst the affluent upper castes the increasing popularity of this ideology was part of a larger shift towards right-wing politics.

2.2 Events in the Run-Up to the Riot

The previous section has shown that the socio-economic and political turmoil of the 1960s paved way for the growth of Hindu nationalism across Ahmedabad. Consequently, in the immediate run-up to the 1969 riot, relatively trivial disputes over religious issues were increasingly politicized. These events, on the one hand, contributed to ‘disturbing the communal harmony in the state’.³⁶ On the other, they afforded Hindu nationalist organizations the opportunity to circulate and legitimize their gendered anti-Muslim rhetoric further.

According to the CoI, the first significant event with respect to the riots took place on 10 March 1969 in the Kalupur locality of the walled city. On that day, trouble started when a police officer moved aside a handcart stacked with books, which was obstructing the road. In the process the cart, which was owned by a Muslim, toppled over, and a Quran fell to the ground. The owner started protesting and a mob gradually gathered. Senior police officers

³⁵ Government of India, *Press in India 1968: Annual Report on the Press compiled by the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the PRB Act for the year* (2 Vols., New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1969) p. 101.

³⁶ Commission of Inquiry, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, p. 46.

alleged that during the protest, Muslims shouted pro-Pakistan slogans such as ‘Even Pakistan would be better than this. What if a Hindu’s temple had been burnt?’³⁷ Sensing that this incident might blow out of proportion the police department promptly issued a public apology on loudspeakers on behalf of the Commissioner of Police (CP) for inadvertently hurting the religious feelings of Muslims. However, these measures to placate the mob and salvage the situation failed and it took a cane-charge and the firing of tear-gas shells by the police before normalcy was finally restored around midnight. This incident was instantly picked up by the upper-caste dominated vernacular press to cast aspersions on the loyalty of Muslims towards India.

This debate became even more acrimonious when Gujarati Muslims organized a large protest in the walled city against the desecration of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by Israel. In their deposition to the CoI, some police officers stated that during the protest march, Muslims shouted ‘Any one who clashes with Islam will be obliterated’, ‘We cannot tolerate the insult of the Mosque’ and ‘Long Live Muslim unity’.³⁸ However, the Commissioner of Police E. F. Deboo, stated that the protesters did not shout any anti-national slogans like ‘Long Live Pakistan’, but added that Hindu leaders saw this protest as a ‘show of Muslim force’, which created ‘resentment amongst the Hindus’. The Gujarati press aggravated this feeling of ‘Hindu resentment’ by unhinging the Al Aqsa protest from its local context and inserting it into a long history of Muslim atrocities.

Feelings of Muslims [were] wounded by Al Aqsa mosque incident; Hindus understood it and sympathized. Muslims would remove historical injustice by handing over to the Hindus that portion of Kashi Vishwanath Temple which is being used under the name of Aurangzeb Mosque and that portion of Shiv Temple Rudramal at Sidhipur which has been converted into a mosque. Shiva Linga made into pieces by Mohmed Gazni which are under

³⁷ Ibid., p. 53.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

threshold of mosque should be returned from being trampled.³⁹

Claiming a daily circulation of over 63,000 copies and a readership of over a million, the *Gujarat Samachar* acted as a mass vehicle for the dissemination of stereotypes about Muslims and Hindus.⁴⁰ These portrayals, on the one hand, identified Muslims who had come out in protest against the destruction of the Al Aqsa mosque with the ‘violent’, ‘iconoclastic’ Muslim ‘invader’, and Hindus with their ‘historically tolerant’ and ‘victimized’ counterparts on the other. However, a significant difference between past and present Hindu generations was also publicized. Unlike their predecessors, contemporary Hindus were demanding justice and claiming that what was rightfully theirs ‘should be returned’.

The idea that contemporary Hindus were unwilling to accede to the violent iconoclastic Muslims gained further popularity following the ‘Ramayan incident’. On 4 September 1969, a police officer, while trying to disperse a *Ramlila*⁴¹ audience, accidentally dropped a Ramayan. The situation was made worse by the fact that the officer involved was a Muslim. Significantly, immediately after the ‘Ramayan incident’, RSS and BJS leaders took the lead in popularizing the notion that the Ramayan incident was a calculated Muslim affront to the Hindu religion. Along with members of the Hindu Mahasabha and religious priests, they formed the Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti (HDRS), a committee for the protection of the Hindu religion, on 11 September. Soon thereafter, senior HDRS leaders organized several processions during which they delivered anti-Muslim speeches and distributed inflammatory pamphlets.⁴² Police witnesses reported that during these processions, the participants shouted slogans like ‘Every Muslim is a traitor, send him to Pakistan’ and ‘Anyone who clashes with

³⁹*Gujarat Samachar*, 10 September 1969, reproduced and translated in *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴⁰ *Gujarat Samachar* sold over 63,688 copies daily in 1968. Government of India, *Press in India 1968*, p. 109.

⁴¹ *Ramlila* is a dramatic folk re-enactment of the life of the mythological god Rama as described in Hindu epic *Ramayana*. In most parts of northern and western India local troupes perform the Ramayan over 10-15 days.

⁴² Commission of Inquiry (1970) *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad.*, p. 59.

Hindus will be obliterated'.⁴³ As the CoI noted, these processions were aimed to warn the Muslims that Hindus would not tolerate any insult to their religion and community.

It has...to be noticed...that the Bhartiya Jan Sangh workers had said that it was not the Muslims alone who could show strength by taking out processions etc., but the Hindus also can take out similar processions and show their unity and strength.⁴⁴

Subsequently, vernacular newspapers did their bit in circulating the HDRS' version of the 'Ramayan incident' and the notion that the Hindu community was not prepared to suffer 'Muslim atrocities' silently. For instance, on 12 September 1969, *Jai Hind*, a Gujarati afternoon daily demanded that the Muslim officer who had 'insulted' the Ramayan should be promptly expelled because

If this demand is not accepted, the *offended feelings of the Hindu community will result in agitation* and the Government alone will be responsible for its consequences.⁴⁵ (emphasis added)

While the press was widely circulating these ideas, speeches delivered by senior Bhartiya Jana Sangh leader Balraj Madhok in Ahmedabad on 14 and 16 September also invoked Muslim stereotypes. In his address to a mass gathering of prominent intellectuals, students and over 200 RSS volunteers, Madhok stated that India was facing an external threat from Pakistan and an internal threat from Indian Muslims. He insisted that the youth needed to prepare urgently for violence and war because

No country in the world which is not aware of self-defense and is indifferent to military power can remain alive. It cannot even achieve peace... This is the reason why in the last 23 years our country was attacked four times. Had we prepared our country and youth for war instead of the shibboleth of peace and flying pigeons of peace, we would have achieved peace.... We have talked much about peace and non-violence; now we should try to learn to talk about war.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 58-9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 214 and p. 226.

Disguised as ‘self defence’, Madhok’s ideas about the necessity for ‘war’ were widely reported across the vernacular media. This led the CoI to conclude that these speeches ‘incited the Hindus and contributed to the September riots’.⁴⁷

This survey of the events that took place in the immediate run-up to the 1969 riot has shown that stereotypical portrayals of Muslims as aggressive, iconoclastic and disloyal, and of Hindus as passive victims were in wide circulation. The mass distribution of anti-Muslim rhetoric contributed to the formation of the HDRS. When the riot began, the HDRS, RSS, and BJS provided ideological and organizational leadership to the marauding mobs and contributed to the incidence of sexual and other forms of violence against Muslims.

2.3 Events in the Riot

On 18 September, trouble started when Muslim worshippers from the Bukhari Sahib shrine apparently attacked the neighbouring Hindu Jagannath Temple. When a few temple cows disrupted the Muslim *Urs* procession and injured some women and children, Muslims entered the temple premises to complain to the priests. In their deposition of the CoI, senior police officers alleged that a Muslim crowd, armed with knives, scythes, iron pipes and sticks, ‘attacked’ the priests of the temple and threw acid bulbs at them. However, the evidence presented before the CoI revealed that Muslims had made no such attack on the temple. Instead, the CoI described the cow incident as an accident and stated that ‘it arose due to the shying of the cows and not because the people in the crowd wanted to attack...Hindus’.⁴⁸ However, at the time, the HDRS, the RSS, the BJS, and the priests of the Jagannath temple insisted that the protest was a deliberate ‘Muslim attack’ on Hindus.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

As the news of the incident spread, a mob of 100-200 people gathered around the temple. Fearing an escalation of tensions, the police issued special press notes to inform the public about the reality of the temple scuffle. Meanwhile, prominent Hindu and Muslim religious and political leaders formed a Peace Committee and appealed to the public to maintain communal harmony. In an attempt to salvage the situation, Muslim leaders went to the temple priests to apologize expressly on behalf of the community and offered to publish that apology formally in the vernacular press. However, these attempts to maintain peace proved to be futile. Priests of the Jagannath temple, members of the Jan Sangh, the RSS, and the HDRS disregarded these pleas for peace and warned that Hindus would avenge this ‘insult’ of the temple priests.⁴⁹ In the evening of 18 September, Hindu nationalist organizations and priests called a public meeting to protest against the ‘insult’ to the Jagannath temple. Before the day was over, mobs of 200-700 people had looted and destroyed at least six Muslim properties. These events marked the beginning of the 1969 riot.

From 19 September, the violence gathered pace. According to the CoI, ‘communally minded Hindu elements’ in the city started circulating rumours about deaths of Hindu priests and attacks on temples. From then on, the size of the ‘rioting’ mobs grew to 500-1,000 and the number of incidents and the extent of damage to life and property rose sharply.⁵⁰ On that day at least 152 shops and homes were destroyed, 11 religious places desecrated and 3 people killed.⁵¹ In an attempt to quell the violence, the police imposed a curfew in the affected parts of the walled city. Although the curfew was extended to the whole of Ahmedabad by the following day, the violence continued unabated for the next eleven days.

In western Ahmedabad between 19 and 30 September, violence took place in

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 87-93.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 145.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Ellisbridge and Navrangpura resulting in the destruction of 431 commercial and residential establishments and the death of 49 people. Even worse violence was recorded from the walled city where communal hostility had gathered pace during the run-up to the violence. Muslim-dominated pols in Dariapur, Shahpur, Mirzapur, Kalupur, Khadia, Raipur, Gheekanta and Khanpur were singled out for attack resulting in the destruction and looting of 1, 979 shops, and the death of 118 people.

The toll in the industrial labour region was higher than that of the walled city and western Ahmedabad put together. Owing to the socio-economic turmoil of the 1960s, much of the violence was concentrated in the mill districts. The labour localities of Maninagar, Behrampura, Gomtipur, Rakhial, Chamanpura, Sarangpur, Vatwa, Bapunagar, Naroda, Asarva, Amraiwadi, Narol, Sardarnagar, Jamalpur and Khokhra-Memdadav saw a total destruction of 3,891 properties and 712 killings.⁵² Of those slain, at least 100 were identified as Muslim workers employed in the city's textile mills.⁵³ Ghanshyam Shah reports that sexual violence occurred in Khokhra-Mehmadavad, Amraiwadi, Raipur, Rakhial, Bapunagar, Chamanpura and New Mental Colony. 'Women were raped or stripped bare and forced to walk naked on the road...women's breasts were cut and sex organs were mutilated and torn apart.'⁵⁴ This is supported, at least in the case of Chamanpura, Bapunagar, Gomtipur, Khokhra-Mehmadavad, Amraiwadi, by interviews I conducted with Muslim women in Ahmedabad.⁵⁵

One of the neighbourhoods where such violence took place was Bhilwada in the mill

⁵² Ibid., pp. 151-66.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 176.

⁵⁴ Ghanshyam Shah, 'The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad', p. 190.

⁵⁵ Interviews with A. Bano at her residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 29/11/07; R. Bano at her residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 29/11/07 and 30/11/07; F. Iqbal (from Bapunagar) and S. Khurshid (from Chamanpur), interviews at a Muslim women's meeting near Lal Darwaza, Ahmedabad, 6/11/07; Q. Amin (from Chamanpur) at her residence in Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad, 12/12/07; and Ghanshyam Shah, 'The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad', p. 190.

district of Gomtipur. This district was home to Scheduled Caste migrants from UP, Maharashtra and rural Gujarat, who lived in chawls and adjoining slums in close proximity to Muslims. On 20 September, a group of 200-1,000 men attacked Muslims in Gomtipur. Before the end of the day, at least 100 Muslims were dead, and 1,198 of their homes and shops had been destroyed.⁵⁶ On 21 September several Muslim women were subjected to sexual violence in Bhilwada. The testimony of Amina Bano, a Muslim woman who escaped gang rape on that day, is an indication of the scale of the violence:

... I ran towards the open fields near Bhilwada. Women and children were hiding in those paddy fields for a whole day. During the riot so many women and girls were raped...These women ...would tell me that their husband was killed like this... and how they [the attackers] raped them...and raped their daughters, they did this...and that. Half of them came naked. All their clothes were torn. They had come in a very bad state. Rabaris wear *safas* (turban). [On seeing these naked women] Rabaris gave them their *safas* to cover themselves...we were betrayed by people who we lived with all our lives.⁵⁷

During the riot, the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology and activists to the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women can be tracked at two levels: a) ideological instigation by organizing an incendiary propaganda campaign, and b) provision of organizational leadership to the rioters. The following paragraphs will explore each of these levels in turn.

From the morning of 20 September, various Hindu nationalist outfits organized a massive propaganda campaign instigating sexual violence against Muslim women. The contents of this ideological propaganda mirrored the core elements of Hindutva ideology described in the previous chapter. Four main themes combined to instigate Hindu men to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women. The first widely circulated theme was that of

⁵⁶ Commission of Inquiry, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, Appendices, Appendix V between pp. 144-5, and *Ibid.*, Report, p. 141 and p. 155.

⁵⁷ Interview at her residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 29/11/07.

projecting Hindu women as the victims of the sexually violent Muslim male. The purveyor of this theme was *Sevak*, the afternoon edition of one of the two most widely circulated vernacular dailies in Gujarat.⁵⁸ Given that upper castes had gradually gravitated towards right-wing politics in the 1960s, and that they had transformed the vernacular press into a vehicle for anti-Muslim propaganda in the run-up to the riot, it is not surprising that Gujarati newspapers acted as its purveyors during the riot. Entitled ‘A shocking event’ the newspaper carried the following report on 20 September:

An inhuman and shocking incident has occurred in the Gandhi Park Society situated in Rakhial near Lal Mill today in the early hours...The persons residing in the surrounding areas of the Park, not only made an attack with scythes, hockey-sticks... etc., but also stripped unmarried and married women naked and outraged their modesty in early morning... This incident has occurred because the Park is surrounded by the population of other community.⁵⁹

Since this piece of information was published in a widely circulated and respected vernacular daily, this report masqueraded as a fact-based news report. However, when a police inquiry was conducted into the incident, the report was found to be false.⁶⁰ Although this fictitious report did not identify the religious identity of the assailants, it was hardly necessary to do so. As the CoI noted, the ‘public at large is having the knowledge’ that Gandhi Park is a Hindu locality that is ‘surrounded’ by Muslims.⁶¹ Therefore, even without identifying the religious affiliation of the ‘other community’, this report managed to situate the occurrence of sexual violence against Hindu women in a local context and project Muslim men as ‘inhuman’ perpetrators of sexual violence.

⁵⁸ In 1968, *Sevak* had a daily circulation of 6,367 copies, whilst the main newspaper *Sandesh* claimed a circulation of 70, 988 copies. Government of India (1969) *Press in India 1968*, Vol. 1, p. 83 and p. 107.

⁵⁹ Reproduced and translated in Commission of Inquiry (1970) *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, p. 106.

⁶⁰ Affidavit of CP Deboo, *Ibid.* p. 106.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Hate pamphlets published immediately after the publication of this report built on this report and circulated a second theme. This theme was that of projecting the Gandhi Park incident as the latest example of the alleged sexual atrocities ‘historically’ committed by Muslim men against Hindu women. A pamphlet entitled, ‘Awake, Oh Hindus: Awake, Oh Youths’, which came into circulation from 20 September read:

Muslim have made a heinous attack on the well-known temple of Jagannathji ...[they] have been repeating...history...their main object is ...to pollute Hindus and to molest Hindu women ...when India was partitioned, lakhs of Hindus were converted into Muslims and harems were formed of their wives, mothers and daughters. They were raped and converted into Muslims.... In Gandhi Park ...Muslims rushed into houses and made Hindu girls and women naked and raped them in broad-day light. Even in Kalapur... women were made naked and raped. ...[I]f Hindus do not wake by the above incidents, Hindu religion and Hinduism will be uprooted, their sisters and daughters will be forced to become prostitutes...⁶²

By dislodging particular events, whether real or fictitious, from their specific context such pamphlets relayed the message that sexual violence against Hindu women by Muslim men had followed an interrupted continuum. At the same time such pamphlets played on the anxieties of labour-class men, whose ‘sisters and daughters’ had been forced into sex work due to the economic downturn, as described earlier.

The third theme then followed seamlessly: to project the ‘historical’ sexual atrocities of Muslim men as a symbolic humiliation of the Hindu male and to instigate them into ‘retaliatory’ and pre-emptive violence against Muslims as a way to redeem their lost masculine pride. One of the handbills that came into circulation from 19-20 September read:

Hindus get organized, be bold. Take weapons in your hands and attack the Muslims who are out to destroy Hindu religion and Hindu temples...Every Hindu to save his religion, caste, sisters, and daughters must awaken and learn how to attack and learn the policy of defence not cowardice.⁶³

⁶² Reproduced and translated in *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

⁶³ Anonymous Pamphlet, reproduced and translated in Ghanshyam Shah, ‘The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad’, p. 192.

Since differences of chronology and local context had already been blurred, any one Hindu victim could be substituted by any other and any Muslim for any other in the cause of ‘defending’ Hindu religion, Hindu temples and Hindu women. In order to make this appeal of taking ‘defensive’ violent action against Muslim men and women more convincing, these pamphlets added a fourth dimension to their messages. They indicated that the otherwise noble Gandhian ideal of non-violence was a relative virtue, unfit for application in Hindu war against the tyrannical Muslim.

Let each Hindu take a vow to take revenge of the insult of Hindu religion
 ...Tell preceptors of peace that Gandhiji had never taught to defend Muslims
 who insult religion and molest women. Gandhiji never taught non-violence of
 cowards and impotents... Drive out cowards and impotents from your areas.⁶⁴

In reinterpreting the Gandhian idea of non-violence the logic applied was that Muslims ‘insult religion’ and ‘molest women’ because they are powerful and potent while Hindus are emasculated. So only by perpetrating the same crimes against Muslims, can Hindus prove their masculine prowess and reduce Muslim men to impotency. Only after ‘driving out’ the Muslim threat, could Hindu men aspire for a non-violent masculinity.

Issued by the Hindu Sangram Samiti [committee for a Hindu Struggle, an affiliate of the BJS], by the HDRS, or anonymously by ‘lovers of Hindu religion’ such incendiary pamphlets were widely circulated across Ahmedabad. The evidence presented before the CoI led it to conclude that ‘nearly 10,000’ such pamphlets had come into circulation from 20 September. The police arrested ten people, most of whom were members of the HDRS and the BJS, for writing, publishing, and distributing virulent pamphlets.⁶⁵

In order to quell the circulation of such incendiary propaganda the state government

⁶⁴ Reproduced and translated in Commission of Inquiry, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, p. 109.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

tried to contradict these pamphlets through radio broadcasts, announcements on loud speakers and by issuing press notes. It even set up a special telephone line to inform the public about the truth of the Gandhi Park incident.⁶⁶ Despite these attempts, however, the circulation of pamphlets and rumours continued unabated. Pamphlets were circulated by hand, surreptitiously pasted on walls and billboards, while rumours and anti-Muslim slogans were hand-written on blackboards in different localities.⁶⁷ In its report, the CoI concluded that:

[W]ritings on the blackboards, the pamphlets...were attempts to excite, incite and inflame the Hindus to attack the Muslims...While actual riots and incidents may not have taken place as a result of these... there is ample evidence to show that tension continued, and these pamphlets must have also had their due share in impeding an early return to normalcy.⁶⁸

So far, we have seen that immediately after the violence gathered pace from 20 September, Hindu nationalist organizations actively provided an ideological instigation for sexual violence against Muslim women. By first circulating a rumour that Hindu women had been sexually victimized by Muslims and then recontextualizing this fictitious incident into a longer imagined history of Muslim atrocities, the propaganda enabled Hindu men to view themselves as victims. These victims were then incited into avenging these masculinized humiliations as a way to redeem lost masculine pride.

Having provided an ideological justification for sexual violence, Hindu nationalist activists also took an active part in organizing and planning the riots, and leading the marauding crowds. Mobs of over 200-2,000 men armed with knives, sticks, iron pipes, torches, stones, swords, kerosene-soaked rags, acid bulbs, stones, and fire-arms, were carried in lorries, presumably orchestrated by Hindu nationalist organizations, from one locality to

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 112-3.

⁶⁷ In Ahmedabadi neighbourhoods, especially pols, blackboards are installed in the most public part of the locality for the purposes of special government notices, daily news etc. During the riot, these boards were used for anti-Muslim propaganda.

⁶⁸ Commission of Inquiry, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, p. 110.

another. On reaching the locality, these mobs often divided themselves into groups and attacked from different directions simultaneously. ‘Some times one group kept the local inhabitants who were resisting engaged while other came from the other direction and attacked.’⁶⁹ In other instances, the attackers barricaded the roads to prevent the police and the army from dispersing the crowds and preventing the violence. Inside the barricaded area, houses were looted, Muslim men and women were attacked and their homes and property set ablaze.⁷⁰ The evidence presented before the CoI revealed that in several instances BJS and RSS members were seen leading these crowds, pointing out Muslim properties to the attackers with the help of voters lists, and otherwise instigating violence.⁷¹

In organizing this violence, Hindu nationalist groups received support from the various communities they had painstakingly mobilized throughout the 1960s. On the one hand, affluent upper castes provided material support to these groups, wrote anti-Muslim articles for the vernacular press, and published handbills.⁷² On the other hand, Scheduled Caste men, especially labour migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, took the lead in perpetrating violence against Muslims in western and eastern Ahmedabad. Furthermore, Hindu nationalist groups also received some support from the police machinery that failed to quell or prevent violence against Muslims. In some instances the CoI found some police officers playing an openly partisan role in the riot.

We have...an impression that though the whole of the police force may not be communally involved, there may be some instances where the police were affected by the Jagannath temple incident...There may...be a few cases of partiality...In one case there is [an] allegation that a police officer had deliberately shot two Muslims.⁷³

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 215.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 217.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.216.

⁷² Ghanshyam Shah, ‘The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad’, p. 90.

⁷³ Commission of Inquiry, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, p. 193.

In the aftermath of 1969 riot, Hindu nationalist organizations justified the violence inflicted against Muslims. Representatives of the Hullad Pidit Sahayta Samiti (Committee for the relief of (Hindu) riot victims), set up by the BJS, testified to the CoI that

...it is the Muslims who had launched the first murderous attack on Hindu ...and which has led *Hindus to act in defence and in retaliation*.⁷⁴ (emphasis added)

By describing the actions of the rioters as ‘defence’ and ‘retaliation’, representatives of the Hullad Pidit Sahayta Samiti were reverberating Hindu nationalist ideology. Projecting Muslims as the aggressors enabled them to view Hindus as ‘victims’ and their actions as a justifiable response.

This section has tracked and interrogated the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology and activists in the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women. Immediately after the riot began, the RSS, the HDRS, and their affiliates ideologically instigated sexual violence through mass propaganda. By projecting Hindu women as victims of the supposedly sexually violent Muslim male, describing this victimization as part of a ‘history’ of Muslim atrocities, and ultimately propagating the idea that these atrocities on Hindu women are a symbolic humiliation of the Hindu male, this propaganda instigated ‘Hindu’ men to inflict violence against Muslim women. Just as in the case of the founding ideologues, the Hindutva ideology of the 1960s instigated sexual violence as a way to redeem the lost Hindu masculine pride. As violence gathered pace, Hindu nationalist outfits backed up their ideological propaganda with organizational leadership to the rioters. Affluent and lower income Hindus provided material and ideological support to the outfits in orchestrating the violence, whilst industrial workers took the lead in inflicting sexual and other forms of violence against Muslims. This violence

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

was then rationalized as a ‘defensive’ (re)action to Muslim ‘aggression’.

This, however, is not the end of the story. In addition to the motivations provided by Hindu nationalist ideology and activists, the sexual violence against Muslim women was partly motivated by patriarchal ideologies as well. The following section examines how these ideas manifested themselves during the 1969 riot.

2.4 Patriarchal Motivations

This section examines how the infliction of sexual violence was motivated by patriarchal ideas that normalize sexual violence as ‘sex’. Since tracking the men who inflicted such violence during the 1969 riot and engaging them in a dialogue is extremely difficult the following section relies on the testimonies of the survivors of the 1969 riot. Consider the testimony of Amina Bano who was attacked by six men in the Bhilwada neighbourhood on 21 September. Her description of the events that took place on that day suggests that the men who attacked her were partly motivated by the patriarchal blurring of the distinction between sexual violence and sexual pleasure:

They first attacked my father with swords and lathis. My mother started screaming. When she tried to protect him, they started beating her too. They said to me, “We will not kill you here, we will take you inside”. They tried to drag me inside the house. They said to each other, ‘She is *bade kaam ki cheez* (useful object)... we won’t kill you here, we will kill you inside.’ ...They were pulling me towards them. They said that they would rape me (*beizzati karenge*). I screamed at them and said, “You should be ashamed of yourself. Don’t you have mothers and sisters in your house?” But they pinned me with knives between them...they warned me that if I tried to escape they would stab me from all sides. Then one of them came to my rescue. He was also a *UP ka bhaiya*⁷⁵. He scolded the others and made all those men leave me... I ran towards the open fields near Bhilwada.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ The term refers to labour immigrants from the north-Indian province of Uttar Pradesh but Amina used the term in a derogatory way.

⁷⁶ Interview at her residence in Vatwa Ahmedabad, 3011/07.

Several parts of this testimony suggest that Amina's attackers believed that sexual violence would be a pleasurable experience. Their description of her as a 'kaam ki cheez' transformed her into a sexual object that could be forcefully appropriated and used for the purposes of sexual gratification. Although the main aim of the attackers was to kill her, they intended to avail themselves of this sexual object before doing so. Significantly, Amina resisted this objectification by invoking the attackers' familial responsibilities as sanctioned within wider patriarchal structures. She tried to make her attackers view her as their own 'mother' or 'sister', in the hope that her appeal would remind them of their familial obligation to protect the sexual chastity of their mothers and sisters. However, her attackers, if anything, seemed to derive pleasure as she pleaded with them. Why else would they declare their intentions to Amina? The declaration that she was going to be raped, the fear it invoked, her powerlessness, and her frantic effort to escape, was suggestive of a kind of sexual foreplay. Her resistance and fear did not serve as a deterrent to violence but rather to heighten the state of sexual arousal and the anticipation of sexual gratification that would come out of raping her. At every stage of her attack, the gang of men seemed to be partly motivated by the desire for sexual pleasure that could be achieved through sexual violence. This suggests that Hindutva ideology alone did not motivate such violence during the 1969 riot.

The following section further problematizes these ideology-based explanations by arguing for the significance of neighbourhood ties in enabling the infliction of sexual violence against Muslim women.

2.5 Breakdown of Neighbourhood Ties

In order to examine the significance of neighbourhood ties, this section focuses once

again on the episode of sexual violence in the Bhilwada neighbourhood of Gomtipur, described in the previous sections. Rashida Bano, Amina's elder sister, lived in her marital home in the neighbourhood and was intimately aware of the sequence of events. Rashida's testimony points to the ways in which the manifestation of Hindutva ideology and patriarchal ideas in sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties:

In our basti [locality] there were only 20-25 Muslim families and their houses were in one row. My father used to repair cycles. The shop was owned by a Hindu man from UP but my father had taken the contract to run it. Ram bhai [the shop owner] lived with other people from UP in a separate colony but, my father ran the shop. My father had good relations with these people and was especially respected amongst the Rabaris⁷⁷. They were all very friendly with my father...they would get together at his shop everyday and chatted for hours. He had lots of friends. He had filed lots of petitions with the Corporation [Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation] and got a road built and had water taps installed. He had earned a lot of respect even though he was very poor, wore rags and barely managed to eat a square meal everyday. Occasionally, there were some scuffles between Hindus and Muslims either over money or during some festival or over some other small issue but we still talked to each other and were part of each other's daily life.

On Saturday night [20 September 1969] rumours started circulating that riots were going to start in our basti... In our area, where my parents used to live, there were lots of *UP ke bhaiyas*.⁷⁸ These people were quite orthodox and active in the RSS. My father had close ties with them so he was sure that no harm would come on us. Our Rabari neighbours told him to escape with his family and children. They said *chacha* run away...this time they will not leave any Muslim alive. But my father was still sure that nothing would happen. On the morning of the 21 my father decided to escape to Rakhial with everyone else. He had barely walked a hundred meters when those people spotted him. Before the riot, these people used to spend the whole day chatting with him at his shop.

When those people spotted us they said, 'See *chacha* is coming, he has his daughter with him'. They said to each other, *gira do Mussalman ko* (kill the Muslim). I was young at the time. So these people came out with their lathis and shouted, *eh budhe, eh budhe, idhar aa* (you old man, come here). People who had grown up calling him *chacha* everyday, were calling him *budha* that day. My father thought that these people just wanted to take whatever little money and possessions he had on him. God knows what had come over my father, that he walked back towards them...that is when... they attacked him

⁷⁷ Rabaris are lower castes communities who traditionally work as milk producers and distributors.

⁷⁸ The term refers to labour immigrants from the north-Indian province of Uttar Pradesh but Rashida used in a derogatory way.

with swords and lathis. My mother started screaming. When she tried to protect him, they started beating her too.

These people, who killed my father and attacked my mother and sister were *ghar ke hi log* (members of the family), they were not unknown strangers. When they attacked my sister, one of them saved her. There are good people in this world too. He confronted the other men so they let her run away. The same people, for whose rights my father dedicated all his life, killed him in 1969.⁷⁹

This testimony sheds light on how the incidence of sexual violence occurred at the neighbourhood level. As mentioned earlier, in the industrial labour region Muslims lived separately from Hindus but in close proximity to them. Although the socio-economic turmoil of the 1960s had strained the relationship between Scheduled Caste and Muslim residents of chawls and slums, Rashida's testimony reveals that there was considerable everyday interaction between them. While their close proximity paved the way for hostility, it also provided the space for amicable relations. Moreover, despite the spatial segregation, Hindus and Muslims were 'part of each other's life'.

Under the strain of rumours and Hindutva mobilization, however, these ties were abruptly terminated. The familiar and likeable 'chacha' at whose shop 'they would all get together and chat for hours' was suddenly demoted to an unfamiliar, distanced 'buddha'. At that moment, neighbourhood ties forged on the basis of everyday interaction and friendship were replaced with hostile relations between two antagonistic religious communities. This breakdown of ties reconstituted the neighbourhood as a gendered communal space in which 'Hindu men' were pitched against both 'Muslim men' and 'Muslim women'.

Such a breakdown of neighbourhood ties created the conditions for the infliction of sexual violence that was motivated by Hindu nationalist ideology on the one hand, and patriarchal ideas on the other. With the sense of familiarity out of the way, Hindu neighbours were

⁷⁹ Interview at her residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 29/11/07 and 30/1/07.

transformed into defenders of the Hindu community and Muslim neighbours into an embodiment of the imaginary Muslim 'enemy'. While the 'Musalman' was killed, 'his daughter' was targeted for sexual violence. Through this violence, the symbols of honour, biological reproducers and property of the Muslim 'enemy' could be destroyed and Hindu virility could be asserted.

In addition to creating the space for sexual violence motivated by Hindutva ideology, the breakdown of neighbourhood also paved way for the manifestation of patriarchal ideas that conflate sexual violence with 'sex'. Once ethical-moral codes tied up with everyday ties and friendly relations were dispelled, a space in which the familiar Amina could be viewed as a sexual object was created. This sexual object could then be appropriated through violence for the purposes of sexual gratification.

An examination of the riot at the neighbourhood level has thus shown that ties forged on the basis of everyday interaction and friendship broke down during the 1969 riot. This breakdown created the space for the manifestation of Hindu nationalist ideology and patriarchal ideas in sexual violence against Muslim women.

Conclusion

Hindu nationalist organizations became infamous for orchestrating sexual and other forms of violence against Muslim in the 1992 riot in Surat and the 2002 massacre. However, this chapter has shown that their involvement in orchestrating such violence can be traced back to the 1969 riot. It has revealed that the rising popularity of Hindu nationalist organizations in eastern and western Ahmedabad during the 1960s enabled the politicization of religious identities. As a result, relatively trivial incidents came to be seen through the lens

of an imagined history of Muslim aggression and Hindu victimization. Consequently, a minor accident sparked off a massive riot. During the riot, Hindutva outfits provided ideological and organizational leadership to the rioters. They circulated fictitious stories about sexual atrocities committed by Muslims on Hindu women and projected this alleged atrocity as a symbolic humiliation of the Hindu male. Having ideologically instigated men to inflict sexual violence, they provided organizational support to rioters in the form of weapons, voters' lists, and transportation.

However, whilst recognizing the contribution of Hindutva ideology, this chapter has also argued that patriarchal ideas that normalize sexual violence as 'sex' also played a role in motivating such violence. Moreover, this chapter has shown that the manifestation of Hindu nationalist ideology and patriarchal ideas in acts of sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties. With these ties out of the way, sexual violence against the communal and sexual object, i.e. Muslim women, became possible.

CHAPTER III: THE 1985 RIOT IN AHMEDABAD

Introduction

The first major communal riot in Gujarat after 1969 broke out in 1985. The period between 1970 and the mid-1980s, however, was littered with communal riots in several other, predominantly urban, parts of India. The most significant amongst these riots were the anti-Muslim riots in Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad (Maharashtra) in 1970, Tellicherry (Kerala) in 1971, and Jamshedpur (Jharkhand) in 1979, the anti-Christian riots in Kanyakumari (Kerala) in 1982 and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. According to one study, during this period less than half the incidents started over religious issues like festivals, cow slaughter and desecration of religious places. Significantly, the most common causes of communal violence were non-religious issues such as disputes over property or 'quarrels over women'.¹ The riot that took place in Ahmedabad in 1985, however, stood out as more violent than any of these.

The 1985 riot started on 19 February and took until 18 July to abate. The riot erupted over the decision of the Congress-led government of Gujarat to increase the number of reserved seats for backward-caste Hindus in government jobs and educational institutions from 10 percent to 28 percent. The anti-reservation agitation began in Ahmedabad but gradually spread to several other districts in the province, especially Baroda, Surat, Mehsana and Patan. A total of 2,632 incidents and offences were reported from the province, out of which 662 took place in Ahmedabad.² Startlingly, the anti-reservation agitation turned into communal rioting within a month. From 1 March, Ahmedabad became the epicentre of a

¹ Ashis Nandy *et al*, *Creating a Nationality*, p. 14.

² Commission of Inquiry, Justice Vinod Shanker Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the incidents of violence and disturbances which took place at various places in the state of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985* (3 Vols., Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1990), Annexure XXXVII, p. 439.

communal riot, which soon spread to the district of Baroda as well. 743 incidents and offences were recorded from Ahmedabad and another 78 from the surrounding rural areas. The district of Baroda saw 332 incidents, while another 81 were reported from Bharuch, Mehsana, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Kutch-Bhuj and Kheda.³

Although official estimates of the extent of destruction are unavailable, unofficial studies estimated that during the 1985 riot approximately 220 people lost their lives, and property worth over 2,200 crore rupees was damaged or destroyed. The main victims of this violence were Muslims: 2,500 of their houses were destroyed, 1,500 shops were burnt or looted, 100 Muslims were murdered, 400 stabbed, and hundreds sustained grievous injuries. Over 12,000 Muslims were rendered homeless and 900 arrested by the police.⁴ Although the industrial labour region had witnessed macabre sexual violence against Muslim women in 1969, no such violence was inflicted on them during the 1985 riots.⁵ However, three incidents of sexual violence against upper caste Hindu women took place during the riot. This violence took the form of verbal and visual assault.

Although the overall scale of the riot, in terms of death, injury and forms of violence, did not compare to the catastrophic events of the 1969 episode, the 1985 violence lasted nearly seven months and saw an unprecedented loss of property. A year after the violence had subsided an official one-man Commission of Inquiry (hereafter CoI) was set up under Justice Vinod Shanker Dave of the High Court of Rajasthan. Just as in the case of the Reddy

³ Ibid., p. 440.

⁴ Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p. 88, and Sujata Patel, 'The Ahmedabad Riots, 1985: An Analysis', *Reports-Papers* (Centre of Social Studies, Surat: Unpublished Monograph, 1985), pp. 8-9.

⁵ This observation is based on the interviews conducted during fieldwork. Furthermore, none of the academic studies on the 1985 riot have mentioned any such incident. See, for instance, Ibid., and Howard Spodek, 'From Gandhi to Violence: Ahmedabad's 1985 Riots in Historical Perspective', in *Modern Asian Studies*, 23 (4), 1989, pp. 765-795. Reports of women's organizations have not mentioned such cases either. See for instance, Women's Research Group, 'Impact of Ahmedabad Disturbances on Women: A Report', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20 (41), 12 October, 1985, pp. 1726-31.

Commission, the aims of the CoI were to investigate the causes and *modus operandi* of the riots and the role of the State machinery in controlling and preventing the protracted violence. The Commission published a three-volume report in May 1990. It contained a compilation of affidavits and statements of government workers, police officers, top bureaucrats, and politicians from all the major parties operating in the province. Police and hospital records were also reproduced in some detail. The report also contained statements by Dalit leaders, representatives of Islamic and Hindu religious organizations, human rights activists and some survivors of violence. The materials reproduced in this report, along with media reports from *Gujarat Samachar*, *Indian Express*, and *Times of India*, will be the main sources for this chapter. This chapter will also draw on the testimonies of survivors along with other relevant official and unofficial documents that shed light on the political economy of this period.

Significantly, unlike the official report on the 1969 riot, the report published by the Dave CoI recorded three incidents of sexual violence against Hindu women. The first incident took place in the first week of April in the eastern industrial labour region, the second occurred in the Raipur region of the walled city on 16 and 17 April, whilst the third occurred in the mill district of Gomtipur on 18 April. In the first two incidents upper caste Hindu women were made the targets of verbal sexual violence and the clothes of two of the women involved were torn off, whilst in the third instance, upper caste women were subjected to visual and verbal sexual violence. The perpetrators of this sexualized violence in 1985 were police officers.

There are several police officers who committed excesses and atrocities, their behaviour was inhuman and indecent and unbecoming of members of the police force. Some of them had gone to the extent of misbehaving, maltreating and women handling [sic].⁶

⁶ Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, p. 268.

There was no mention of sexual violence against Muslim women in the CoI report. However, a women's organization that investigated the impact of the 1985 riot on women, reported that sexual violence against Muslim women in the forms of verbal and visual abuse occurred on 20 June during the annual Rath yatra [Hindu religious procession] in the walled city of Ahmedabad. The perpetrators of this violence were Harijan⁷ men and officers of the State Reserve Police (SRP).⁸ However, neither this report nor my interviewees mentioned any instances of more severe sexual violence against Muslim women.

This brief on the scale and nature of sexual violence inflicted in the 1985 riot raises several pertinent questions. This chapter asks: Why was the extent and form of sexual violence against Muslim women limited during the 1985 riot even though the city had witnessed such macabre violence in 1969?

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first maps the growth of Hindu nationalist organizations in Ahmedabad between 1970 and 1985 in order to provide the context in which the events of the 1985 riot have to be understood. The second part focuses on the events that preceded the eruption of the riot and the role of Hindu nationalist activists and ideology in instigating sexual violence against Muslim women during the riot. The third part of this chapter explores the motivations of police officers in inflicting sexual violence against Hindu and Muslim women in the three incidents mentioned above, whilst the final section explores why the industrial labour regions did not witness the kind of sexual violence they did during the 1969 riot.

⁷ Harijans are the former untouchables or Scheduled Castes. The term, which literally means children of god, was coined by Gandhi to refer to untouchables.

⁸ Women's Research Group, 'Impact of Ahmedabad Disturbances on Women', p. 1727. Also mentioned in Sujata Patel, 'The Ahmedabad Riots', Appendix III, pp. 151-65 and Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p. 118.

3.1 Growth of Hindu Nationalism: 1970 - 1985

Already from the mid-1960s, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, Ahmedabad was struggling to cope with the onset of socio-economic and political turmoil. Between 1970 and 1980, while the population of the city rose from nearly 2 million to 4 million, social, economic and political crises also intensified significantly. Consequently, during this period divisions between the different communities, already spatially segregated along class-, caste- and religious-lines, grew sharply. The intensification of socio-economic and political crises was paralleled by a horizontal and vertical growth of Hindu nationalist organizations across Ahmedabad. However, the nature of Hindutva mobilization continued to differ considerably in eastern and western Ahmedabad respectively. This section, accordingly, examines the growth of Hindu nationalist organizations in these two regions in turn.

Eastern Ahmedabad

The growth of Hindu nationalist organizations in eastern Ahmedabad, i.e. the walled city and the industrial labour region, came in the wake of a steady economic decline. In 1975, 83.37 percent of the total workforce in Ahmedabad was employed in large-scale factories, which offered them good wages and secure employment. By 1980, however, this percentage had dropped to 82.38 and by 1985 to 75.67.⁹ This economic decline was most visible in the textile mills that provided livelihood and financial security to nearly half the city's workforce. In the early 1980s, the mills were estimated to provide direct employment to over 150,000 workers, whilst another 100,000 found work as subcontractors, suppliers and construction

⁹ Government of Gujarat, *Location of Industries in Gujarat State 1975, 1980 and 1985* (2 Vols., Gandhinagar: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 1995), Vol. I, p. 9.

workers etc.¹⁰ When 19 of the city's 65 mills shut down between 1979 and 1984, over 50,000 workers were rendered unemployed.¹¹ Although Harijans accounted for approximately 14 per cent of the city's population and Muslims less than 15 percent, they constituted over two thirds of the workers rendered jobless.¹² However, upper caste and backward caste communities who worked in the mills were also left unemployed with the closure of the mills. Since women had been gradually eliminated from the textile mills in the previous three decades, the overwhelming majority of those rendered jobless were men.

Already forced into unskilled or semi-skilled and poorly paid jobs from the mid-1960s, ever-greater numbers of labourers were forced to seek jobs in small-scale industries from the early 1980s onwards. Not surprisingly, the number of registered small-scale industries and the number of workers employed in them rose sharply during this period. While in 1970, 1,910 small-scale units employed 35,497 workers, by 1975 the total number of such units had risen to 2,282 and their workforce to 43,467. In the decade that followed, the city saw the emergence of 3,221 small-scale industries, which together employed over 55,000 workers.¹³ Since laws pertaining to protection and welfare of labour did not apply to factories with a small workforce (10-100 workers), exploitation of these contract labourers increased. They also lost access to Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association, which used to provide welfare facilities to the mill workers, bargain on their behalf for better wages and thus afford them a measure of dignity.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p. 37.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Howard Spodek, 'From Gandhi to Violence', p. 773.

¹³ Government of Gujarat, *Location of Industries in Gujarat State*, Vol. I, Statement No. I, p. 77.

¹⁴ Indira Hirway and Piet Terhal, 'The Contradictions of Growth', in Ghanshyam Shah, Mario Rutten, Hein Streefkerk (eds.), *Development and Deprivation in Gujarat: In honour of Jan Breman* (New Delhi, London: Sage, 2002), pp. 18-20.

Subsequently, there was a steady decline in the living standards of the urban poor. Between 1960 and 1980 the prices of essential commodities rose sharply¹⁵, but there was no concomitant rise in the daily average wages of the urban poor.¹⁶ In fact, redundant mill workers lost their daily average wage of Rs. 25-50 and had to contend with the Rs.11-15 they earned in small-scale industries.¹⁷ Subsequently, the number of urban poor in Gujarat increased from 4,133,000 in 1977-78 to 4,726,000 in 1983 and to 5,263,000 in 1987-88.¹⁸ In order to compensate for the drop in their men's wages and to cope with rising prices, women too were forced to seek poorly-paid, menial work. The decline in the quality of work available to women is reflected in the fact that in 1961 the number of female workers per 1000 males in the organized sector was 491 but by 1981 it had dropped to 368. Moreover, redundant workers were no longer able to educate their children or secure good jobs for them, which drew the latter increasingly towards the expanding criminal underworld of the city.

The economic turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s was paralleled by an intensification of the housing crisis. As the construction of new chawls to house industrial labour was suspended in the wake of the economic debacle in the mills, the displaced workers sought refuge in the expanding slums in the eastern labour region. In the 1980s, nearly a quarter of the city's population was housed in the slums. About 83 percent of the slum's residents belonged to lower- and backward-caste groups, out of which 21 per cent belonged to the Scheduled Castes, whilst 15 per cent were Muslims.¹⁹ Most of these slums were constructed

¹⁵ For instance, price of coarse rice, the staple diet of the urban poor, rose from Rs. 56.77 per quintal in 1962 to Rs. 223.40 in 1981. During the same period, the price of groundnut oil rose from Rs. 190.95 to Rs. 1,431.18, and that of sugar increased from Rs. 114.95 to Rs. 682.68. Government of Gujarat, *Ahmedabad District Gazette* (Gandhinagar: Government of Gujarat, 1985), p. 97.

¹⁶ For instance, average daily wage of cobblers in Gujarat rose negligibly from Rs. 4 in 1962 to Rs. 14 in 1981. Skilled carpenters earned less than Rs. 5 in 1962 and a pittance of Rs. 17.77 in 1981. *Ibid.*

¹⁷ B.B. Patel, *Workers of Closes Textile Mills* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing, 1988), pp. 30-44.

¹⁸ Government of India, *Estimates of Poverty in India* (New Delhi: Planning Commission, 1997), pp. 48-49.

¹⁹ Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, *Report on the Census of Slums Ahmedabad City 1976*, p. 5.

illegally on expensive and increasingly rare urban land. Poor immigrants would pay large sums of money to the local slum builders in exchange for a scrap of land, on top of the monthly rent. Since the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation had long outsourced the responsibility for maintaining and providing basic civic facilities in the slums to these local slum builders, the working poor was faced with the problem of overcrowding and deplorable living conditions. The continued existence of these slums was itself subject to the builder's relations with the local municipal corporators and politicians. Through their connections with these local leaders, the slumlords provided basic amenities to the slum residents. In exchange, they offered politicians support during elections.²⁰

Furthermore, the rising prices of land in Ahmedabad provided the local builders and slum developers with more lucrative options than simply renting out the slums dwellings to labourers. With the growing commercial value of the slum land, the trend of evacuating the land and 'selling' it to the highest bidders set in.²¹ According to Shani, slumlords terrorized the slum dwellers and sometimes even orchestrated riots to force them to evacuate the land.²² By the mid-1980s the working poor increasingly found itself economically insecure and socially marginalized. It was in the context of this social and economic decline that Hindu nationalist organizations were able to mobilize greater support for their anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Already by the 1960s, Hindu nationalist organizations were well established in eastern Ahmedabad and had recruited large numbers of lower- and backward-caste communities, Adivasis²³, and upper castes. However, in the 1980s, when the competition over jobs and housing intensified, and people struggled to cope with poverty and their injured pride,

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 46-50.

²¹ Ashis Nandy *et al* (eds.), *Creating a Nationality*, pp. 112-13.

²² Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p. 51.

²³ Adivasis are the 'indigenous people'. The legal term used to refer to them is Scheduled Tribes.

chauvinistic Hindutva rhetoric found even greater appeal. Satish Parmar, who identified himself as a Dalit, from Behrampura described how the difficulties faced by unemployed workers due to the closure of textile mills paved way for Hindu mobilization:

In our basti 98 percent of the people used to work in the mills. But after the mills closed down in 1984-5, most of the workers started doing menial labour work. Some started working in small workshops or garages and some started selling vegetables on hand-carts. Children's education had to be stopped. Even women and children had to be sent to work. Women who stayed at home also found some work to do. Some women, who were literate, found work in women's organizations...more and more people were left unemployed. So the standard of education also went down. Would people think about food or education of their children? The first necessity was *roti* [bread]. But then our children would find work at times but at other times nothing would work out. Then these RSS, VHP people started coming to our basti. They would collect young boys and hold meetings with them and brainwash them [*behkate the*]. Once I went and fought with these people and said to them that you are putting our youngsters on the wrong path [*gumraha kar rahe ho*]. But...they did not listen to me.²⁴

As unemployment soared, secure means of livelihood became scanty and education declined, Harijan youths actively joined the ranks of Hindu nationalist organizations, especially the RSS and the VHP.²⁵

The Hindu Right also gave these men an opportunity for upward social mobility otherwise unavailable to them because of their low caste status. During the early 1980s, the VHP organized several Rath yatras [Hindu religious processions] in which Harijans were encouraged to participate.²⁶ Since Harijans are considered ritually impure and usually prohibited from entering temples and joining religious processions, participation in the Rath yatra offered them social respectability. The period between 1970 and 1985 thus saw the horizontal growth of the Hindu Right in the city.

²⁴ Interview at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 21/1/07.

²⁵ Owing to the secretive nature of these organizations the figures for Gujarat are unavailable. However, according to one estimate the overall number of shakhas in the India rose from 17,000 in 1981 to 20,000 in 1985, whilst the membership grew to over a million. Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Sangh Parivar*, p. 6.

²⁶ Ashis Nandy *et al*, *Creating a Nationality*, p.107.

The vertical growth of Hindu Right in the corridors of State power also started during this period. This growth happened when the incumbent Congress (I) government failed to deliver on its promise of bringing about a substantial change in the lives of lower- and backward- castes and Adivasi communities in the wake of socio-economic crises. In 1980, CM Madhavsinh Solanki had devised the KHAM strategy: a political alliance of Kshatriyas²⁷, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims. Hoping that this strategy would give them political clout and social respectability, members belonging to these KHAM communities voted in large numbers for the Congress. Subsequently, in the 1980 Legislative Assembly elections the party won 141 out of 182 seats.²⁸ Although the KHAM communities came to dominate the 1980 Assembly, this political alliance did not bring about any substantial change in the lives of the members of these communities. For instance, Harijan men continued to be humiliated by the police in day-to-day interactions.²⁹ Consequently, Kshatriyas, Harijans and Adivasis gravitated towards the Bhartiya Janta Party, the political wing of the Hindu Right created in 1980 after the dissolution of the BJS. The political weight of the BJP significantly increased by 1985. Although the BJS had won only 3 seats and 8.88 percent of the vote share in 1972, the BJP managed to win 11 seats in the 1985 elections, securing 14.96 percent of the popular vote.³⁰ By the mid-1980s therefore, Hindu nationalist organizations had managed to expand both horizontally and vertically in the city.

The preceding sub-section has described the way the intensification of the socio-economic and political crisis in eastern Ahmedabad paved for the massive Hindutva

²⁷ Kshatriyas are the former Kolis, a backward caste community.

²⁸ Government of Gujarat, *General Elections: Gujarat Legislative Assembly 1962-1980*, pp. 10-11.

²⁹ Pravin Sheth, *Political Development in Gujarat* (Ahmedabad: Karnavati Publications, 1998), p. 29.

³⁰ Government of Gujarat, *Report on the General Elections to the Gujarat Legislative Assembly, March 1985 (Statistical Review)* (Gandhinagar: Chief Electoral Officer, 1985), p. 47 and p. 14.

mobilization in the 1970s and mid-1980s. The economically insecure, socially marginalized and politically disenfranchised Harijans, backward castes and poorer upper castes were increasingly attracted towards the anti-Muslim rhetoric of Hindu nationalism as they competed amongst each other and with Muslims over secure means of livelihood and maintain a semblance of pride and dignity. In contrast to eastern Ahmedabad, however, the mobilization of the affluent upper caste communities for Hindu nationalism had more to do with rising prices, political corruption, and disdain of government-led affirmative action. The following sub-section examines how these tensions translated into support for Hindu nationalist organizations.

Western Ahmedabad

Between 1970 and 1985, western Ahmedabad had solidified its status as the enclave of the affluent sections of the city's population. These affluent sections were overwhelmingly upper caste Hindus as well. Everyday realities of their lives were far removed from the people who lived in congested, dilapidated pols in the old city and the squalor-ridden slums in the industrial labour region. Already from the late-1960s, as the previous chapter has argued, affluent upper castes had started gravitating towards more obviously right-wing politics. Between 1970 and 1985, this shift became more pronounced in the wake of the Nav Nirman movement in early 1970s, the imposition of a nation-wide Emergency in 1975 and, the Congress strategy to forge a KHAM alliance in 1980.

In the 1970s, the incumbent Congress government under CM Chimanbhai Patel came under serious attack from the middle class over allegations of widespread political corruption and skyrocketing prices of consumer goods such as oil and rice. In 1973 unrest over rising

prices lead to violent protests across the city in which the urban affluent classes actively participated.³¹ In 1974, protest against the Congress turned into a movement claiming to be for 'Nav Nirman' or social reconstruction of Gujarat. This movement received critical impetus by the on-going anti-corruption movement in Bihar led by Jayaprakash Narayan. In Gujarat, student activists took the lead in organizing the movement and received support from the urban middle and lower middle class. White-collar employees of private and public bureaucratic enterprises, professionals including journalists, lawyers and doctors strongly supported the movement.³² The RSS, the BJS and ABVP, the student wing of the BJS (and later BJP) took this opportunity to malign the incumbent Congress government and increase its credibility amongst the affluent sections.

When PM Indira Gandhi imposed a nation-wide Emergency on 26 June 1975 fearing the spread of anti-Congress movement across India, the Gujarati elite moved further away from the party. Several Hindu nationalist leaders and activists in Gujarat were incarcerated and a ban was placed on their organizations. The persecution that these organizations faced from the Congress regime helped them earn more respect from the upper caste affluent groups.

Having dealt a major blow to its own popularity by imposing the Emergency, the Congress leadership took refuge in the populist KHAM strategy described above. While the communities that constituted the KHAM alliance voted for the Congress in 1980 (and were subsequently disillusioned), upper castes were deeply disgruntled by this alliance from the beginning. Fearing that the upper caste communities such as Patels, Banias, and Brahmins

³¹ Ghanshyam Shah, 'The Upsurge in Gujarat', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, Vol. 9, August, 1974, pp. 32-4.

³² Dawn E. Jones and Rodney W. Jones, 'Urban Upheavals in India: The 1974 Nav Nirman Riots in Gujarat', *Asian Survey*, 16(11), November, 1976, pp. 1017-8.

would lose control over political power to backward and lower communities (Kshatriyas, Harijans and Adivasis) and religious minorities (Muslims), upper castes gravitated towards the Hindu nationalist parties as well. In 1981, when the Congress government announced its intention to enforce the reservation policy in favour of lower caste communities, middle class, upper castes Hindus waged a violent protest against the government.³³ This disaffection towards Congress further paved way for the improving political fortunes of the BJP and its vertical expansion by the mid-1980s.

Thus far, this chapter has shown that the period between 1970 and 1985 was marked by a rapid horizontal and vertical growth of Hindu nationalist organizations in Ahmedabad. While the deepening socio-economic crises drew large numbers of lower- and backward-castes, Adivasis to Hindutva, the spiralling political crisis helped the Hindu Right expand its influence over the corridors of power in the city. It is in this context that the 1985 riots have to be understood.

3.2 Events in the Riot: Anti-Reservation to Anti-Muslim

The 1985 riot did not have the sort of run-up that we saw during 1969. In 1969 the politicization of trivial disputes between Hindus and Muslims had served to circulate and legitimize Hindu nationalist ideology and fuelled the hostility between the two communities. By contrast, the period before the 1985 riot did not witness such developments. In fact, the 1985 riot did not begin as a communal riot at all but rather as an anti-reservation riot. It was only later that the anti-reservation riot turned into an anti-Muslim riot.

³³ Ishwarlal P. Desai, 'Anti-reservation Agitation and Structure of Gujarat Society', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 16 (18), May, 1981, pp. 819-23.

The violence that occurred during this riot was both complex and protracted. Although Hindu nationalist organizations were involved in the riot from the very outset, between January and April, their focus was primarily on stirring up the anti-reservation agitation and maligning the incumbent Congress government. During these three months, they did not incite 'Hindus' to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women. It was from May that these organizations played an active role in providing ideological motivations for such violence and organizational leadership to the attackers. Accordingly, the first sub-section takes a brief stock of the events that took place between January and April 1985. The second sub-section concentrates on the activities of the Hindu Right between May and June.

In January 1985 the Congress government announced its intention to increase the number of reserved seats for Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in educational institutions and government jobs from 10 to 28 percent. This announcement instantly sparked off a wave of violent protests against the reservation policy across the city. In the first two weeks of February upper caste students, their parents and professionals organized peaceful protests against the reservation policy.³⁴ Soon thereafter, the ABVP stepped in to provide organizational leadership to the students, and the agitation turned violent.³⁵ Between 19 and 28 February, the agitators damaged government property, stoned the houses of some State officials, burnt municipal and State transport buses, and even attacked some policemen.

In the first week of March, the Congress won the Legislative Assembly elections and allotted 14 out of 20 cabinet posts in his government to members of the KHAM alliance. Already peeved with the reservation policy, the significant presence of KHAM communities in the cabinet served to further threaten the hegemony of upper caste groups in politics and

³⁴ Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, p. 202.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 269. Also see p. 209.

society. Subsequently, from March upper castes gave the anti-reservation agitation a renewed vigour. Soon, the BJP, the VHP, the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (labour union of the BJP), also threw their weight behind the anti-reservation agitators.³⁶ On 18 March the central student anti-reservation body, the Akhil Gujarat Navarachna Samiti [All-Gujarat Committee for Reconstruction] called for a state-wide *bandh* [shutting down of businesses, shops and offices].³⁷ Although the bandh was successfully observed on that day, the police recorded over fifty incidents of stone throwing and destruction of government property.³⁸ In the evening of 18 March, a death knell (*Mrityughant*³⁹) was sounded in Vadigam, a Hindu neighbourhood in the walled city, to symbolize the death of the reservation policy. While this death knell rang out, a stone, allegedly thrown by the residents of Vadigam, hit a Muslim boy from the neighbouring Muslim locality in Naginapole. Before the bandh day was over, ‘anti-reservation agitation took a sudden and sharp turn in the shape of communal riots’.⁴⁰ Between 18 and 19 March, upper castes and Muslims clashed in Vadigam, Naginapole, Dariapur, Dabgarwad and Kalupur in the walled city.⁴¹ Before the violence could spiral out of control, the government called in the army and impose a curfew in the walled city on 19 March. Consequently, the last two weeks of March remained relatively peaceful.

From April onwards, anti-reservation agitation and communal riots took place simultaneously. During that month, anti-reservation agitation spread to Saraspur and Gomtipur in the industrial labour region; Astodia, Shahpur, Gheekanta and Dariapur in the

³⁶ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 11, and Vol. II, p. 191; Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva and Beyond* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), pp. 255-6.

³⁷ Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, p. 203.

³⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, Annexure XXXV, pp. 178-87.

³⁹ The death knell was symbolized by the banging of kitchen utensils from the rooftops.

⁴⁰ Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, p. 27.

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 226.

walled city; and Naranpura, Paldi and Ellisbridge in western Ahmedabad.⁴² Significantly, in several instances of anti-reservation riots, mobs of upper castes attacked Harijans and Muslims, even though the beneficiaries of the new reservation policy were the OBCs.⁴³ In order to quell the violence, the police was asked to suppress the anti-reservation riots. In three different incidents the police inflicted sexual violence primarily in the form of verbal and visual sexual violence on Hindu women. Meanwhile, mobs constituting of upper caste men attacked Muslim and Harijans houses and property in Indira Garibnagar, Gomtipur, Odhav and Naroda in the industrial labour region.⁴⁴

Although some of the events that took place between February and April will be discussed in greater detail in the next two sections of the chapter, suffice it to say here that the gendered, anti-Muslim rhetoric of Hindu nationalism was not in wide circulation during this period. In contrast, as the following paragraphs will show, the period between May and June 1985 was awash with such propaganda.

Between May and June, the RSS, the VHP, the BJP and other organizations affiliated to them, such as the Hindu Yuvak Mandal [Hindu Youth Organization] provided ideological and organizational leadership to the attackers. At the level of ideological leadership, these outfits organized a mass propaganda campaign that incited men to inflict sexual and other forms of violence against Muslims. Like in 1969, the contents of the propaganda circulated during this period remained loyal to the core tenets of Hindutva ideology, whilst responding to the socio-political context of the mid-1980s and the riot.

⁴² Ibid., Vol. I, p. 236, p. 234, p. 260, p. 361; Also see Vol. III, Annexure XXV, pp. 158-291; and Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p. 128.

⁴³ Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. III, Annexure XXV, pp. 158-291.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 251-60, and pp. 215-6.

The propaganda campaign began when some Muslims allegedly slaughtered a cow belonging to the Saryudas Temple in the walled city on 13 May.⁴⁵ Although the CoI described this incident and similar alleged case as an ‘incident of a rumour’⁴⁶, one senior police officer insisted in his deposition that Muslims had indeed slaughter the cow.⁴⁷ The following day, the Hindu Yuvak Mandal circulated a pamphlet entitled ‘The Cow of the Temple Decapitated: Its Head Thrown in the Temple at Dariapur’. It read:

This horrifying act of desecration was committed by Muslims on 13 of May 1985. The Saryudas Temple is situated in Prem Darwaza, and one of the cows of the temple, named Jasodha, was beheaded by the Muslims from Jijiwada who left its bleeding head lying at the Temple Gate. They also wrote a message in its blood, ‘the Hindus are Kafirs and Pigs’...

We Hindus consider cows as Mothers as sacred too. Muslims have killed one such cow. Now it is the time to awaken, and to take revenge of this cruel deed of the Muslims by beating them to death. To kill the demons in the guise of Muslims who perform such cruel deeds to behead a sacred cow, is our religion (Dharma) and sacred duty. There is no sin in killing people like them, even the sacred Gita vouchsafes.⁴⁸

This pamphlet made no attempt to conceal its instigation for violence against Muslims. Significantly, by insisting that ‘Hindus consider cows as Mothers’, the pamphlet invoked the mother-son relationship in order to make the particular incident of cow slaughter feel more personal and provocative. So, the insistence on violence as desirable could be described as a ‘sacred duty’ of all Hindus. As in the case of the founding ideologues, a moral antidote was attached to this instigation by invoking the Gita⁴⁹, a religious text revered by most believing north Indian Hindus.

Incendiary pamphlets that appeared thereafter not only insisted on violence, but also

⁴⁵ Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 374-5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 228-9.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 94.

⁴⁸ Reproduced in Gujarati in Ibid., Annexure VII, p. 24.

⁴⁹ The Gita is an ancient Hindu mythological text that contains the story of Jasoda, her son, Lord Krishna and his victory over evil.

conflated non-violence with cowardice and the ability to inflict violence with bravery.

...How long will the tolerant Hindu community continue to accept the empty slogan of 'Hindu-Muslim Bhai-Bhai'? The blood on Hindu dead bodies expects you to arise and show bravery. That Muslims attack Hindu Temples to desecrate idols is a well-known blot in history.

How can such a Muslim be considered a citizen of India? Have we Hindus become so cowardly?

Brave Hindus, arise to protect religion and culture and to teach the enemy a bitter lesson that if they want to live in India, they must first become Indians and then Muslims. Come to save the Hindu community! One hundred to two hundred sacrifices will be sufficient. Arise and awake and give reply to every brick with a stone.⁵⁰

This pamphlet blurred the boundaries between the past and the present by reminding Hindus the 'well-known history' of Muslim atrocities. In order to further cement the connection between the past and present, it forged 'blood' ties between the readers and those Hindus who have allegedly been slain in the past by Muslims. In relaying the 'history' of Muslim 'attacks' on dead and alive Hindus, this pamphlet sought to create a Hindu brotherhood on the basis of a shared need for revenge. Upon taking this revenge and 'sacrificing' 'one hundred to two hundred' Muslims, this Hindu brotherhood would prove their 'bravery'.

Other pamphlets circulated during this time elaborated on the caste and religious backgrounds of men would constitute this Hindu brotherhood, and at the same time invoked the core tenets of Hindutva ideology that served to justify sexual violence against Muslim women. Consider the following pamphlet that was widely circulated across Ahmedabad between May and June 1985. Published anonymously under the title 'Hindus Awaken/ Wage the Holy War' it read:

We remember Shivaji Chattrapati's and Maharana Pratap's sacrifices...Have the Hindus who are now indulging in luxuries forgotten these sacrifices?...Hindus awake! Declare social and economic boycott of the bigot Muslim community. You should not buy any material from their shops.

⁵⁰ Reproduced and translated in Sujata Patel, 'The Ahmedabad Riots', Appendix II, p. 142.

The rupee that is paid by us is used in destroying our Hindu religion....They have arranged to murder Hindus or create arson and theft.

Many a helpless Hindu women have been raped by these barbarous people. Will you forget the torture perpetrated on your mothers and sisters?

This licentious, treacherous community has captured daughters of two Harijan brothers from Gomtipur and the daughter of one Harijan brother from Mirzapur for satiating their ferocious sexual appetites.

Come, Hindu, Harijan, Sikh, Marathi, Punjabi, forget the differences between lower and higher castes, the rich and poor and unite. We must solemnly pledge that 'all Hindu [are] One'...

For a Kshatriya (Hindu) there is no greater duty than to wage a war over religion ...this war is like an entry to heaven.⁵¹

By appealing to 'Hindu, Harijan, Sikh, Marathi, Punjabi', 'lower and higher castes, the rich and poor', this pamphlet sought to mobilize a brotherhood of 'Hindus' irrespective of their caste, class and regional backgrounds. Significantly, this brotherhood was to be constituted partly of communities that formed part of the Congress' KHAM alliance i.e. Kshatriyas, Harijans and Adivasis (minus the Muslims). In order to mobilize Harijans in support of Hindutva, the pamphlet played on the anxieties of Harijan men, who had been left unemployed after the closure of textile mills, by insisting on an economic boycott of Muslims.

This brotherhood was to be forged on the basis of a sexualized rhetoric of vengeance. The pamphlet employed familiar tropes of Hindutva ideology. First, this pamphlet unhinged local incidents (the alleged abduction and rape of Harijan women) and situated it in a longer 'history' of atrocities committed by 'barbarous' Muslims on Hindu women. Second, it interpreted these events as symbolic humiliations of Hindu men, insisting that they should not 'forget the torture perpetrated' on their 'mothers and sisters'. As a third theme, the pamphlet appealed to the readers' religious sentiments by insisting that avenging this humiliation is not only a sacred 'duty' of Hindus but also a path to 'heaven'. As described in Chapter I, these

⁵¹ Reproduced in Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Annexure VII, p. 23.

were precisely the themes in Hindutva ideology that served to justify sexual violence against Muslim women.

An examination of the propaganda material distributed between May and June has thus revealed that during the 1985 riot Hindu nationalist organizations and their affiliates unabashedly incited violence against Muslims. By circulating stereotypes about Muslims as ‘iconoclasts’, ‘barbarous’, ‘aggressive rapists’, these organizations sought to project Hindu men as victims of Muslim ‘tyranny’. While the contents of these pamphlets closely resonated the ideas laid down by the founding ideologues of the RSS, and mirrored the contents of the propaganda during the 1969 riot, they differed from them in two significantly ways. Firstly, for the first time by describing violence as a ‘sacred duty’ of Hindus, Hindu nationalist organizations gave a formal religious sanction. Unlike 1969, violence was not meant for ‘defending’ the Hindus, their religion and their women. Instead in 1985 violence was described as a ‘sacred duty’ that Hindus had to deliver in order to prove their bravery and masculine might. Secondly, the uniqueness of the 1985 propaganda also lay in its strategic appeal to Kshatriyas, Harijans, as well as Adivasis, to forge a Hindu brotherhood of revenge. Significantly, this appeal was based on the core tenets of Hindutva ideology that served to justify sexual violence against Muslim women.

After providing such carefully constructed ideological motivations for sexual and other forms of violence, Hindu nationalist outfits organized several events in which Harijan men attacked Muslim property and inflicted verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women. One such event was the annual Rath yatra procession in the walled city on 20 June. Incidentally, this was also the day for the Muslim festival of Id-ul-Fitr. This procession was historically used to show the ‘might and strength of Hindus... in the shape of Akhadas

[gymnasiums] and acrobats’.⁵² Initially, the police had appealed to the priests of the temple to abstain from organizing the yatra because the walled city was under curfew and the communal situation in the city was tense. However, the participants of the yatra carried out the procession as scheduled and took much pride in defying the police.

As is customary in Hindu religious festivals, upper caste Hindu men participated in the yatra along with priests and *sadhus* (religious mendicants). This year, however, for the first time the BJP and the VHP encouraged Harijan youth to participate in the procession. At the beginning of the processions, the devotees shouted anti-Solanki and anti-government slogans along with their traditional chants like ‘Hail Lord Krishna, the thief of butter milk’. Although the army tried to stop the procession from entering ‘communally sensitive’ areas in the old city, the procession went ahead anyway.⁵³ Just as the procession entered the old city, its traditional route through Muslim dominated areas, the slogans suddenly transformed. The one mentioned above was modified to ‘Hail Lord Krishna, Muslims are thieves’, and other’s like ‘Muslims have only one place, either Pakistan or the Graveyard’ were shouted. Stone throwing and looting started on both sides and the army resorted to firing that led to the death of six people.⁵⁴ Several Muslim women complained that when the Rath yatra passed through Dariapur, a mixed locality, Hindu men made obscene sexual gestures: ‘holding the lathis they carried at their groin and waving them at the women, and even pulling down their trousers’.⁵⁵ Other people from Kalupur and Dariapur stated that Harijan and upper caste Hindu men pelted stones at Muslims and shouted sexually derogatory slogans at Muslim women.⁵⁶

⁵² Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, p. 262.

⁵³ Affidavit of B. K. Jha, Police Commissioner of Ahmedabad reproduced in *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 264-7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 266.

⁵⁵ Women’s Research Group, ‘Impact of Ahmedabad Disturbances on Women’, p. 1727.

⁵⁶ Hindu women of the neighbourhood gave similar statements but added that even the police and the State Reserve Police personnel were guilty of such behaviour. *Ibid.*

Harijan men who participated in the Rath yatra and inflicted sexual and other forms of violence against Muslims claimed that in doing so, ‘they felt part of the Hindu community’.⁵⁷ Others justified their actions by stating that ‘we are in a majority in Ahmedabad, and we must show this’.⁵⁸ These statements indicate how the sexualized anti-Muslim rhetoric of Hindutva ideology motivated men to perpetrate such violence.

Thus far, an examination of the events that took place during the 1985 riot has revealed that Hindu nationalist organizations were actively involved in stirring up the anti-reservation agitation between February and April. During that period circulation of the gendered anti-Muslim rhetoric was largely absent. Even though some incidents of communal violence did take place during those three months, the main perpetrators of this violence were upper caste men who attacked not only Muslim homes and property but also that of Harijans. From May onwards the Hindu Right stepped up their anti-Muslim activities. Their mass propaganda circulated stereotypical images of historical ‘Hindu victimization’, the persistence of the ‘Muslim threat’ and the need to avenge ‘Muslim atrocities’ to redeem and assert Hindu masculine pride. By circulating this gendered anti-Muslim propaganda, Hindu nationalist organizations sought to bring together members of different class, caste and regional backgrounds into the Hindu fold. In addition to this ideological mobilization, the BJP and the VHP also organized events in which men could become a part of the Hindu community by inflicting sexual and others form of violence against Muslims.

Given that brutal sexual violence did not occur during the 1985 riot, it is important to note that the limited incidence of such violence was not for the want of Hindutva motivations. Equally significantly, as the following section will argue, patriarchal motivations for the

⁵⁷ Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p. 118.

⁵⁸ Women’s Research Group, ‘Impact of Ahmedabad Disturbances on Women’, p. 1728.

perpetration of such violence were also far from absent during the riot.

3.3 Patriarchal Motivations

During the 1985 riot, patriarchal discourses that blur the distinctions between sexual violence and sex, and sanction such violence as a way to maintain the gender status quo within the class, caste and State structure were widely prevalent. In order to show how these ideas motivated men to inflict such violence during the riot, this section examines three incidents in which the police victimized upper caste Hindu women.

As mentioned in the previous section, sexual violence against Hindu women started in April when the Congress government ordered the police to suppress the anti-reservation agitation with whatever force necessary. In three separate incidents the police inflicted sexual violence against Hindu women. The following paragraphs briefly describe the incidents and the nature of perpetrated sexual violence.

The first incident took place on 4 and 5 April in Asarwa, an upper caste-dominated neighbourhood in the walled city. On those days, the police came down heavily on the anti-reservation protestors and resorted to firing tear-gas shells and lathi [stick or truncheon] charge. When Pramila Patel, an upper caste Hindu woman, complained against the illegal arrest and harassment of her son by the police, senior police officers beat her mercilessly, humiliated her with abusive language, and tore off her clothes. Similar treatment was then meted out to several other women of the area who expressed their sympathy with Patel and had accompanied her to Gujarat's Governor's office to lodge the complaint.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, p. 234.

The second incident occurred between 16-17 April in Raipur, also an upper caste-dominated neighbourhood in the walled city. On 16 April a contingent of the State Reserve Police (hereafter the SRP) forcefully established a watch-point in the house of an upper caste family. The house owner's wife, Sudha Bhat [sic] asked the men to leave stating that her husband was out of town. Not only did the policemen stay put, they also made lewd suggestions and stated that, 'they were there to substitute her husband'. The following morning, 25 women from the neighbourhood defied the curfew to come to Bhat's aid and forced the policemen to vacate her house. But the policemen locked up the house from outside and detained all the women for several hours. Later Senior SRP officer, R.K. Vashisht arrived at the house with more policemen who beat the women as they came out of the house and removed the *saree*⁶⁰ of one of these women.⁶¹

The third incident occurred on 18 April, in an upper caste neighbourhood in the industrial labour region of Gomtipur. On that day, under the authority of Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP) A.K. Bhargava, a parade of 30 naked policemen was organized in the neighbourhood. This parade was enacted periodically between 6.30 and 9.30 pm in which the policemen also made lewd comments and obscene gestures at women. Although in his deposition to the CoI, ACP Bhargava denied the allegation, one of Ahmedabad's most respected women's organizations, AWAG, recorded statements of women who claimed that such a parade had indeed taken place.⁶²

When read together, these incidents point to prevalence of patriarchal motivations to inflict sexual violence against women. On the one hand, the fact that several policemen made

⁶⁰ A saree is a female garment in the Indian Subcontinent. It is a strip of unstitched cloth, ranging from four to nine metres in length that is draped over the body.

⁶¹ Women's Research Group, 'Impact of Ahmedabad Disturbances on Women', p. 1730.

⁶² Ibid., and AWAG report mentioned in Sujata Patel, 'The Ahmedabad Riots', pp. 66-8.

obscene gestures and lewd suggestions to women suggests that to them such violence was pleasurable. That some of them suggested to Sudha Bhat ‘that they were there to substitute her husband’ is indicative of how violence was underwritten by the understanding of such harassment as somehow enjoyable. On the other, these women had undermined the gender status quo by coming out on the streets to protest against the State in the first incident, and against the actions of male police officers in the second and the third. The harassment of Pramila Patel, the violence inflicted on women who came to the aid of Sudha Bhat, and the organization of naked parade was thus meant as a punishment for protesting against the State. By protesting against the establishment women had asserted their agency and threatened the patriarchal authority of the State. Sexual violence against them then served to punish this transgression.

Significantly, the reassertion of the patriarchal norm, whereby women are expected to be passive, did not end with the infliction of violence. In the aftermath of the harassment of Pramila Patel and the other women who came out to support her, the police department sought to further reassert the gendered status quo by casting aspersions on their sexual chastity. When a women’s group approached Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Swaroop over the incident, he replied that these women were of ‘easy virtue’ and that they

May have been lower caste women with their customarily different set of values hired for the specific purpose of embarrassing the police... since upper caste women’s wouldn’t take off their blouses and show their injuries.⁶³

This statement reflected the caste biases of senior officials in the State machinery. Sexual violence against lower caste women was justified and rationalized by citing their ‘customarily different sets of values’. The argument was that since lower caste women allegedly did not

⁶³ Deputy Commissioner of Police, Swaroop, quoted in Women and Media Group, ‘Impact of Ahmedabad Disturbances on Women’, p. 1730.

have any qualms about removing their clothes in front of strangers (who in this case was the Governor B.K. Nehru, an upper caste Hindu man), their violent disrobing by the police could not be understood as criminal. This statement also served as a warning to upper caste Hindu women that if they stepped out of the protected confines of the domestic space, their sexual chastity would be questioned, and result in sexual violence against them.

This section has therefore argued that patriarchal ideas that normalize sexual violence as 'sex', and sanction its infliction to punish transgression of norms of acceptable behaviour and reassert the gendered status quo motivated sexual violence during the riots. The infliction of such violence was normalized and condoned by casting aspersions on the sexual chastity of the victims.

The second and the third section of this chapter have thus far shown that Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations for sexual violence were popular during the 1985 riot. Significantly though, physical violence against Muslim women seems not to have been a feature of this episode of inter-religious conflict, even though in 1969 industrial labour regions of the city had witnessed macabre violence. The following section explores why this was the case.

3.4 Enduring Ties

An examination of the 1969 riot in the previous chapter showed that infliction of sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties between Scheduled Castes and Muslims. By contrast, during the 1985 riot, Harijans and Muslims strengthened their neighbourhood ties by forging strategic alliances with one another. As the following paragraphs show, the resilience of these ties probably served to prevent the incidence of brutal

sexual violence against Muslim women.

The reason why Harijans and Muslims strengthened their neighbourhood ties has to be understood in the context of the anti-reservation violence. As mentioned earlier, during the 1985 riot anti-reservation riots took place alongside communal riots. Significantly, even though OBCs were the primary beneficiaries of the reservation policy, much of the violence perpetrated by upper caste anti-reservation agitators, especially by Patels, was aimed at Harijans and Muslims, not OBCs. This was because upper castes felt the KHAM alliance, from which Patels had been excluded, threatened their control over social and political power in the province. Consider the contents of a pamphlet circulated by the Naranpura Patel Yuvak Mandal [Naranpura Patel Youth Committee] in May 1985. Entitled 'Patels of Gujarat Awake', the pamphlet read:

Now the time has come. The frequent and fatal attacks of the Muslims, Harijans, and Thakors [Kshatriyas] on our community are to be tolerated no longer. It is now a dire necessity that each Patel is awakened to this humiliation and a befitting reply be given. We are not going to tolerate the challenge thrown by the Kshatriyas who publicly worship the 'bow and arrow'. Now, in its reply, we too are going to unite and equip ourselves...The Patel community is ready to answer them any time, and are never afraid of damage to our goods and bodies when fighting for honour, have you forgotten? Have you also forgotten that these people [Harijans] belong to the low community, which used to pick up the night soil from our homes? Those who used to do this work for ages are now seated in huge offices of the bank due to the Reservation policies, and have become our senior officers! We cannot tolerate this any longer. Then, these non-vegetarian Muslims! We have already paid them by creating Pakistan as compensation. We must now exile them from India. The nation is now only for the Hindus only. Just because the Harijans and Muslims have united in these days of riots, they should be boycotted by us, and that is our request to the entire community of Patels.⁶⁴

The anxieties of upper caste communities over the loss of social and political power to

⁶⁴ Reproduced in Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Annexure VII, p. 22.

KHAM communities, deep rooted caste-based prejudices and the desire to maintain them, and the hostility towards Muslims as the ‘other’, were written all over this pamphlet. This threat was compounded by the genuine economic hardship that lower income upper castes faced following the closure of the textile mills. As a result, threat of losing social and political prestige, and increasingly economic hostility and competition, led upper castes to instigate and orchestrate violence against Harijans and Muslims. This threat motivated violence against Harijans and Muslims in the walled city and in the industrial labour region.

For instance, in the walled city, where Harijans, Muslims and upper castes lived separately but in close proximity to each other, several clashes took place between the former two and the latter. Upper castes attacked Muslim-dominated neighbourhood in Naginapole, Dariapur and Kalupur between 18 and 19 March⁶⁵. ‘...[I]n the presence of the police the houses, shops, garage, grainary [sic] etc. of the Muslims were set on fire and the police did nothing to stop them or apprehend any body’.⁶⁶ Similar instances of violence occurred in Harijan-dominated neighbourhoods in Asarwa on 16 April and in Karanj on 18 April.⁶⁷

In the industrial labour region, Harijans and Muslims were attacked in Saraspur, Indira Garibnagar, Bapunagar, Gomtipur and Odhav. Worst episode of violence against them was reported from Bapunagar and Indira Garibnagar between 21 and 25 April. According to eyewitnesses, a mob of 8,000 – 10,000 Patel men attacked on the morning of the 21 April. The mob was armed with knives, iron rods, and pipes and was led by police. The mob in connivance with the police first pelted stones at the basti and then started killing Muslims, Harijans, looting their shops and setting houses on fire. Similar attacks took place on the 22

⁶⁵ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 226.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 251.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Annexure XXXV, p. 219 and p. 224.

and 23 April.⁶⁸ By the time violence was brought under control, nearly two-third of the total Harijans houses had been burnt in Bapunagar and more than 6,000 Muslims rendered homeless in Indira Garibnagar.⁶⁹

Given that the 1985 riot saw such widespread violence against Harijans, it is not surprising they remembered the 1985 as a riot over the reservation policy and not communal issues. Kishen Parmar who worked as a *badli* [casual worker] in Calico Mills in Behrampura said:

The 1985 riots started over the reservation issue. Whatever happened was not so much between Hindus and Muslims. In 1985 there some talk of reducing reserved seats, so riots started over that. During that riot, Dalits were badly beaten by the police. In front of me in my locality men, even women and 10 – 11 year old children were beaten up. We [Dalits] suffered a lot during the riot. One of the boys...was beaten so badly that he died after 6 months. We filed a case also but that time everyone was afraid of the police...Upper caste people did not want that Dalits to get educated and reach good high posts or become government officers. They just wanted us to do small menial jobs for them in their houses.⁷⁰

Even some Muslims, remembered the events of 1985 not as a communal riot but rather as being over the reservation policy, which had led to police brutality. Shamsulbhai, a Muslim and a former employee of Calico Mills in Behrampura, explained:

The 1985 riot started because Dalits were being given reservations by the government. Upper castes did not want that Dalits to get reservations. Once the riot started the military came and it imposed a curfew in our areas. But the police used to come and beat up Dalits in our locality. I saw with my own eyes that the police mercilessly beat Dalits who were fighting for their rights.⁷¹

It is in the context of this widespread caste-based violence that the endurance of neighbourhood ties in the face of communal mobilization has to be understood. During the

⁶⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 251.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 215-6.

⁷⁰ Interview at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 15/1/07.

⁷¹ Interview at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 20/1/07.

1985 riot, Harijans found themselves at the receiving end of caste-based violence whilst Muslims became targets of communal hostilities. In both these cases, however, the perpetrators of violence were upper castes and the police. Since they lived in close proximity with one another in the industrial labour region, they forged neighbourhood alliances to protect their own and each other's life and property. In order to understand how these alliances were forged consider the following two testimonies.

Mumtaz Bano lived in Rakhial, a mixed neighbourhood in the mill district of Gomtipur.

Her neighbourhood was attacked by a mob of upper caste men and the police on 21 April.

The 1985 riot started over the reservation issue, but later became a Hindu-Muslim riot. In our locality, Muslims and Harijans used to live side by side. In one row people from UP lived, in one there were Rabaris. I think there were some people from Maharashtra also. We had good relations with those people. All of us were poor – *dal roti khane wale log*. [people who eat bread and lentils]. When the fight over reservations started Hindu and Muslims in our basti reached a settlement: Muslims will not attack and Hindus will not react. Peace was declared. When my husband went to buy milk, suddenly a mob appeared. They burnt houses, and looted shops. Police was firing so many bullets it was like rainfall. But then Harijans and Muslims together fought the mob. We defended ourselves with whatever we could find.⁷²

A Muslim man from Pannalal Ki Chawli in Gomtipur gave the following testimony to activists in 1985 whilst living in a relief camp:

On 23 April situation became tense in our area. I used to help in the relief camps during the day and go back home to my chawl at night and tell people to maintain peace. On 10 May, a meeting was conducted at the house of Ibrahim bhai, who runs a flour-grinding shop. Since violence had erupted in Dariapur and Kalupur people were afraid. I was told that there is a meeting of Muslims, Hindus and the police. From our neighbouring chawls spokesmen and leaders of Harijan brothers, Pathan brothers came to the meeting. Some people who hail from Maharashtra and Kerala also came to the meeting. There was someone from all areas between Raipur and our chawl. It was decided that if someone comes to attack Muslims from your area then you would stop them, and if some Muslims attack or come to loot then we will take responsibility and not let them do anything... We also decided that two

⁷² Interview at his residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 22/11/07.

people from each mohalla would stay up at night and make sure everything is okay. At night, around 2 at night, Hindu and Muslim brothers would meet at a nearby cycle shop at an SRP point to update each other on the latest developments. So we used to stay up at night and keep watch... some people send their women and children and some of their other belongings to their relatives or here and there....

There are lots of instances where Harijans have helped Muslims. If you see Harijan brothers, Sikh brothers, brothers from UP, and Rabaris who participated in the 1969 riot have not joined the majority [upper caste Hindus] this time.⁷³

When read together, these testimonies reveal how neighbourhood ties between Harijans and Muslims were strengthened during the 1985 riot by forging a strategic alliance. This alliance brought together migrant Harijan labourers from UP, Maharashtra, Kerala and from rural Gujarat (Rabaris) as well as Muslims and Pathans. Although Hindu nationalist organizations had firmly established themselves in these industrial labour regions from the 1960s, and had rapidly recruited lower and backward communities between 1970 and 1985, during the riot they chose to remain loyal to their Muslim neighbours instead.

As the testimonies show, once this alliance was forged, Harijans and Muslims mutually decided to maintain peace. They organized night vigils to prevent violent confrontations and kept each other informed about local developments. When their localities were attacked they protected one another from marauding crowds. Even though Scheduled Caste migrants from UP and Maharashtra had taken the lead in attacking Muslims during the 1969 riot, during the 1985 riot ties based on everyday interaction, a shared sense of persecution, and political necessities prevailed over communal mobilization. Despite the prevalence of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations for sexual violence, neighbourhood ties did not break. The resilience of these ties seems to have had the effect of preventing the occurrence of brutal sexual violence against Muslim women.

⁷³ Interview with an anonymous Muslim man, Aman Chowk Relief Camp, 1/6/1985, recorded in Achyut Yagnik's 1985 film documentary 'The 1985 Riot in Ahmedabad', SETU Archives, Ahmedabad.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that between 1970 and 1985 Hindu nationalist organizations mobilized extensive support from various sections of the Ahmedabadi population in the wake of the deepening socio-economic and political crises. When the anti-reservation riot turned into an anti-Muslim riot, these organizations sought to mobilize different caste communities against Muslims on the basis of their gendered Hindutva rhetoric. They also organized events in which this brotherhood inflicted verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women and attacked Muslim property. As a result, Hindu nationalist motivations for inflicting brutal sexual violence were anything but absent from the riot. Moreover, patriarchal ideas that conflate sexual violence with 'sex' and normalize its infliction to maintain the gendered status quo were also prevalent during the riot. Indeed, it was these patriarchal ideas that motivated policemen to sexually victimize Hindu women.

However, despite the presence of these motivations, brutal sexual violence was not reported. This chapter has argued for the significance of strong neighbourhood ties between Harijans and Muslims in preventing such violence. In sharp contrast to the 1969 riot, in 1985 these two communities were made the targets of upper caste violence, which led them to forge strategic alliances with one another in order to protect each other's homes and lives. This strengthening of ties seems to have prevented extreme sexual violence against Muslim women. Through these findings, this chapter has challenged the predominant view that explains the incidence of such sexual violence in terms of Hindutva ideology alone. Instead, it has made a case for taking into account both the contribution of patriarchal ideas that normalize and sanction sexual violence against women, and the nature of neighbourhood ties, in understanding such occurrences.

CHAPTER IV: THE 1992 RIOT IN AHMEDABAD

Introduction

The 1992 riot in Ahmedabad started in the immediate aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Mosque in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya on 6 December. It is notable that the demolition of this Mosque led to communal rioting in several other parts of India that were thousands of miles away from Ayodhya. Violence erupted in the provinces of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. The province of Uttar Pradesh, in which Ayodhya is located, saw widespread communal rioting. In Gujarat, the cities of Ahmedabad and Surat were engulfed by communal riots immediately after the demolition of the Babri mosque. However, violence also spread to the districts of Bharuch, Jambusar, Khambhat and Anand.¹

In Ahmedabad violence started on 6 December and continued sporadically until 11 January. By the time large-scale rioting was brought to a halt, at least 134 people had been killed, and several hundreds had been injured and rendered homeless. Another 171 people had been killed in other parts of the province.² Although the breakdown of these figures according to religious identity is unavailable, media reports of the time suggest that the overwhelming majority of those dead were Muslims.³ Significantly, between December 1992 and January 1993, instances of sexual violence against Muslim women, in the form of rape, gang rape and

¹ *Times of India*, Delhi edition, 6 December 1992 – 1 February 1993.

² These estimates are based on new reports published in *The Times of India* and *Indian Express*, Ahmedabad edition, between 6-12 December 1992, 24-25 December 1992, 6-30 January 1993 and, Arunkumar Bhatt, 'Ahmedabad Carnage: Rioters rip Gujarat's Premier City Apart', Cover Story, *Frontline*, 10 (3), January 30, 1992, pp. 18-20.

³ *Ibid.*

genital mutilation, were reported from Bombay and Surat.⁴ In Ahmedabad, however, sexual violence only took the form of verbal and visual abuse.⁵

In the aftermath of the 1992 violence in Ahmedabad and Surat an official Commission of Inquiry was appointed under Justice Chauhan of the Gujarat High Court. However, the government of Gujarat, which was led by CM Shankarsinh Vaghlela at the time, disbanded the commission in 1996 before this document could be finalized and made public. No authoritative explanation for this disbanding has surfaced as yet. Since this commission report is unavailable, this chapter will draw on media reports, documentary films, NGO reports and Hindu nationalist propaganda material. It will also draw heavily on the testimonies of people who witnessed and survived the riot.

The main concern of this chapter is to examine why brutal instances of sexual violence were not reported from the 1992 riot in Ahmedabad. In order to do so, this chapter will first explore the workings of Hindu nationalist organizations between 1985 and 1992: their rhetoric and mobilization activities. The second part will analyse the events that took place during the riot. The final part will explore the impact of communal mobilization on neighbourhoods during the riot.

4.1 Entrenchment of Hindu Nationalism: 1985 – 1992

Between 1985 and 1992, Hindu nationalist organizations dedicated themselves to aggressively mobilizing support for Hindutva, and succeeded in entrenching themselves in

⁴ See Lancy Lobo and Paul D'Souza, 'Surat Riots II – Images of Violence'; Sudhir Chandra, 'Communal Consciousness and Communal Violence'; Purushottam Agarwal, 'Surat, Savarkar and Draupadi' on Surat. Justice B.N. SriKrishna report <http://www.sabrang.com/srikrish/sri%20main.htm>; Citizen's Tribunal (Justice S M Daud and Justice Hosbet Suresh), *People's Verdict*, <http://www.sabrang.com/tribunal/vol2/womenvio.html>. Accessed 30/04/09; Anand Patwardhan, *Father, Son and the Holy War* (Documentary Film, India, 1994).

⁵ AIDWA, CWDS, MDS, NFIW, 'Report of Women's Delegation', in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds.), *Women and the Hindu Right* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996), p. 321.

Ahmedabad. As in the previous two decades, eastern and western Ahmedabad experienced this process differently. Accordingly, this section explores the activities of the Hindu nationalist organizations in these two regions in turn.

Eastern Ahmedabad

The entrenchment of the Hindu nationalist organizations in the walled city and in the industrial labour region was closely tied up with the socio-economic decline that set in after the closure of textile mills in the early 1980s. Ever-greater number of workers were forced into poorly paid, unorganized sector jobs such as manufacturing and service, transport and construction work. For instance, out of the 959,073 industrial main workers⁶ in the city in 1991, over 35 percent worked in manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs industry, and nearly 10 percent in the transportation and communication sectors.⁷ Since Dalits⁸ and Muslims constituted the overwhelming majority of the mill-workers rendered unemployed, they were the hardest hit by the economic slump. Several of my respondents, who lost their jobs in the mills, took up daily waged jobs as truck drivers, shuttle drivers, petty shopkeepers, construction workers, or vegetable vendors. Despite the growing economic insecurity, however, Dalits and Muslims had forged a strategic alliance to protect their own and each other's lives during the 1985 riot. Moreover, the anti-reservation stance of the ABVP and the BJP had also distanced lower castes. In order to mobilize their support, after the 1985 riot the VHP paid particular attention to mobilizing Dalits. It formed a special militant youth wing in the mid-1980s called the Bajrang Dal for this purpose.

⁶ The official Census defines 'Main Workers' as people who were employed for at least 6 months during the year that preceded the Census year.

⁷ *Census of India 1991, Gujarat District Census Handbook, Village and Townwise Primary Census Abstract, Series 5, Part XII – A & B, District Primary Census Abstract, Annexure, pp. 310-3.*

⁸ In line with the official and unofficial documents that comment on this period and testimonies, this chapter will use the term Dalit to refer to Scheduled Castes or Harijans.

The ABVP, which was the main protagonist in the anti-reservation agitation, started favouring the reservation system after 1985. The VHP organized several Hindu Youth Sammelans [youth conventions] and appealed to the youth to dedicate themselves to the ‘abolition of untouchability’ and work for the ‘all round development of their ‘economically and socially backward Hindu brothers’.⁹ In addition to this, the VHP activists actively engaged with unemployed Dalit youth in the industrial labour region of Ahmedabad. Political purpose, an opportunity for upward social mobility and the material support which the VHP offered, appealed to several Dalit men. Mohan Macwan, son of an ex-mill worker, and a resident of the labour region of Gomtipur was one of the men who joined the Bajrang Dal in late 1980s.

I was into body-building since I was 15 and I used to teach 20-25 boys of my *vistaar* [locality]. The local VHP leaders had noticed this and approached me to conduct proper classes for all the boys in my locality. They provided me with all the resources and equipment and even bought us an old vacant house and converted it into a gym. They put me in charge, promised to make me a youth leader and paid me a salary for this work. They also trained us in using lathis in the shakhas they organized in the main cricket grounds.

They also held intellectual classes where they told us about Ambedkar and the work he did to raise the dignity and social standing of Dalits. They said that Ambedkar wanted us all to be Hindus and live together. I had not studied that much, so I believed what they said. I knew that it was because of his work that I have respect today, can wear good clothes and sit amongst you [upper caste] people. So if Baba Ambedkar wanted us to be with Hindus and live together as brothers, then I must do it. This is why many other Dalit boys like me decided to go with them.

They would tell us that Hindus must forget their old caste problems. Whatever wrongs were inflicted on you by our ancestors are in the past...today we are all together. We will come and live with you, come to your house, eat with you, sit and talk to you... and they did. They would come home when someone at home was ill and give us money for medicines. If they found out that a family is too poor to afford an evening meal then these VHP people collect money and gave it to that family. They said you must come to our temples and worship there like all the rest of us. In the basti, we are all Hindu brothers and we have to work together to protect the

⁹ Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *Shaping of Modern Gujarat*, p. 256.

Hindu community from Muslims.

Durga Vahini [the women's wing of the VHP] used to do similar work with Dalit girls of our vistaar. Tell them that they should work for the country, for their religion and come and participate in Durga Vahini programmes. They would tell girls that today, a woman is not afraid of anyone, she is strong like Jhansi Ki Rani. She can fight and is at par with men. They started a *balwadi* [crèche] in my basti and one of my neighbours, a college graduate, was put in charge of that. She was asked to teach other girls and got Rs. 3-4,000 for it. They told her teach them whatever you want but tell them stories of Ram, sing Bhajans [religious Hindu prayers] and start the classes with Vande Mataram.¹⁰

Mohan's testimony reveals how young Dalit men in the labour districts were mobilized by Hindu nationalist organizations in the late 1980s. The latter provided Dalits with a sense of political purpose and community by telling them that they must protect the Hindu community from their imaginary Muslim enemy. By rejecting norms of caste purity that ritually prohibit sharing food, entry into temples and touching, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal also offered them social respectability otherwise unavailable to them because of their low caste status. Material benefits in the form of work, money and medicines, also helped to ameliorate their economic hardship. Moreover, by carrying out similar work amongst Dalit women, Durga Vahini helped to secure their support for Hindutva agenda too.

Given this intricate process of mobilization, it is hardly surprising that the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a phenomenal rise in the membership of Hindu nationalist organizations in Gujarat. According to one estimate, in 1986 the RSS ran over 1,099 'purna' and 'upshakhas'¹¹ in the province and had 25,320 volunteers. By 1990, it had 1,289 full and sub-branches and 28,956 volunteers. During the same period the Bharitya Mazdoor Sangh

¹⁰ Interview in Gomtipur, Ahmedabad, 20/10/07.

¹¹ Since most cities had more than one shakhas, they came to be known as upshakhas or sub-branches.

(worker's union) rose from 19,700 to 20,216, whilst the membership of the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (farmer's union) from 4,00 in 1986 to 20,000 in 1988, to a 200,095 by 1990.¹²

This insidious entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations from the late 1980s in the industrial labour region in eastern Ahmedabad also started resulting in the expulsion of Muslims from mixed neighbourhoods. Immediately after the 1985 riot, for instance, the industrial labour region of Bapunagar was partitioned. Muslims were evicted and forced to sell their property in the Hindu-dominated areas of Indira Garibnagar. The Muslim-dominated part came to be known by local residents as 'Pakistan', whilst the other was dominated by Dalits and came to be known as 'Hindustan'. The road dividing the two was called 'the border'.¹³ When not evicted from their property, Muslims shifted out of Hindu-dominated areas out of their own accord in fear of their lives. As one of the survivors of the 1985 riot from Saraspur explained, 'Hindus say that they don't want *Miyan bhai* [Muslims] in the chawli. This time we barely managed to save our lives. What if they attack us again? Now I will accept living on the streets, but will never go back.'¹⁴ This fear led several Muslims families to shift to the Muslim-dominated slums in Juhapura. By the early 1990s, Juhapura developed as a Muslim ghetto and came to be known popularly as 'mini-Pakistan'.¹⁵ The road that divided Juhapura from the nearby Hindu-dominated locality of Gupta Nagar came to be known as the 'India-Pakistan border'.

In the walled city, a similar process of spatial segregation unfolded. Here, however, the evacuees were upper caste Hindus. For instance, economically better-off upper caste

¹² Gajendraprasad Shukla, 'Rajkiya Pakshni Vicharsarani Ane Tena Aadhar: Gujarat Bhartiya Janta Pakshno Ekam Abhyas' (University of South Gujarat: Unpublished Thesis, 1991), p. 49 and p. 50.

¹³ Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*, p.127. Also see Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *Shaping of Modern Gujarat*, p. 230.

¹⁴ Shahabuddin, Aman Chowk Relief Camp, 1/6/85, recorded in Achyut Yagnik's 1985 film documentary 'The 1985 Riot in Ahmedabad', SETU Archives, Ahmedabad.

¹⁵ Interview with S. Khan at her residence in Juhapura, Ahmedabad, 21/12/07 and with J. Ahir at her residence in Gupta Nagar, Ahmedabad, 23/12/07.

residents of Vadigam sold their property and shifted to the affluent Paldi area on the western side of the river. Simultaneously, some backward caste families from the industrial labour regions also moved into the Hindu-dominated areas of the walled city in order to ensure safety. As a result, from the early 1990s spatial divisions in Ahmedabad had hardened not only along class- and caste-lines, but also along community-lines.

As this spatial segregation increased, Hindu nationalist organizations started physically inscribing these divisions. Billboards proclaiming Hindu-dominated areas as 'Hindu Rashtras', usually erected by the local chapters of the VHP, started appearing across Ahmedabad. These boards typically read, 'Hindu Rashtra's Gomtipur Village welcomes you', or 'You are now entering Saraspur village of Hindu Rashtra'.¹⁶ Similar boards were erected in other districts of Gujarat. They read, for instance, 'You are now entering Vadodara Pradesh of Hindu Rashtra'.¹⁷ These boards were the physical symbols of the entrenchment of the Hindu nationalist organizations in Ahmedabad.

This subsection has interrogated the process through which Hindu nationalist organizations entrenched themselves in eastern Ahmedabad between 1985 and 1992. By exploiting socio-economic deprivations and offering a sense of community and political purpose, the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and Durga Vahini mobilized Dalits in support of Hindutva. This deep entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations further fuelled the spatial segregation of people along religious lines. With the closure of several composite textile mills and the division of neighbourhoods, the places in which lower income and poor Hindus and Muslims could inter-mix shrank rapidly. Hindutva had come to pervade the urban

¹⁶ Interview with Geeta Shah at her residence, Ahmedabad, 5/1/07.

¹⁷ During my fieldtrip in 2006-8, I spotted several such billboards in Ahmedabad, Surat and Baroda.

space on the eastern side of the Sabarmati. The following section explores how Hindu nationalist organizations also came to pervade the region across the river on the west.

Western Ahmedabad

The entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations in the affluent locales of western Ahmedabad was tied up with the politico-economic concerns of the upper castes. Although these communities had steadily been shifting towards decidedly right-wing politics from the 1960s, this shift gathered pace in the early-1980s. Disillusionment with the corrupt and factionalized Congress had brought them out on the streets during the Nav Nirman movement in the mid-1970s. When the Congress introduced the KHAM alliance and then the reservation policy in the 1980s, the upper castes had waged violent protests in 1981. The 1985 anti-reservation agitation had served to crystallize their opposition to the Congress and mobilized them in favour of the BJP. In the aftermath of the 1985 agitation this crystallization of ideological support for Hindu nationalism continued.

Upper caste students, who had opposed the reservation policy, increasingly joined the student wing of the BJP. Consequently, the membership of the ABVP increased from 5,037 in 1986 to 10,972 by 1990. Affluent land-owning communities, especially Patels, who were disgruntled with the Congress' KHAM policy, also threw their weight behind the BJP. Government officials who had also opposed the reservation for lower and backward castes in public sector jobs, also increasingly joined the BJP. Their support took Hindutva ideology to the heart of the State machinery. Bureaucrats, police officers, municipal officers and other government officials openly espoused Hindu nationalist ideas.¹⁸ This increasing support was

¹⁸ Pravin Sheth, *Political Development in Gujarat*, Nikita Sud, 'Gujarat: From Developmental State to Hindu Rashtra?' (University of Oxford: Unpublished Thesis, 2007).

reflected in the increase in the membership of the BJP. The number of ordinary members of the party increased from 55,000 in 1980-1983 to 140,000 in 1984-1987. Within the next three years, i.e. by 1990, the membership had reached 200,000.¹⁹

With this phenomenal rise in the popularity of Hindu nationalist organizations in western as well as eastern Ahmedabad, the BJP recorded its first major election victory in 1987. In that year, the party won the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation elections with a convincing majority. In the 1990 Assembly Elections the BJP managed to secure 67 out of the total 182 seats. This electoral success propelled the party to the corridors of State power. Under the leadership of the Janta Dal leader, Chimanbhai Patel, the BJP formed a coalition government in the province. The Hindu Right had entered the government and extensively infiltrated the State machinery. Now Hindutva was both ideologically and politically entrenched in the city.

As in the case of the eastern part of the city, this entrenchment ushered in changes in the demography of western Ahmedabad as well. Although the latter was primarily an upper caste Hindu enclave, there were a few affluent Muslim families in the Paldi area on the west. Between 1989-1990, the VHP started attacking these families as well. It circulated a map with saffron and green markers (the former signifying the Hindu and the latter Muslim area) and pressurized these families to evacuate their property and relocate to Muslim-dominated areas.²⁰

Whilst these affluent areas were being converted into Hindutva's version of a Hindu Rashtra, slums along the western periphery of the region were undergoing the same process. These slums were home to lower and backward caste and Muslim daily-waged labourers who

¹⁹ Gajendraprasad Shukla, 'Rajkiya pakshni vicharsarani ane tena aadhar', p. 46 and p. 233.

²⁰ Communalism Combat, 'Face to Face with Fascism', in *Communalism Combat*, April, 2000, www.sabrang.com/cc/comold/april00/co-story.htm. Accessed 19/06/09.

worked in middle class homes as domestic servants, vegetable vendors, menial workers and shopkeepers etc. Here too, Hindu nationalist organizations mobilized lower and backward residents against Muslims by manipulating their caste- and class-based anxieties. These neighbourhoods had been so extensively mobilized by the early 1990s that boards such as ‘Hindu Rashtra’s Thaltej Village welcomes you’ appeared here as well.²¹

This section has argued that the period between 1985 and 1992 saw the entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations across Ahmedabad. Socio-economic and politico-ideological concerns drove vast sections of the Ahmedabadi population towards Hindutva, which translated into votes for the BJP. Now the Hindu Right had a firm control over urban neighbourhoods, widespread ideological and emotional support, and access to the resources of the State. It is in the context of this entrenchment that the activities of Hindu nationalist organizations between 1985 and 1992, and eventually the riot of December 1992 have to be understood.

4.2 Build-Up to the 1992 Riot: The Ramjanmabhoomi Movement

From the mid-1980s Hindu nationalist organizations started the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. This movement aimed at reclaiming the so-called Ramjanmabhoomi, the birthplace of Lord Ram in Ayodhya. This reclamation involved the building of a magnificent Hindu temple at that site where a medieval mosque, Babri Masjid, stood. Because this site had been under dispute since 1947, the gates to the Babri Mosque had been locked and people barred from entering the structure. However, when these locks were removed in 1986, Hindu nationalist organizations claimed that this was the first step towards liberating the disputed

²¹ Interview with Geeta Shah at her residence, Ahmedabad, 5/1/07.

land and building a Ram Temple. Subsequently, from 1986 the RSS, the VHP and the BJP started the nation-wide Ramjanmabhoomi campaign. Ahmedabad was one of the locations in which this campaign was pursued most aggressively.

From the very beginning, this campaign involved the circulation of virulent anti-Muslim propaganda and organizing mass religious processions. Propaganda pamphlets that threatened Muslims to relinquish their claim over the Babri Mosque were widely circulated in the city and other parts of the province. A pamphlet entitled 'The Story of the Ramjanmabhoomi', was widely circulated by the VHP:

...Till date, 76 battles have been fought to free the janmabhoomi. 300,000 Hindus have lost their lives fighting for this space...Today, the Ramjanmabhoomi Trust has resurrected the call for handing over this space to Hindus...

...Muslims are advised to...hand over the birthplace of Ram to Hindus... If Muslims do not, Hindu society is equipped to sacrifice the path of the Constitution.²²

In addition to circulating such propaganda materials, the VHP also organized several religious processions to mobilize support for the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign and collect funds for it. Since large sections of the Ahmedabadi population - affluent upper castes, Dalits and other lower-and backward-caste communities - had been actively mobilized for the Hindutva cause, they generously donated money for these processions. These processions were organized in remote rural areas as well as urban centres such as Ahmedabad and Surat. In Ahmedabad, the VHP took the lead in organizing the Jagannath procession in the walled city and a Ram-Janki Shobha Yatra (procession of lord Ram and his consort in 1987 in Ahmedabad.

²² Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 'Shri Ramjanmabhoomi ni vyatha katha' (Unpublished Pamphlet: Ahmedabad, 1987) reproduced and translated in Nikita Sud, 'Gujarat: From Developmental State to Hindu Rashtra?', p. 210.

These processions stoked communal tensions and led to violence not only in Ahmedabad but also in the neighbouring districts of Kheda, Panchmahals, Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Mehsana and Bharuch as well.²³ According to one estimate, the period between 1986 and 1987 saw as many as 95 instances of inter-religious rioting.²⁴ By 1987 communal tensions in the province had increased so significantly that even trivial scuffles over cricket matches and rickshaw fares led to Hindu-Muslim violence. Since the BJP was in command of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation from 1987, and Hindutva supporters had extensively infiltrated the State machinery, the police was both unwilling and unable to prevent these processions and quell communal violence in the city.

From 1987 onwards the tone of Hindu nationalist rhetoric and the belligerence of the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation took a turn for the worse. This turn was a product of three significant developments that took place at the nation-wide level. The first development was the telecast of the mythological epic *Ramayana* on the national television that was made to coincide with the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. On the one hand, the telecast of this famous epic helped to mobilize a much wider Hindu constituency in support of the movement.²⁵ On the other, since this telecast portrayed Ram as a virile, yet virtuous, warrior-king, Hindu nationalist organizations used his image to popularize Hindutva's ideal of militant Hindu manhood.²⁶

The second development was the infamous Shah Bano controversy²⁷ of 1986, which

²³ Ashis Nandy *et al* (1995) *Creating a Nationality*, pp. 121-3.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 108.

²⁵ Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 118-9.

²⁶ Anuradha Kapur, 'Deity to Crusader: The Changing Iconography of Ram', in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindu and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today* (New Delhi: Viking, 1993).

²⁷ Introduced by Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress government at the behest of Muslim religious leaders, the Bill denied Muslim women right to alimony after divorce. This issue had surfaced after the Supreme Court of India granted a Muslim woman, Shah Bano, the right to monthly maintenance even though Muslim men are not

led to acrimonious debates over the Uniform Civil Code²⁸. The Hindu Right accused the Congress government of appeasing Muslims by allowing Islamic clerics to adjudicate matters relating to Muslim women's rights, while Hindus were subject to ostensibly more secular laws. The regional mouthpiece of the RSS in Ahmedabad, *Sadhana*, used this opportunity to propagate the idea that Hindus were being treated 'unfairly in their own country'.²⁹ This controversy further helped to mobilize upper caste Hindus for Hindutva.

The third development took place in 1987 when Roop Kanwar, a Rajput woman from Rajasthan committed *sati* [i.e., immolated herself on the pyre of her deceased husband]. Hindu nationalist organizations used this opportunity to hail *sati* as the greatest of Hindu traditions and a marker of a Hindu woman's unwavering commitment to their husband and their religion. These three events set the pace for the changing tone of Hindutva rhetoric from 1990. Whilst Ram became the icon for Hindutva's ideal of aggressive masculinity, Roop Kanwar became the icon for its ideal of self-abnegating, self-sacrificing femininity. At the same time, the Shah Bano controversy crystallized the image of Muslims as fanatical 'others'.

Subsequently, from 1990, the icon of an aggressive, muscular Ram striding forward resolutely to slay demons, eradicate evil from the world and re-establish his utopian rule, became the chief symbol of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. This warrior-like, heavily armed and powerful Ram was projected as the new Hindu man committed to ending all

obliged to pay alimony to their wives under Shariat law. For a good discussion on this controversy see Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, 'Women Between Community and State: Some Implications of the Uniform Civil Code Debates in India, in *Social Text* 65, 18(4), Winter, 2000, pp. 55-82.

²⁸ Uniform Civil Code is the legal term for a set of secular civil law that would govern all people irrespective of their religion, caste and tribe. This Code would supersede the right of citizens to be governed under different personal laws based on their religion or caste or tribe, such as the Muslim Personal Law.

²⁹ Issues of *Sadhana*, Ahmedabad, 1986-7.

injustices.³⁰ Thereafter, the assertion of Hindu strength and unity by perpetrating violence against Muslims, and the destruction of the mosque in order to liberate the Ramjanmabhoomi became the part of the same project. ‘Karseva’ [religious service], as BJP President, Lal Krishna Advani warned, ‘does not mean *bhajans* [religious songs] and *kirtans* [religious prayers]. We will perform karseva with shovels and bricks.’³¹

This newly acquired militancy was reflected in the virulent speeches delivered by Hindu nationalist leaders such as VHP leader Sadhavi Rithambhra. A notorious campaigner for this militant Hinduism, she instigated men to annihilate Muslims.

...Young [Hindu] men come to me and ask for arms. I asked them, “Why do you need arms”

They said, “To kill the enemies of Hinduism”. I responded, “Why would you want to waste bullets to kill eunuchs!”...Let no one forget...whoever challenges Hindus will die a dog’s death.

Say it with Pride, We are Hindus! Victory to Lord Ram!³²

This militant anti-Muslim rhetoric increasingly found expression in the religious processions organized by Hindu nationalist organizations in Ahmedabad. When the VHP organized a religious procession to celebrate the birth of Lord Ganesh and Ram Jyoti (the light of Ram) in September 1990, participants shouted sexually abusive slogans like: ‘Circumcised Muslims, we shall not let you live’, ‘Muslim is a mother-fucker’, ‘Each child is Ram’s, the rest are bastards’.³³ These slogans reflected the emergence of an overtly militant Hindutva sexuality that was ranged against the ‘circumcised’, ‘bastard’ and allegedly immoral Muslim ‘other’.

³⁰ Richard Davis, ‘The Iconography of Rama’s Chariot’, in David Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, South Asian Seminar Series (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996).

³¹ Lal Krishna Advani, quoted in, *Times of India*, Delhi edition, 1 December 1992.

³² Sadhavi Rithambhra’s speech recorded in Anand Patwardhan’s *Father, Son and the Holy War* (Documentary Film, India, 1994)

³³ Asghar Ali Engineer, ‘Communal Riots in Recent Months’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (40), October 6, 1990, pp. 2234-6, p. 2235.

In the bid to encourage the assertion of a militant Hindu masculinity against this Muslim ‘enemy’, descriptions of sexual violence allegedly perpetrated against Hindu women were made more graphic. One of the VHP pamphlets, entitled ‘Terrorism Attacks India’, illustrates this:

In the Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, two Hindu children were murdered and their flesh was stuffed into the mouths of their mother and father. In Pakistan and in Bangladesh Hindu women were stripped on the streets and then they were gang raped.

What happened in Kashmir could happen in India as well.... Today when Hindus protect the country then it is considered communal but when Muslims support terrorism then that is considered secular.

What is the solution? There is only one solution to this problem: The construction of a Ram Temple at the Ramjanmabhoomi. This is a holy task. This will unite the whole Hindu society.³⁴

This pamphlet used lurid descriptions of sexual violence against Hindu women to stress the need for Hindu unity against ‘Muslim terrorism’, for the rejection of secularism and for the construction of the Ram Temple.

This rising militancy of Hindutva rhetoric was reflected in the way men inflicted verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women during events organized by Hindu nationalist organizations. For instance, when the VHP organized Jagannath Yatra in July 1992, the participants stripped themselves in front of Muslim women. They shouted slogans such as ‘Children of Tipu Sultan bring your Ruqayyas ...our Ram and Laxman are coming to fuck them’ when the procession passed through Muslim neighbourhoods in the walled city.³⁵ Similar instances of verbal sexual violence against Muslim women were reported during religious processions in Baroda as well.³⁶

³⁴ Vishwa Hindu Parishad, ‘Antankvadnu Bharat Par Akraman’ (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1990).

³⁵ Asghar Ali Engineer, ‘Communal Riots in Ahmedabad’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 (31-32), 1992, pp. 1641-1643, p. 1643.

³⁶ Bhavana Mehta and Trupti Shah, ‘Gender and Communal Riots’, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27(47), 21 November, 1992, pp. 2252-2254, p. 2523.

This section has tracked the period between 1985 and 1992 during which Hindu nationalist organizations started their Ramjanmabhoomi movement. During the course of this movement, Hindutva rhetoric acquired a new belligerence in which the militant Hindu male was pitched against the ‘circumcised’, ‘emasculated’ Muslim male. This militancy of the invigorated Hindu male was then repeatedly expressed through verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women and violence against Muslim men.

4.3 Events in the Riot

The immediate catalyst to the 1992 riot was of course the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya on 6 December. This demolition was orchestrated by the RSS, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal and carried out by *karsevaks* [Hindu religious activists]. Some of these *karsevaks* had been trained in demolition, combat and use of weapons by retired army officers in special camps near Ahmedabad.³⁷ As the news of this demolition spread, a wave of communal riots started all over India. On 6 December itself violence had spread to several parts of Gujarat including Ahmedabad, Surat and Bharuch districts and led to 61 deaths. In Ahmedabad, riots started on 6 December following the broadcast of the news on the national television and continued sporadically until 11 January 1993. Based on media reports and survivors’ testimonies, the following paragraphs describe the events that took place during the riot in Ahmedabad.

From 6th morning, slogans such as ‘*Ayodhya ma Ram, pachi aaram*’ [We will rest after Ram has been seated in Ayodhya] were seen painted on walls across the city.³⁸ Armed with sticks, tridents, swords, spears, stones and crude petrol bombs, organized groups of 200-1,000

³⁷ Arunkumar Bhatt, ‘Polishing the Claws: What is the VHP up to?’, *Frontline*, 8 (21), October 12-25, 1991, p. 106.

³⁸ Interview with S. Parmar at his residence in Behrampur, Ahmedabad, 21/1/07.

men went on a rampage. These mobs were heard shouting slogans like ‘Musalman ko kato maro’ [Cut and kill the Muslims] and ‘Jai Shri Ram’ [Victory to Lord Ram].³⁹ Most of these attackers were VHP, RSS and Bajrang Dal activists who singled out Muslims, their mosques, shops and homes for attack.⁴⁰ Hindu houses and shops were marked with signs such as ‘This is a Hindu house’, ‘This is Ram’s Shop’, and ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and left untouched.⁴¹ Mobs that attacked usually chanted slogans like ‘Bajrang Bali Ki Jai’ [Victory to Monkey Deity, Bajrang]. Several women reported that the attackers shouted sexual abuse, made obscene gestures, and sometimes unzipped their trousers in front of them.⁴² Sexual violence in the form of such verbal and visual acts was widely reported across Ahmedabad.⁴³

Much of this violence was concentrated in Muslim-dominated areas in the walled city, especially, Kalupur, Dariapur and Jamalpur and in the industrial labour regions of Rakhial, Gomtipur, Danilimda and Behrampura. In these areas, mobs of men pelted stones at Muslim houses whilst the police fired at the Muslims. In order to protect themselves Muslim men and women defended themselves with whatever they could find. For instance, a survivor from Danilimda explained to me the events that took place in her basti:

When the news of Babri masjid reached the city a rumour started circulating in our area that a riot is going to start. I saw that police came to our basti and showered bullets at us. 5 people were killed in that firing. I was hiding behind a wall watching all this. Just then one bullet hit a woman and her stomach slit. My husband picked up the woman and ran. But then after a little distance, the woman died. When my husband was running carrying that woman I was worried that a bullet might hit him too. Our chawli was surrounded on all four sides. Stones were being pelted from everywhere. Then even I joined my children. I would collect stones and give to them. In our basti several women had joined the men in throwing stones.⁴⁴

³⁹ AIDWA, CWDS, MDS, NFIW, ‘Report of Women’s Delegation’, p. 305.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 320, p. 305.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 304.

⁴² Ibid., p. 321.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 321, p. 300.

⁴⁴ Interview with N. Bano at her residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 18/1/07.

By the end of the evening the situation had deteriorated so considerably that on 7 December the army was called in. An indefinite curfew was imposed in Shahpur, Karanj, Haveli, Kagadpith and Vejalpur areas in the walled city and in the industrial labour region of Maninagar. Despite the imposition of the curfew, several stabbings still took place and rioters continued to throw stones at each other from their rooftops. On that day, at least 4 people died in police firing in Ahmedabad in the mill districts. The overall death toll in the province by the end of that day was said to be 109.

On 8 December, whilst the violence spread to Juhapura and Bapunagar, more cases of rioting were reported from Shahpur. A mob led by local BJP leader attacked the Muslim-dominated areas where seven members of family were locked up in a house and then incinerated.⁴⁵ Violence was also reported from Dariapur, Haveli and Kagadpith in the walled city. Since neighbourhoods in the industrial labour region and the walled city were extensively segregated along religious lines, Muslims and Hindus fought pitched battles with another. On that day, at least 32 people lost their lives in the city. The unwillingness and the inability of the police to quell the violence had become so obvious by 8 December that it had to be replaced by special companies of the Homeguard in the sensitive labour areas like Shahpur and Jamalpur. However, violence between the two communities continued. As Meenabehn, a Dalit woman from the Hindu-dominated neighbourhood of Gupta Nagar across the 'border' from Juhapura, described:

Both Hindu and Muslims sides used to stay awake all night to protect the basti. Both of them were scared of each other. In which ever chawli Muslims were in a minority, Hindus were attacked. Wherever, Hindus were in a minority they were attacked by Muslims. But in any case Hindus are in a majority so Muslims suffered a lot more.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ AIDWA, CWDS, MDS, NFIW, 'Report of Women's Delegation', p. 301.

⁴⁶ Interview at her residence in Gupta Nagar, Ahmedabad, 12/10/06.

Between 8 and 9 December, instances of looting of shops and homes, and destruction of mosques were widely reported across Ahmedabad. Incidents of stone throwing, arson and looting were reported from the sensitive Bapunagar area, Vejalpur and the semi-urban industrial labour region of Naroda district on 10 December. In an attempt to quell the violence, curfew was extended to these areas and the army made to organize flag marches to ensure peace. This brought the violence to a halt until 24 December.

On the 25 December violence erupted again in Gomtipur where mobs led by the VHP and the Bajrang Dal singled out Muslim houses for attack.⁴⁷ They freely used acid bulbs, soda bottles, tridents and swords, which led to 59 deaths and left 31 seriously injured. The army was promptly called in after police attempts to disperse clashing groups with 40 rounds and 30 teargas shells failed to deter the rioters. Extensive patrolling by army personnel and a strict curfew brought the violence to a halt, albeit only briefly.

On 6 January, exactly a month after the destruction of the Babri Mosque, Ahmedabad was engulfed by a second phase of communal rioting. The violence erupted when Muslims organized a procession to mourn the demolition of the Mosque, whilst Hindus celebrated the day on the streets by bursting firecrackers, lighting lamps and raising slogans like 'Victory to Lord Ram'. On the same evening the VHP and the Bajrang Dal organized a *Maha Arti* [a grand Hindu religious ceremony] in the Dalit-dominated area of Behrampura to celebrate the anniversary of the mosque demolition. According to several witnesses, in the evening near the Meladi Mata Temple [temple of a local deity] a mob of 8,000 men gathered to attend the arti.⁴⁸ Sporting saffron headbands and in some cases even khaki shorts [uniform of RSS

⁴⁷ Interview with M. Macwan in Gomtipur, Ahmedabad, 20/10/07.

⁴⁸ Interview with S. Pathan at her residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 15/1/07; I. Yaqub at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 29/1/07, and A. Rafiq at her residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 18/1/07.

volunteers], these men carried tridents, spears and swords. After the arti was over these men attacked the Muslim-dominated chawl of the area in which nearly 200 Muslim families resided. According to Sakina Pathan, one the residents of the chawl, these mobs were ‘shouting such filthy slogans and swear words about Muslim women that if you heard them you would just shut your ears’. First, the mob pelted stones at Muslim houses. In order to defend themselves and prevent the attacking mob from entering the chawl, Muslim men and women also threw stones. Asiya Rafiq was one the women who helped in warding off the marauding crowd. She told me:

When these people came to attend that arti, they all had weapons in their hands. Some had tridents and spears in their hands, and others had swords. We did not have anything except stones. We still managed to defend ourselves for one hour. I also went with my son to the corner of the road and threw stones at them. Then they burnt down Muslim houses in the back row. I recognized some of the people who attacked our basti but there were also others who I did not know by face. But I did see that the police was for Hindus. They fired at us and arrested so many of our boys but they did not arrest any Hindu. So many of our shops were looted but the police did not do anything.⁴⁹

While the police connived with the mobs, several Muslims houses in the chawl were burnt, and grain shops and transport depots owned by them were looted and incinerated. It was only after the army arrived in Behrampura that the violence was brought to halt.

On 8 January a fresh round of violence began following a canard that a mosque had been demolished on Relief Road. Hindu-Muslim clashes rocked the eastern industrial suburbs of the city leaving 12 dead, including a police constable, and a hundred injured before the end of the day. Fearing an escalation of violence, the army was called in yet again and an indefinite curfew was imposed on the walled city and the industrial areas. On the 10 January,

⁴⁹ Interview with A. Rafiq at her residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 18/1/07.

more instances of stone-throwing, stabbings, firing of kerosene bombs and acid bulbs took place claiming another 18 lives. Biscuit Galli, Kalupur, Relief Road, Shahpur, Astodia and, Gomtipur were the worst affected areas in which Muslim and Hindu mobs attacked one another. Violence was brought under control by 11 January and the army started relaxing the curfew in some areas. However, by that day 134 people were dead in Ahmedabad and a total of 305 in the entire province.

This section tracked the various phases of the 1992 riot. It has shown that the much of the violence was concentrated in the walled city and the industrial labour regions. Significantly, even though Hindu nationalist organizations were the main protagonists in the riot and there was widespread support for Hindutva ideology, sexual violence took the form of verbal and visual abuse only. Owing to the dearth of sources for this riot, it will be not be possible to examine how patriarchal ideas motivated this violence. The following section explores the nature of neighbourhood ties during the riot in order to understand why brutal sexual violence did not occur during the 1992 riot.

4.4 Fragile Ties

This section takes the industrial labour region of Behrampura as a site for studying the nature of neighbourhood ties during the 1992 riot. This is an important site because by the early 1990s Behrampura had become a Hindutva stronghold. Firstly, this region had been communalized extensively from the mid-1960s as a result of which Behrampura saw extensive anti-Muslim violence during the 1969 riot.⁵⁰ Secondly, during the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation several Dalit men from the area participated in the karseva at

⁵⁰ Commission of Inquiry, *Inquiry into the communal disturbances at Ahmedabad*, p. 193.

Ayodhya, which served to further entrench Hindu nationalism in this neighbourhood.⁵¹ Thirdly, like most other neighbourhoods in the industrial labour region, Behrampura too was segregated along religious lines, with Hindu and Muslim areas demarcated by a ‘border’.⁵² However, despite the extensive communalization of this neighbourhood, none of my respondents mentioned any instances of brutal sexual violence during the riot. When a team of women’s activists visited Ahmedabad in the aftermath of the 1992 they did not come across any such cases either.⁵³ This section offers an explanation for the absence of brutal sexual violence against Muslim women by pointing to the resilience of neighbourhood ties between Dalit and Muslim residents of Behrampura.

Most of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood worked in Sarabhai-owned Calico textile mills. This was one of the few mills in Ahmedabad that did not close down in the early to mid-1980s. Although Dalit and Muslim workers of this mill competed with each other over jobs and housing like the other mill workers in the industrial labour region, their work in the mills still afforded them space to interact. One such Dalit, Vinod Parmar, who worked as a badli in the Calico mill, for instance, said:

I used to work in automatic cell of the mill. In our mill 80 percent of the workers were either Dalits or Muslims. Only 20 percent of the workers were people of other castes. In the mills we Dalits had to face lots of atrocities. Work that involved hard manual labour was always given to us. But, whatever the problems in the mills everyone worked together.⁵⁴

These ties based on everyday interaction in the mills and in the neighbourhoods had, however, got strained over the years due to extensive communal mobilization. This strain is reflected in

⁵¹ Interview with I. Yaqub, at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 29/1/07 and Kishen Rathod at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 28/1/07.

⁵² Interview with S. Pathan at her residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 15/1/07.

⁵³ AIDWA, CWDS, MDS, NFIW, ‘Report of Women’s Delegation’, p. 320.

⁵⁴ Interview at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 19/1/07.

the testimony of Sakina Pathan, daughter of one of the Muslim casual workers in the Calico mill,

After the Babri Masjid was demolished, the environment in our basti was very tense. Our boys used to do stay up all night and keep a vigil. On both sides [Hindu and Muslim] men used to keep watch. They had to...because just behind our basti was the border. Any side could attack at anytime.⁵⁵

When violence broke out in Behrampura on 6 January following the maha arti, the strain of communal mobilization led to violence against Muslims. Some Dalits looted and burnt the property of their Muslim neighbours. However, despite this violence neighbourhood ties between Dalits and Muslims did not break down entirely. Some Dalits actively protected the lives and homes of Muslims. One such Dalit, Kishen Rathod confronted his 'own people' to protect his Muslim friends. (His Muslim neighbours confirmed his version of events⁵⁶.) He said:

I saw the 1992 riot with my own eyes. That riot was communal from the very beginning. I have a [Muslim] friend called Mumtaz. His house was on the main road and mine was inside the basti on the left-hand side. I was sleeping in my house when I heard people shouting 'kill', 'slaughter'. That is when I woke up. I picked up a knife from my house and reached his house. I saw that our own people had surrounded Mumtaz's house from all sides. In that area there were three Muslim houses. I came in front of those people and threatened them. I said to them that if these people [Muslim families] are harmed in anyway, then I will not spare any of you. If I had not reached Muslims on time that day, then all three families would have lost their lives. Then I walked these three families to the Muslim side of the basti. Until the riot went on, I stayed with the Muslims.⁵⁷

This testimony shows how neighbourhood spaces had been reconstituted into communal spaces wherein religious minorities were singled out for attack and forced into Muslim-dominated areas to secure their lives. However, despite this extensive communalization, some

⁵⁵ Interview at her residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 15/1/07.

⁵⁶ Interview with I. Khan at his shop in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 8/12/06.

⁵⁷ Interview at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 28/1/07.

ties based on friendship and everyday interaction had still managed to endure. These ties protected the three Muslim families mentioned in the testimony. It was such ties, howsoever fragile, that also seem to have prevented the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women. As one Mujibbhai explained:

In 1992 all the pre-planning for the riot was done by the RSS and the VHP. At that time the Congress was in power but in Gujarat the BJP wielded a lot of weight. The riot started over Babri Masjid. Hindus wanted a Ram temple to be built in place of the mosque. Over this issue Hinds and Muslims fought with each other. Wherever there was a temple, Muslims demolished it. And wherever Hindus had greater numbers, mosques were demolished.

We have good relations with Hindus, which have always been good. In 1992 a maha arti was going to be organized in our area. One of our Hindu neighbours came and informed us that this arti is going to be organized at a mass scale. So we locked up our women and girls in a big bungalow. Then if the mob attacked we would not have to worry about them.⁵⁸

While neighbourhoods had been reconstituted as communal spaces, this testimony shows how some 'good relations' endured communal mobilization and probably prevented the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women. The advance warning enabled Muslims to ensure the safety of their 'women and girls'. However, this testimony also points to the extent to which the threat of sexual violence to Muslim women had been internalized. It was this internalization that led families that feared an attack to lock away women as the first preventive measure. So, even though brutal sexual violence did not occur in Behrampura during the 1992 riot, Muslims were convinced of its possibility.

By examining the dynamics of violence at the level of the neighbourhood, the preceding paragraphs have argued that despite extensive communal mobilization, neighbourhood ties between Dalits and Muslims did not snap entirely during the riot. Although some Dalits destroyed Muslim property, for others ties based on everyday

⁵⁸ Interview at his residence in Behrampura, Ahmedabad, 15/12/06.

interaction remained important. These remaining ties seemed to have prevented the incidence of brutal sexual violence against Muslim women.

Conclusion

The period between 1985 and 1992 saw the entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations in eastern and western Ahmedabad. This paved way for the BJP to record its first major electoral victory in the Municipal Corporation elections in the city. This success was paralleled at the provincial level as well, which seated the party as coalition partner in the state government. Consequently, the Sangh Parivar was able to aggressively pursue the Ramjanmabhoomi movement in Ahmedabad as well as other parts of the province. During this movement, the city witnessed repeated bouts of violence against Muslims and verbal and visual sexual violence against Muslim women. When this movement culminated in the destruction of the Babri Mosque, a wave of communal violence engulfed several cities in India. Surat and Bombay also saw brutal sexual violence against Muslim women.

However, the experience of Ahmedabad was different, even though Hindutva activists actively participated in the 1992 riot. Sexual violence took the form of verbal and visual abuse but did not spiral into extreme forms. This chapter has pointed to the significance of neighbourhood ties as an explanation of this absence of brutal sexual violence. By analysing the case of the industrial labour region of Behrampura, a neighbourhood dominated by Hindu nationalist organizations, it has shown that some neighbourhood ties endured communal mobilization so that such violence was prevented. Through this analysis of the 1992 riot, this chapter has also challenged the predominant Hindutva ideology-based explanations of sexual violence in inter-religious conflict. As in the case of Chapter III, this chapter further

emphasizes the significance of neighbourhood ties in explaining brutal sexual violence against Muslim women.

CHAPTER V: THE ANTI-MUSLIM MASSACRE OF 2002

Introduction

In 2002 Gujarat witnessed the worst anti-Muslim massacre in the history of independent India. The violence started on 28 February and did not subside until April. Although Ahmedabad was the worst affected region, the districts of Banaskantha, Patan, Mehsana, Sabarkantha and Gandhinagar in the north; Kheda, Anand, Panchmahals and Dahod, in the east; Vadodara, Bharuch, Narmada, and Surat in the south; and Kutch, Surendranagar, Rajkot, Junagadh and Bhavnagar on the west also saw violence in 2002. By April over 2,000 people were dead and 2,500 were 'missing' in the province. Over 75,000 homes were damaged and 1,024 were completely destroyed. 10,429 shops were incinerated and another 1,278 ransacked. Property worth over Rs. 30 billion is said to have been destroyed. Over 130,000 Muslims were left languishing in 103 camps across the province. Of the total number of people rendered homeless, over half (66,292) were sheltered in the 44 camps in Ahmedabad alone.¹ During this massacre, Muslim men, women and children were subjected to bestial forms of violence.

Sexual violence against Muslim women was a widespread feature of the massacre. Brutal sexual violence in the form of rape, gang rape and genital mutilation was reported from the industrial labour region of Naroda Patiya, Naroda Gaon, and Chamanpura. Verbal and visual sexual violence was reported from the labour regions of Bapunagar, Danilimda, Behrampura, and Vatwa. Outside Ahmedabad, Muslim women were subjected to gang rape and genital mutilation in Kalol, Dailol, Godhra and Lunavada in the rural Panchmahal district,

¹ Communalism Combat, 'Gujarat', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 17. Official figures state that 762 people died during the violence, but the vast majority of investigative reports have disputed this number.

and Randhikpur village in Dahod district.² Reports published by civil rights groups, academics and the National Women's Commission have shown that the incidence of sexual violence was widespread during the 2002 massacre. However, there are no authoritative records on its exact scale. According to one activist who has carried out the most extensive documentation and rehabilitation work in the province, at least 150-200 women were subjected to sexual violence in 2002.³ When I documented the testimonies of survivors in the relief camps in the Panchmahals, Ahmedabad and Dahod districts in May 2002, I came across at least 16 cross-verified cases of women who had survived sexual violence. Significantly, most survivors mentioned the rapes of at least 25-35 women in their respective neighbourhoods and villages. Reports by other investigative teams have published similar details.⁴

This widespread incidence of sexual violence has led some to speak of a 'regular pattern of violence against women'⁵ and of a 'gory and military precision...evidence of some sick minds and a vicious [Hindutva] ideology'.⁶ This chapter will argue that although Hindutva ideology was an important motivation for inflicting sexual violence, patriarchal ideas, and the breakdown of neighbourhood ties also played a significant role in the infliction of such violence during the massacre.

² Ibid., pp. 45-55.

³ Teesta Setalvad, Expert Witness to the Concerned Citizens Tribunal: Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Justice P. B. Sawant, Justice Hosbet Suresh, K. G. Kannabiran, Aruna Roy, K. S. Subramanian, Ghanshyam Shah, Tanika Sarkar (2002) *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. List of Incidents and Evidence*, Vol. I (Mumbai: CCT, 2002), p. 216.

⁴ Citizens Initiative: Syeda Hameed, Ruth Manorama, Malini Ghose, Sheba George, Farah Naqvi and Mari Thekaekara, 'The Survivors Speak. How has the Gujarat Massacre Affected Minority Women? Fact-finding by a Women's Panel' in *The Gujarat Pogrom: Compilations of Various Reports* (Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2002); and International Initiative for Justice: Anissa Helie, Gabriele Mischkowski, Nira Yuval-Davis, Sunila Abeyssekara, Vahida Nainar, Farah Naqvi, Meera Vellayudan, Rhonda Copelan, Uma Chakravarty, *Threatened Existence: A Feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat* (Bombay: IJJ, 2003).

⁵ Citizens Initiative, 'The Survivors Speak', p. 75.

⁶ Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. Findings and Recommendations*, Vol. II (Mumbai: CCT, 2002), p. 39.

In order to do so, this chapter will draw on the large body of sources that are available on this episode. These sources fall into three main categories. The first category is of publications of various NGOs, independent citizens tribunals, international human rights organizations and the media. These publications contain testimonies of survivors, their affidavits, Hindu nationalist propaganda material, and statements by State officials. They also contain documentation on the workings of Hindu nationalist organizations and episodes of inter-religious violence in Ahmedabad between 1992 and 2002.

The second category is of reports produced by government bodies such as the National Human Rights Commission and the Justice U.C. Banerjee Commission set up to investigate the Godhra tragedy of 27 February 2002. It is important to add here that the Government of Gujarat appointed a special Commission of Inquiry under Justice G.T. Nanavati and Justice K.G. Shah to investigate the 2002 events. However, this Commission has been accused of corruption and subverting the course of justice.⁷ Since the findings of this CoI have been widely disputed, this chapter will not draw on this report. The third category of sources is constituted by interviews with survivors, rights activists, Hindu nationalist leaders, leaders of Muslim organizations, and members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal who participated in the violence.

This chapter has been divided into five sections. The first section examines the spectacular growth of Hindu nationalist organizations between 1993 and 1998. The second section analyses the activities of Hindutva outfits between 1998 and 2002, which anticipated the massacre. The third section focuses on the events that acted as the immediate catalysts to the 2002 massacre and the nature of ideological and organizational leadership provided by the

⁷ For details on the controversy over this Commission see, for instance, the report published by Tehelka, *Gujarat 2002: The Truth*, 2007, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107The_RSS_will.asp. Accessed on 16/07/09.

Hindu Right to attackers. The fourth section is concerned with examining the extent to which sexual violence against Muslim women was motivated by wider patriarchal ideas, whilst the final section investigates how the manifestation of Hindu nationalist ideology and patriarchal ideas was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties.

5.1 Hindu Nationalism and ‘Amari Sarkar’: 1992 – 1998

By the early 1990s, Hindu nationalist organizations had entrenched themselves firmly across Ahmedabad. The widespread violence following the demolition of the Babri Mosque was a testament to their success in communalizing not only the city but also large parts of the province. The period between 1992 and 1998, however, proved to be the most crucial for the horizontal and vertical expansion of the Hindu Right. On the one hand, the Sangh Parivar consolidated its ideological hold over eastern and western Ahmedabad during this period. On the other hand, the unambiguous support of various caste and class communities for Hindutva was transformed into votes for the BJP. Accordingly, this section examines these developments in turn.

Eastern Ahmedabad

The 1990s saw the growth of Ahmedabad’s urban population from 3.31 million in 1991 to 4.52 million by 2001. This period was marked by a rapid decline in the employment opportunities and civic amenities available to the urban poor. As the wealthy upper castes and a section of the upwardly mobile, lower and backward communities continued to migrate to affluent locales in western Ahmedabad, living conditions in the walled city and in the industrial labour region continued to decline rapidly. An estimate of the scale of the decline can be made from the fact that in 2001 only 54.12 percent of male workers were part of the

urban labour force, whilst only 13.75 percent of the women participated in the paid workforce of the city.⁸ Most of these workers did not have permanent jobs or access to the minimum wage.⁹ They worked mostly as daily-waged labourers with little or no guarantee of finding work throughout the year. Simultaneously, the liberalization of the economy from the early 1990s and rapid privatization meant that lower and backward caste communities could not avail themselves of reservations.

This economic decline was reflected in the deterioration of their housing conditions as well. While in 1976 slums accounted for at least 30 percent of the total number of houses in Ahmedabad, by the end of the 1990s, the number had risen to at least 44 percent.¹⁰ Furthermore, this decade also saw the expansion of slums further east in the industrial labour region. People who worked in small-scale industries or did other menial jobs in suburban labour regions like Naroda were housed in similar slums and chawls. Since most of these houses were constructed illegally, workers lived under the constant threat of evacuation by the government or were forced to acquiesce to the local slum landlord to ensure protection. Meanwhile, commercialization of infrastructural development increasingly placed basic amenities, health care and education beyond the reach of the urban poor.¹¹

Owing to this further rise in economic and social insecurity, a process that had been set in motion from the mid 1960s, Hindu nationalist organizations found ever-greater opportunities to mobilize lower- and backward- caste and Adivasi workers against Muslims.

⁸ *Census of India, 2001, Population, Workers and their Characteristics*, quoted in Darshini Mahadevia, 'Communal Space over Life Space: Saga of Increasing Vulnerability in Ahmedabad', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (48), 30 November, 2002, pp. 4850-4858, p. 4853.

⁹ Darshini Mahadevia, 'Communal Space over Life Space', p. 4853.

¹⁰ Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, *Revised Development Plan 1975 – 1985* (Ahmedabad: AMC, 1985), Vol. I, p. 69 and Ibid. These publications have details on only those areas that fall under the jurisdiction of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. Had the slums located outside this area been surveyed, the figures for late 1990s would be higher still.

¹¹ Darshini Mahadevia, 'Communal Space over Life Space', p. 4851.

During the 1990s, Hindu nationalist organizations carried out mainly three kinds of activities in eastern Ahmedabad: segregating neighbourhoods along religious lines; ideologically mobilizing people against Muslims; and converting ideological support for Hindutva into votes for the BJP.

Segregating neighbourhoods was a vital part of Hindutva's mobilization drive. Already by the early 1990s, boundaries had been drawn between Muslim and non-Muslim dominated localities within neighbourhoods. Marked by what came to be known as 'borders', divisions between people grew in the aftermath of the 1992 riot. Out of fear, more Muslim families moved to Juhapura in the south-western part of the city, which had already come to be known as 'mini-Pakistan'. Other families moved to Vatwa in the south-eastern part of Ahmedabad, which rapidly developed as a Muslim enclave in the 1990s. Rashida Bano and her family, who despite the 1969 riot had continued to live in the mixed neighbourhood of Rakhial until 1992, was one such family that moved to Vatwa. She told me that 'after Babri, home, neighbourhood, environment everything was separated. We also moved to a 'Muslim area'. Hindus also sold their property and bought houses where only Hindus lived'.¹² These divisions along community lines continued to be inscribed by VHP-erected boards that proclaimed Hindu-dominated areas as Hindu Rashtras.

As spatial segregation and communalization of urban space continued, Hindu nationalist organizations simultaneously stepped up their campaign to ideologically mobilize vast sections of Ahmedabad's population against Muslims. On the one hand, the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini and their education wings Vidya Bharti and Shishu Mandir, provided Dalits, Adivasis, and other backward communities with material resources such as

¹² Interview with R. Bano at her residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 29/11/07.

medical aid, education, and jobs. On the other, they actively recruited and trained cadres in the shakhas, organized religious festivals and built temples in the slums located in the industrial labour region.¹³ The Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram [Organization for the uplift of Adivasis] and the VHP carried out similar work with tribals and other low and backward communities in other northern and southern districts of Gujarat.¹⁴ Subsequently, the 1990s saw a phenomenal rise in the membership of the Sangh outfits. For instance, the membership of Bajrang Dal stood at nearly 32,000 in 1991. By the late 1990s, however, the organization claimed to have one activist for every 2,000 people in India (c. 500,000) as well as offices at the district-, taluka- and village-level.¹⁵

In addition to mobilizing people for Hindutva, Hindu nationalist organizations also worked towards translating anti-Muslim sentiment into votes for the BJP. According to Sud, acquiring State power was necessary because the secular directives of the State continued to pose significant constraints on Sangh Parivar's aims and activities.¹⁶ For instance, immediately after the demolition of the Babri Mosque a nation-wide ban was imposed on the RSS, the VHP, and the Bajrang Dal¹⁷, forcing these organizations to tone down their anti-Muslim rhetoric and refrain from organizing events that would lead to violence. Subsequently, from 1993 onwards the Sangh Parivar dedicated itself to acquiring power in the provincial government.

Between 1993 and 1995 VHP leader Sadhavi Rithambhra organized several mass rallies in the industrial labour region and appealed to its supporters to 'throw the anti-Hindu

¹³ Interviews with two Dalit members of the Bajrang Dal in Gomtipur and suburban Ahmedabad, 20/10/07.

¹⁴ Interviews with RSS members in Ahwa town, Dangs district, Gujarat quoted in Human Rights Watch, *Politics by Other Means: Attacks Against Christians in India* (New York: HRW, 1999), p. 20.

¹⁵ Haresh Bhatt, Central VHP Vice-President in Gujarat, quoted in *Outlook*, 18 March 2002, p. 28.

¹⁶ Nikita Sud 'Gujarat: From Developmental State To Hindu Rashtra?', p. 230.

¹⁷ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Notification No. II/14034/2 (iii)92-IS (DV) placed a ban on the VHP, No. II/14034/2 (iv)92-IS (DV) on RSS, No. II/14034/2 (v)92-IS (DV) on the Bajrang Dal in 11 December 1992. Quoted in *Times of India*, Delhi edition, 17 December 1992, p. 5.

Congress into dustbins'¹⁸ and vote for the BJP instead. In one such rally organized in the labour region of Bapunagar in February 1995, over two 200,000 people turned up to cheer her. For its part, the BJP promised to 'free' their lives of 'fear' (from Muslims), 'hunger' (from poverty) and 'corruption' (of the Congress).¹⁹ The party carefully played on the economic vulnerabilities of the urban poor by promising, for instance, employment to the 150,000 laid off mill workers, and civic amenities. It also appealed to the social anxieties of lower and backward caste voters, by claiming that the BJP was committed to bringing them into the 'Hindu fold'. The party especially appealed to poor Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and OBC women by promising a gift of Rs. 5,000 along with *mangal sutras*²⁰ and by pledging to organize religious festivals for them. Mobilization of the various caste communities, by exploiting their socio-economic anxieties and politicizing their religious-ethnic identity did wonders for the BJP.²¹

The preceding sub-section has shown that in eastern Ahmedabad the socio-economic insecurity of the urban poor intensified in the face of the rapid liberalization and privatization of economy. The intensification of these crises afforded Hindu nationalist organizations the opportunity to ideologically mobilize lower and backward caste communities and Adivasis, both male and female, against Muslims. This mobilization and repeated bouts of inter-religious violence also hardened the spatial boundaries along religious lines. During this period, the burgeoning middle class, composed primarily of upper castes, also shifted decidedly towards Hindutva. The following sub-section examines the reasons for this.

¹⁸ N. K. Chaudhary, *Assembly Elections 1994 – 1995: An Analysis and Results* (Delhi: Shipra Publications, 1995), p. 145.

¹⁹ Bhartiya Janata Party, *Sankalp Patra: Vidhansabha Chutni* (Ahmedabad: BJP Gujarat Pradesh, 1995).

²⁰ Sacred marital thread worn primarily by upper caste Hindu women.

²¹ Ashis Nandy *et al*, *Creating a Nationality*, Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat* and Ornit Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism*.

Western Ahmedabad

Affluent upper caste Ahmedabadis, as mentioned in the previous chapters, had gradually shifted towards right-wing politics and Hindu nationalist ideology from the 1960s. The political shift accelerated in the wake of the Nav Nirman movement in the 1970s, anti-reservation agitations in 1981, 1985 and late-1980s, and the numerous communal riots between 1969 and 1992. The anti-reservation, anti-Muslim, and anti-Congress stance of the BJP and other Hindutva outfits had attracted the support of these communities. However, following the liberalization of economy in the early 1990s, the political and ideological shift of affluent Ahmedabadis towards Hindutva crystallized into unambiguous and unwavering support.

The liberalization of the economy afforded these sections of society opportunities to avail themselves not only of elite educational institutes and adequate infrastructural facilities but also of the burgeoning shopping malls, cinema halls, beauty salons and restaurants. Growing foreign investment had also brought them wealth and prestige. Meanwhile, limiting the reach of the reservation policies through privatization ensured the socio-political and economic hegemony of the upper castes. Academics, lawyers, doctors, engineers, and government officials continued to fill the BJP ranks. Moreover, since the Congress was ideologically directionless, ridden with factionalism and accused of ‘appeasing Muslims’, the upper castes rapidly moved towards the BJP. Subsequently, these sections, especially the land owning Patel communities, who had been left out of the KHAM alliance in the 1980s and stood to gain from the BJP’s land liberalization policies, also voted the party into power.²² Middle class, upper caste women also gravitated towards the BJP, for it gave them the

²² Nikita Sud, ‘Gujarat: From Developmental State To Hindu Rashtra?’, pp. 270-4.

opportunity to constitute themselves as active political agents.

The unambiguous political shift towards the BJP was further fuelled by a religious shift towards Hindu nationalist version of Hinduism. This occurred in the wake of the alienation wrought by rapid economic change, urbanization and the eclipse of traditional forms of community life. These communities involved themselves in excessive and ostentatious religious activities, donated money to religious events organized by Hindu nationalist organizations, and participated in its programs. This involvement afforded them the opportunity to retain a sense of community belonging and assuage the guilt of conspicuous consumption.²³ Because of their class-based political, economic and religious concerns, the 1990s saw affluent Ahmedabadis throw their weight decidedly behind Hindutva and the BJP.

The Arrival of 'Amari Sarkar' [Our Government]

By 1995 Hindu nationalist organizations had successfully transformed Hindutva supporters into BJP voters. While the BJP had managed to win the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation elections in 1987 and had become a coalition partner in the Chimanbhai Patel's Janta Dal ministry in 1990, the party recorded its first major electoral victory in 1995. It swept not only the Legislative Assembly elections, but also the Municipal Corporation and Taluka Panchayat elections. In the six Municipal Corporations of the province, BJP won 395 seats leaving the Congress to settle with a mere 37. In the Taluka Panchayat elections the party bagged 2,445 out of 3,782 seats whilst the Congress got a mere 860. In the Assembly

²³ D. N. Pathak, Expert Witness, Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. List of Incidents and Evidence*, Vol. I, pp. 213-4; Interview with Achyut Yagnik, Ahmedabad, 26/12/06. For a more excellent discussion on the nation-wide trend see, Pradip K. Datta, 'Hindutva and the New Indian Middle Class', in Indira Chandrasekhar and Peter Seel (eds.), *Body.City: Siting Contemporary Culture in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2003).

elections, the BJP received 43.03 percent of the vote share and doubled its seat tally between 1990 and 1995 winning 121 out of 182 seats, reducing the Congress seats to a mere 45. Keshubhai Patel, an RSS volunteer, took over the office of the Chief Minister of the first BJP government in Gujarat in 1995.

Following this, the Sangh Parivar also set about appointing compliant officers and hardcore supporters of Hindutva to critical administrative posts and in the police.²⁴ One of the beneficiaries of Sangh's drive to have Hindutva supporters in the State machinery was Dr. Maya Kodnani. Kodnani came from a staunch RSS family from Banaskantha and had attended two officers training camps of the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti. In 1995 she was given the responsibility of the Naroda constituency of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation – the industrial suburb in which the worst instances of sexual violence took place in 2002.²⁵

The infiltration of staunch Hindutva supporters at all levels on the one hand enabled the Sangh to seek subsidies from government for organizing its activities. On the other hand, Hindutva supporters were now convinced that that they would have a free hand in communal riots and not fear the imposition of bans or preventive arrests. One RSS member expressed this sentiment clearly: 'When it is 'amari sarkar', whatever we say goes'. It was confidence borne out of this extensive saffronization²⁶ that enabled the Gujarati mouthpiece of the RSS, *Sadhana*, to unabashedly declare in 1996 that, 'Muslims cannot look to the police for protection anymore. They can live safely only if they maintain amicable relationships with

²⁴ Achyut Yagnik and Nikita Sud, 'Hindutva and beyond: The political topography of Gujarat', presented at the Conference on State Politics in India in the 1990s: Political Mobilisation and Political Competition, December, 2004, www.crisisstates.com/download/india/yagnik&sud. Accessed 20/06/09.

²⁵ Interview at BJP Office, Ahmedabad, 10/11/07.

²⁶ The term (after the saffron robes of Hindu priests and the colour of RSS's flag) is a political neologism that refers to the effects of Sangh Parivar's ideology and activities on State and society in India.

Hindus.’²⁷

In 1998, the BJP once again won the Legislative Assembly elections with a convincing majority. Meanwhile, in the same year the BJP also formed a coalition government at the centre with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as the Prime Minister. Now the BJP was in power not only in the province but also in New Delhi.

This section has thus tracked the journey of Hindu nationalist organizations all the way from controlling urban neighbourhoods in eastern and western Ahmedabad to the highest political office in the state. It has described how the Sangh Parivar successfully entrenched itself in society as well as in the State machinery. It is in the context of this horizontal and vertical entrenchment of the Sangh Parivar, that the activities of Hindu nationalist organizations and the violence between 1998 and 2002, and ultimately the 2002 massacre have to be understood.

5.2 Build-Up to the 2002 Massacre

With their ‘own government’ in power, Hindu nationalist activists unleashed an era of aggressive Hindutva mobilization and violence against religious minorities from 1998. Between 1998 and 2002 Hindu nationalist outfits organized a massive propaganda campaign against Muslims and orchestrated violence against them. Significantly, during this period these outfits also started to target Christians through propaganda and violence. This section examines the contents of this propaganda against religious minorities and the violence that ensued, for it was these developments that paved way for the 2002 massacre.

²⁷ *Sadhana*, 8 June 1996, p. 8.

Figure 1(a): Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 'Savadhan Campaign' (Ahmedabad, 1998)



Male: Iqbal bhai, alias Paresh Female: Hey Ram! He said he was Hindu but he turned out to be a Muslim!!	Male: Keep Quiet! You are going to be sold off. Female: First you promised to keep me like a princess. Arti became Ayesha
If a Muslim man trapped me, then today this is what my condition would be!!!	Hindu women!! Beware!

In 1998, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal set up a special Hindu Jagran Morcha [Forum for Hindu Awakening, HJM] to organize a mass propaganda campaign against Muslims and Christians. Significantly, the anti-Muslim propaganda focused almost exclusively on the gendered rhetoric of Hindutva. However, in order to appeal to the class- and caste- based sensibilities of the different communities, the propaganda aimed at upper castes and that aimed at poorer Dalits and OBCs differed in terms of tone and content.

The propaganda aimed at the affluent upper castes contained three inter-related ideas: a) Muslims were seducing and forcing Hindu women into marriage; b) These forced alliances threatened to diminish the Hindu population; and c) In order to prevent Hindus from becoming a minority in India it was important to ‘protect’ Hindu women and destroy the Muslim community through an economic boycott. This is illustrated by the following example [see Figure 1(a)].

Entitled ‘Warning Campaign’ this illustrated pamphlet described to its readers how a Muslim man first beguiled a Hindu woman, married her and then converted her to Islam. With one wife at home, the Muslim man promptly remarried. The pamphlet further went on to warn women that getting married to a Muslim man would mean seven children. Familiar Hindutva descriptions of Muslim men appeared in this pamphlet. They were depicted as treacherous polygamists, who are supposedly committed to converting Hindu women to Islam and increasing their population by having numerous children.

In order to make these Hindutva ideas more contemporary and to convince the readers that Muslims posed a realistic ‘threat’ to the sexual virtue of Hindu women, the pamphlet created fictitious stories about such incidents having occurred all over Gujarat [see Figure 1(b), Appendix]:

...a Muslim driving instructor seduced a Hindu millionaire's daughter and kidnapped her....

...a man pretending to be Raju [a common Hindu name] beguiled a young Hindu graduate woman. Only after getting married she realized that she was now trapped in Muslim hands...

...a Muslim man running a shop for beauty products seduced his customer, a Hindu woman

....a Muslim man deceived a Hindu woman, Sonal, that he has a bungalow and a good job. After marrying her, he kept her in a slum in Gomtipur. Sonal managed to escape and returned home.

Having relayed the nature and extent of the Muslim 'threat', the pamphlet appealed to 'Hindu Mothers-Fathers' to register the case with the police in case their daughters 'fall into the Muslim trap'. It asked Hindu parents to bring back the girl or contact VHP, Bajrang Dal, and Durga Vahini to retrieve the girl. In exchange for this 'service' they were asked to assist the work carried out by these organizations because 'if one Hindu became a Muslim or a Christian', Hindus numbers would go down and more importantly 'Hindu community would have one more enemy'.²⁸ These pamphlets carefully played on upper caste anxieties over the loss of traditional caste-based ways of community life and over familial control over female sexuality in the wake of rapid liberalized commercialization.

As a result, the idea that Hindu women were incapable of being in charge of their sexual virtue, and were vulnerable to the inherently 'treacherous and scheming' Muslim male became increasingly popular in the city. This growing popularity is evident from two important developments that took place during this period. Firstly, Jyoti Sangh, the oldest women's organization in Ahmedabad, started receiving 'complaints' about love marriages and love affairs for the first time from 1998.²⁹ Secondly, Bajrang Dal leader Babu Bajrangi, set up a special organization to 'recover' women from such marriages and affairs. Under the name of

²⁸ Vishwa Hindu Parishad, *Savdhan Abhiyaan* (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1998).

²⁹ Between 1998 and 2002 the organization received at least 17 such complaints. Jyoti Sangh's Annual Records (1937- 2006), Jyoti Sangh Archives, Ahmedabad.

‘Navchetan’ Group [Organization for a New Awakening], the mission of this organization was to ‘recover’ women from inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.³⁰ In its widely circulated publicity material, for instance, the Navchetan Group consoled parents that ‘in case your daughter forgets your home and society then Navchetan group will talk some sense into her on your behalf for free’ [see Figure 5, Appendix].³¹ By offering such ‘free services’ that responded to the gendered caste- and religion-based anxieties, Hindu nationalist organizations acquired greater legitimacy amongst affluent upper castes.

At the same time, Hindu nationalist organizations set about preparing poorer and lower-income Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis for combating the ‘Muslim threat’ and defending the Hindu community, Hindu religion and Hindu women. This was done by circulating anti-Muslim propaganda amongst them and by organizing special ceremonies for distributing weapons. As in the previous three decades, the Hindu right tried to ideologically mobilize Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis by manipulating their economic and caste-based insecurity. One set of pamphlets encouraged these communities to economically boycott the Muslims. For instance, a pamphlet entitled ‘Victory to Mother India’, encouraged ‘Hindutva lovers to awake’ and insisted [see Figure 4, Appendix]:

Do not buy anything from Muslims
Do not sell them anything
Do not use any thing or item made by them
The reason for this is that Muslims are merciless, brutal, thankless, and cunning.³²

The other set of materials insisted that these communities stay within the Hindu fold,

³⁰ By 2007, he claimed to have ‘saved’ 706 women. Dione Bunsha, ‘I don’t believe in love marriages’: an Indian serial kidnapper interviewed’, *New Internationalist*, 2007, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0IQP/is_400/ai_n27245928/. Accessed 17/06/09.

³¹ Babu Bajrangji, ‘Navchetan Group’ (Ahmedabad: Navchetan Group, n.d.).

³² Anonymous (n.d.), ‘Jai Bharat Mata’ (Ahmedabad).

despite their low caste status and not covert to Islam or Christianity. The reasons given for this was that a diminution of Hindu population would result in sexual violence against 'their' women. Circulated by the VHP, Bajrang Dal and the HJM, these pamphlets described how 'Christian men beguile Adivasi 'Hindu' women in order to convert them'.³³ They warned 'the Adivasi and Dalit sections of the Hindu community' about the rise in the Christian and Muslim population and the plummeting of Hindu numbers [see Figure 2 (a) and 2(b), Appendix]. Citing the case of Muslim-dominated Bangladesh, one such pamphlet, for instance stated:

Do you know what will happen if Hindus become a minority?
 15,000 families (1 lakh men and women) will become homeless
 ...200 mothers-sisters will be raped. Daughters will be raped in front of their mothers
 ...Hindus will be killed and their homes will be looted
 ...Women will be stripped, paraded naked and gang-raped
 ...[I]n Muslim majority nations Hindus cannot live in safety
 ...Hindu community should unite and put an end these atrocities and protest against such behaviour. Indians awake! Indians awake!³⁴

The strategic replacement of 'Hindus' with 'Indians' served to further project religious minorities as foreigners and project violence against them as the patriotic duty of lower and backward caste and Adivasi communities. Similar propaganda was carried out amongst lower and backward caste groups in Baroda³⁵ and Surat³⁶, and amongst Adivasis in the tribal Dangs³⁷ district.

³³ Vishwa Hindu Parishad, *Isaiyan Par Tathakathit Atyachar Keval Dushprachar Hi Dushprachar. Satye Ye hai* (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1999), p.11 and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, *Bharatke Isaikaranka Shadyantra* (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1998).

³⁴ Hindu Jagruti Morcha, *Hindu Jagriti Se Sanskriti Rakhsha*, (Part I and II, Ahmedabad: HJM, n.d.), Part 2, p. 15.

³⁵ Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. Findings and Recommendations*, Vol. II, p. 103.

³⁶ Communalism Combat, 'Welcome to Hindu Rashtra', Cover Story, in *Communalism Combat*, 1998, <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/comold/octob98/page1a.htm>. Accessed 17/06/09.

³⁷ Vishwa Hindu Parishad, *Isaiyan Par Tathakathit Atyachar Keval Dushprachar Hi Dushprachar. Satye Ye hai* (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1999), p.11 and Human Rights Watch, *Politics by Other Means*.

In addition to ideologically preparing Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis to defend Hindutva, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal also prepared them physically for combating the ‘Muslim threat’. They organized several ceremonies from 1998 onwards in which these foot-soldiers were given training and weapons. One such ceremony was organized in the industrial labour region of Maninagar, on 15 September 1998 [see Figure 3, Appendix]. At this ceremony, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal presented tridents to the recruits in order to prepare them to

...protect the nation and Mother India...
 ...wage a strong protest against people who insult the Hindu community...
 ...protect the Hindu religion and Hindu civilization...
 ...protect the mothers and sisters...
 ...confront anti-national forces....³⁸

While the cadre-based Hindu nationalist organizations mobilized emotional, ideological and physical support from different caste and class groups, the extensively saffronized State legitimized their rhetoric by changing state-level policies and providing impunity to Sangh activists. For instance, the State legitimized Hindutva rhetoric concerning the supposed threat that Muslim men pose to the sexual chastity of Hindu women, by setting up special police cells to monitor inter-religious marriages. Although this move was unconstitutional, BJP Home Minister, Haren Pandya, justified it by stating that such marriages were not made from free choice but were forced on Hindu women for ulterior motives.³⁹ Moreover, the Director General of Police (Intelligence) sent special circulars to police departments across the province to monitor the activities of Muslims and Christians and collect information about them.⁴⁰

³⁸ Vishwa Hindu Parishad, ‘Bajrang Dal – Vishwa Hindu Parishad’ (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1998).

³⁹ Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. Findings and Recommendations*, Vol. II, p. 103.

⁴⁰ Communalism Combat, ‘Dateline Gujarat’, in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 104.

When not complicit in the ideological agenda of the Hindu Right, the State provided it with impunity. The police did not apprehend the producers and circulators of this hate-propaganda even though the VHP, Bajrang Dal and HJM clearly published their names along with the addresses and phone number of their local offices. Moreover, the government did nothing to reproach the vernacular media when it violated the law by occasionally reproducing such pamphlets in full.

Secure in the ideological support and the impunity that the State provided, and having mobilized the support of the various caste-class communities, Hindu nationalist activists started orchestrating violence against religious minorities from 1998. Unlike previous decades, incidents of inter-religious violence during this period were one-sided offensives against Muslims and Christians.

In 1998 and 1999, 40 instances of violence against Christians and Muslims were reported across Gujarat.⁴¹ In December 1998, VHP and Bajrang Dal activists led brutal attacks on Christians in the southeastern Dangs district.⁴² The violence continued unabated for over ten days after Christmas, and affected over fifteen villages. Significantly, when Prime Minister Vajpayee visited Dangs, he did not reproach the State machinery for failing to protect religious minorities. Instead, he called for a national debate on conversions.⁴³ Between November 1997 and August 1998, violence against Christians was reported from industrial suburb of Naroda where schools run by missionaries were vandalized.⁴⁴ There were similar attacks in western Ahmedabad on property owned by the St. Xavier's Social Service Society:

⁴¹ Forum Against oppression of Women and Aawaaz-e-Niswaan, *Genocide in Rural Gujarat: The Experience of Dahod District* (Bombay: FAOW and Aawaaz-e-Niswaan, 2002)

<http://www.onlinevolunteers.org/gujarat/reports/rural/rural-gujarat-12.htm> Accessed 23/06/09.

⁴² Human Rights Watch, *Politics by Other Means*.

⁴³ *The Hindu*, Madras edition, 26 January 1999, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Communalism Combat, 'Dateline Gujarat', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 103.

a missionary body that provided health and education services in Ahmedabad's slums.⁴⁵

From 1999, violence against Muslims in Ahmedabad escalated rapidly.⁴⁶ In July 1999 the situation in the city became particularly tense in the wake of India's conflict with Pakistan over Kargil. One of the casualties of the Kargil war was an army man, Mukesh Rathod, who hailed from Meghaninagar in Ahmedabad. L.K. Advani, who was by then a Union Minister in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government at the centre, escorted the dead body of the slain soldier to the city. Between 7 and 11 July Advani, along with BJP MLA Harin Pathak, led mass rallies across the city and delivered provocative anti-Muslim speeches questioning the loyalty of Muslims to the country. The youth wing of the BJP, Bhartiya Yuva Morcha, painted provocative slogans, ostensibly targeted at Pakistan, on the walls of Muslim dominated areas like Vadigam in the walled city. Over the next weeks the VHP and Bajrang Dal started provoking violence. Several intelligence reports were submitted to Gujarat's Home Minister, Haren Pandya, about the activities of these organizations, however, the government did not take any preventive steps.

Anti-Muslim violence broke out on 20 July 1999. The immediate catalyst for the violence was actually a relatively trivial incident. In the walled city, some Muslim men protested against the harassment of a mentally challenged Muslim boy by Hindu men. A clash ensued which soon developed into a 'free-for-all'.⁴⁷ Within hours, Dariapur, Kalupur, Saraspur, Gheekanta and Dabgarwad and Vadigam in the walled city were engulfed in violence. Led by leaders of the VHP, Bajrang Dal and the BJP, armed mobs attacked Muslims, burnt their homes and looted their property. A curfew was imposed and violence

⁴⁵ Communalism Combat, 'Welcome to Hindu Rashtra', Cover Story, in *Communalism Combat*, 1998, <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/comold/octob98/story.htm>, Accessed 23/06/09.

⁴⁶ The following account is based on Communalism Combat, 'Dateline Gujarat', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, pp. 104-6, and media reports that comment on the period.

⁴⁷ 'Riots in City Areas', *Indian Express*, Ahmedabad edition, 21 July 1999, p. 1.

brought to a halt. On 21 July violence erupted in Karanj, Gomtipur, Shahalam and Jamalpur in the industrial labour regions and in Paldi on the western side of the river. Again, curfew was extended to these areas to bring the violence under control. After the violence had abated the police weakly admitted that the violence had been pre-planned and orchestrated under the aegis of Hindu nationalist organizations.

The opening years of the twenty-first century were marked by more mobilization and anti-Muslim violence. In the first week of January 2000, the RSS organized a massive *sankalp shibir* (resolution camp) in several parts of Ahmedabad including Naroda. Over 30,000 people, including 5,000 government officials participated in the camp. The RSS pledged to open shakhas in every village in Gujarat by 2005. The State machinery provided transport, subsidized land and other municipal services like electricity and water for the camp. CM Keshubhai Patel, Union Home Minister Advani along with eight other ministers of the Gujarat Assembly participated in the camp.⁴⁸ In the same week, the provincial government lifted the fourteen-year old ban on government officials joining the RSS. The government went further still and cancelled most non-Hindu holidays and attempted to make subscription to the RSS mouthpiece, *Sadhana*, compulsory for schools.

By 2000, the State and society were so extensively saffronized that violence erupted over trivial issues like cricket matches, parking spaces, rickshaw fares, and the consumption of meat. Ahmedabad's Police Commissioner P C Pandey compared the communal situation in Ahmedabad to 'sitting on a powder keg'.⁴⁹ The proverbial keg exploded in August 2000 after

⁴⁸ Communalism Combat, 'Dateline Gujarat', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 105; International Initiative for Justice, *Threatened Existence*, p. 228; and Communalism Combat, 'Saffron promises and performance', Cover Story, 2000, <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/comold/sep00/cover1.htm>. Accessed 23/06/09.

⁴⁹ Quoted in 'Riots in City Areas', *Indian Express*, Ahmedabad edition, 21 July 1999, p. 1.

Lashkar-e-Toiba militants gunned down 33 Hindu pilgrims visiting the Amarnath shrine in northern India. As the news reached Gujarat, VHP leader Pravin Togadia declared that 'we will avenge these attacks here' in the state. On 3 August, VHP and Bajrang Dal activists announced a state-wide bandh to mourn the deaths of the 33 pilgrims and the 100 others who died in the crossfire between the army and the militants. The violence started in Naroda, yet again, where the VHP, Bajrang Dal and the latest member of Gujarat's Sangh Parivar, Shiv Sena, had set up their main headquarters.

According to witnesses, armed mobs of around 2,000 people roamed around looting and setting fire to Muslim shops, vehicles and homes. They added that although a police station was opposite the main sites of destruction, the police did not stop the mob. Instead, several police constables were seen helping the attackers identify Muslim properties and force open shop shutters for pillaging. Similar instances of looting, arson and stone throwing were reported from Saraspur, Kalupur and Bapunagar. Violence was also reported from districts outside Ahmedabad such as Surat, Khed Brahma, Lambadia, Rajkot and Modasa.

Later the same year, Hindutva activists stepped up their agenda to perform sexual surveillance of women to combat the 'threat' of Muslims. Bajrang Dal members were asked to keep a watch on Dalit girls and Muslim boys in their schools and slums. Their task was to ensure that Dalits did not convert to Islam or Christianity; to intervene if Muslim boys got 'too close' to Hindu girls; and to ensure sexual-religious segregation with force if necessary.

As Mohan Macwan, a Dalit youth leader of the Bajrang Dal from Gomtipur, explained:

VHP people came to the chawl and told people that they should make sure your girls don't speak with Muslim boys... this used to happen in the school as well. I had a teacher who was in the VHP who used to keep an eye on Hindu girls and Muslim boys of the school. He used to make sure that Dalits don't convert to Christianity. If he suspected that one of us might convert, he would ask us to talk some sense into him, tell him not to convert, speak with

him, and warn him of the dangers of conversion. If a Hindu girl spoke with a Muslim boy, or met him regularly, then he would intervene and say that this should not happen. The girl was given stern warnings. If a Muslim boy spoke with a Hindu girl, or met her or fell in love with her then we would warn him. Even if there was no love, it was bad enough. In one case a Muslim boy was beaten up for talking to Hindu girls.⁵⁰

This kind of sexual surveillance, in one instance, is said to have led one Dalit family in Naroda to murder their daughter for bearing a Muslim's child.⁵¹ In western Ahmedabad, ABVP started attacking women wearing 'western dresses', ostensibly to 'protect' them from Muslims.

In addition to this sexual surveillance, Hindu nationalist activists also led several campaigns to forcefully evict Muslims from mixed neighbourhoods. In February 2000, the houses of two Muslim families, who had recently moved into Tulsi Apartments in the Paldi area, were vandalized. Led by BJP corporators, the attackers demanded that the families leave their homes or face consequences. Several other Muslim families of the area were told by VHP-BJP leaders to sell their houses and move out. Not only did the police not intervene, DCP Bisht rationalized it by stating that 'this being a Hindu-dominated area, the locals got angry at the entry of two Muslim families. It's as simple as that'.⁵² Similar evictions took place in the industrial suburb of Naroda, where 60 Muslim families (out of the total 200) were forced to evacuate their property.⁵³

By the end of 2000, violence against religious minorities had increased so much that

⁵⁰ Interview in Gomtipur, Ahmedabad, 20/10/07.

⁵¹ Quami Ekta Trust, Communalism Combat, Dakshin Gujarat Adivasi Sangh, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Samvad, Insaf, IFIE, Sahrwaru, Vote, and People's Union for Human Rights, *Saffron on the Rampage: Gujarat's Muslims pay for Lakshar's Deeds* (Mumbai: SABRANG, 2000), pp .9-10.

⁵² Communalism Combat, *Face to Face with Fascism*, Cover Story, in *Communalism Combat*, 2000, <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/comold/april00/co-story.htm>, Accessed 23/06/09.

⁵³ Quami Ekta Trust *et al*, *Saffron on the Rampage*, pp. 9-14.

Gujarat drew attention from civil rights groups within India and abroad.⁵⁴ This created a crisis of legitimacy for the incumbent Keshubhai Patel-led BJP government. Moreover, the aggressive activities of Hindutva organizations were undermining the BJP in the eyes of the voters. VHP and Bajrang Dal activists were extorting money from rich Hindu businessmen under the pretext of providing security from Muslims, and forcing the local government to protect temples. They harassed Hindu families who wished to marry their daughters into Muslim families and offered to help 'retrieve' gullible girls 'trapped by Muslim men'. ABVP repeatedly attacked upper caste girls wearing non-traditional clothes on university campuses in western Ahmedabad. The close ties between the Sangh and the BJP did considerable damage to the latter's electoral future. Unsurprisingly, the BJP incurred major losses in the 2000 Panchayat and Municipal elections. The party won 192 out of the total 717 seats and lost the other 407 seats, it had won in 1998, to the Congress. The latter registered a convincing victory winning 513 seats. The BJP fared poorly in the Municipal elections as well. Even though it retained AMC, BJP leaders won with a significantly reduced margin.

In order to recover from the dismal 2000 elections results, the so-called ideological moderates within the BJP made way for the militant faction. Keshubhai Patel was ousted and replaced by Narendra Modi in 2001. It was his responsibility to 'defend the Hindu faith' and win the 2003 Assembly elections.⁵⁵ Now the BJP and the Gujarat government were under the command of an RSS *pracharak* (propagandist) and a Hindutva hard-liner.

With the arrival of Narendra Modi at the helm of the State, the VHP restarted the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation in November 2001 with the full support of the BJP government.

⁵⁴ For instance the International Human Rights watch reported on violence in the Dangs in its 1999 report, *Politics by Other Means*.

⁵⁵ Girish Patel, 'Narendra Modi's One-Day Cricket: What and Why?', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (48), 30 November, 2002, pp. 4826-4837, p. 4833.

The Bajrang Dal recruited over 300,000 people and distributed 400,000 tridents and knives amongst its cadres.⁵⁶ The RSS and the VHP also organized special ceremonies to arm its cadres with swords and tridents and instigated violence against Muslims. Special camps to train people in the use of these weapons and other firearms were organized across the province.⁵⁷

This section has argued that after the arrival of the BJP in power, a new era of Hindutva politics was set afoot. The VHP and the Bajrang Dal, along with their affiliates, organized a massive propaganda campaign to lure upper, lower and backward caste communities and Adivasis. By exploiting the class and caste based anxieties of these communities, these organizations sought to convince these communities of the 'sexual threat' that the allegedly polygamist, treacherous and fanatic Muslims posed to them. The increased sexual surveillance of women, and the forceful expulsion of Muslims from mixed localities, reflected the success of these organizations in convincing people of that imaginary threat. Moreover, the Parivar organized numerous camps in which its cadres were armed, trained in the use of weapons and prepared to attack. For its part, the State machinery legitimized Hindutva rhetoric and condoned anti-minority violence. However, as the party in power, the BJP faced a crisis of legitimacy at the provincial, national and international level. In order to woo voters for the 2003 provincial elections and defend the Hindutva cause, Narendra Modi was brought to power. The groundwork for the 2002 massacre was laid.

⁵⁶ 'People who wanted revenge and got it', in *Outlook*, 18 March 200, p. 28.

⁵⁷ Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. Findings and Recommendations*, Vol. II, p. 36.

5.3 Events in the Massacre

There is widespread agreement that violence against Muslim men and women started in the immediate aftermath of the burning of a train compartment carrying karsevaks in Godhra on 27 February. On that day, the S6 compartment of the Sabarmati Express enroute to Ahmedabad from Ayodhya was incinerated resulting in the deaths of 58 passengers, including 26 women and 12 children. While most observers concur that this tragedy sparked off ‘Gujarat 2002’, there is still considerable dispute over how the Godhra incident occurred in the first place.

Some observers have argued that a mob of Muslim men torched the train compartment after karsevaks shouted provocative slogans and harassed Muslim women at Godhra Railway station.⁵⁸ However, the official commission of inquiry under Justice U.C. Banerjee concluded that the train fire was an accident. Others, especially senior leaders of Islamic organizations, suspect that Godhra was a thought-out conspiracy to stir anti-Muslim violence across the province with a view to winning the 2003 Assembly elections.⁵⁹ None of these observers however, dispute that the tragedy in Godhra marked the beginnings of the anti-Muslim massacre of 2002.

From 28 February onwards, Hindu nationalist activists, from CM Modi to local Bajrang Dal leaders, were actively involved in planning and orchestrating every stage of the massacre. The CM Modi-led BJP political regime turned the Godhra tragedy into an excuse for unleashing violence against all Muslims. CM Modi arrived on the scene flanked by several

⁵⁸ Jagori, *What Happened In Gujarat? The Facts*. (Delhi: Jagori, 2002), p. 4; Communalism Combat, ‘Godhra’, in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 15; *Times of India*, Ahmedabad and Delhi edition, 28 February 2002, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Interview with S. Madni, State President of the Jammat-e-Islami Hind, at his office, Ahmedabad, 20/11/07.

other cabinet ministers, including Maya Kodnani. He made a public broadcast describing the Godhra tragedy as a ‘pre-planned, violent act of terrorism’ orchestrated at the behest of Pakistan’s Intelligence Agency.⁶⁰ Although this explanation was based on no evidence, Modi insisted that Pakistan was responsible for the Godhra tragedy. Then, despite explicit warnings from Godhra’s District Collector, Modi carried the charred bodies to Ahmedabad the same day. A special cavalcade was organized which took the remains of the 58 passengers to the Sola Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad.⁶¹ At the hospital, the cavalcade was received by 500 VHP activists who were shouting slogans like ‘Long Live the Karsevaks’ and ‘Long Live Hindu Unity’. While the Godhra victims were being accorded a martyr’s honour, on 27 evening, the General Secretary of the VHP, Praveen Togadia declared that ‘Hindu society will avenge the Godhra killings. Muslims should accept the fact that Hindus are not wearing bangles’.⁶² The same evening, a high-level meeting was called by CM Modi in which he is said to have ordered the police and the bureaucracy to ‘let the Hindu anger express itself’.⁶³

The massacre began on 28 February. During the massacre Hindu nationalist organizations contributed to the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women by providing ideological direction and organizational leadership to the attackers. The following paragraphs examine this contribution of Hindutva outfits at the level of ideological leadership, on the one hand, and organizational leadership, on the other.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Communalism Combat, ‘Godhra’, in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 12; and Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. Findings and Recommendations*, Vol. II, p. 17.

⁶¹ Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat. Findings and Recommendations*, Vol. II, p. 17.

⁶² Quoted in Communalism Combat, ‘Call to Arms’, in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 16.

⁶³ Communalism Combat, ‘Godhra’, in *Communalism Combat*, p. 13.

The manner in which Hindutva organizations provided ideological motivations for sexual violence against Muslims in 2002 was reminiscent of the 1969 riot. The first step in inciting such violence was to project Hindu women as the victims of Muslim men's 'sexual atrocities'. The purveyor of this theme of Hindu women's victimization was the upper caste dominated vernacular media. That vernacular newspapers carried such reports is not surprising given that this media had acted as mass vehicles for Hindutva propaganda for the last forty years, and especially in the 1990s. As mentioned earlier, these newspapers had published similar stories in 1969. However, the 2002 report was considerably more graphic and provocative than the one circulated in 1969. Published alongside graphic photographs of the burnt S6 compartment and charred bodies on 28 February, *Sandesh*, reported that:

Along with karsevaks of Sabarmati Express, children and ladies were massacred and fanatic miscreants dragged away some 10-15 ladies from the compartments which has made the position of Godhra very tense...⁶⁴

From the morning of 28 February, photocopies of *Sandesh*'s front page were circulated in Ahmedabad and Panchmahals.⁶⁵ Although police investigations found the allegations to be baseless, on 1 March 2002, *Sandesh* carried a follow-up story entitled 'From among those abducted from Sabarmati Express two dead bodies of Hindu girls found near Kalol in mutilated state'. It read

As part of a cruel inhuman act that would make even a devil weep, the breasts of both the dead bodies had been cut. Seeing the dead bodies one knows that the girls had been raped again and again, perhaps many times [sic]. There is a speculation that during the act itself the girls might have died...⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Sandesh*, Ahmedabad edition, 28 February 2002, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Communalism Combat, 'Panchmahals', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 49.

⁶⁶ *Sandesh*, Ahmedabad edition, 1 March 2002, p. 16.

Although the newspaper retracted the story a couple of days later, by then these reports had acquired a life of their own. In some versions, Muslim men were alleged to have dragged women from the train into mosques and gang-raped them, whilst in others, the victimized women were identified as belonging to lower caste or tribal communities.⁶⁷

As this idea of Hindu women's sexual victimization spread, Hindutva organizations then sought to unhinge the Godhra events from their local and historical context and insert them into a 'history' of Muslim 'atrocities'. For instance, in a pamphlet circulated by the VHP, the state leader of the organization, Chinubhai Patel exhorted:

At the time of the partition...[Muslims] went around shouting 'Allah –O-Akbar', 'Pakistan Zindabad!' and 'Kill the non-believers!' while carrying sticks, swords, knives and lighted torches, raped lakhs of Hindu mothers, sisters and daughters and killed them. To preserve their virginity many women jumped into well or into fires....

...In Pakistan the status of the Hindus is not just second class – they are slaves there and that is going to happen to the Hindus in India...

...The Godhra incident is just one symptom of the cancer in this country. This cancer is only the trailer – the entire film is still to be seen.⁶⁸

This pamphlet on the one hand, placed the Godhra tragedy along a historical continuum, and on the other, helped to heighten the sense of 'threat' from the imaginary Muslim enemy. Then, the need to combat this 'threat' could be stressed easily. For instance, a pamphlet aimed at lower and backward communities exclaimed:

We do not want to leave a single Muslim alive in Gujarat. The people of villages as well as cities have now woken up and they are ready to take an eye for an eye {to respond to stones with bricks}. To avenge murder {revenge for blood with blood} we will kill Muslims wherever we see them....

⁶⁷ Citizens Initiative, 'The Survivors Speak', p. 80.

⁶⁸ Reproduced and Translated in Communalism Combat, 'Pamphlet Poison', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 133.

... Now the Hindus of the villages should join the Hindus of the cities and complete the work of annihilation of Muslims. The Muslims who consider the architect of Bharat, Baba Ambedkar, to be an untouchable, do not know that they are not even fit to be his footwear...All Hindu brethren are requested to destroy Muslims without being afraid of any politician...⁶⁹

By making references to Ambedkar, this pamphlet strategically played on the caste identity of Dalits, and instigated them to avenge the crimes allegedly committed by Muslims. With a promise of impunity, it instigated them to inflict pre-emptive and 'retaliatory' violence against Muslims. The insistence of 'responding to bricks with stones' would then mean inflicting the same kinds of the violence against Muslims, that the latter have supposedly committed against Hindus i.e. killing, looting and rape. Through this provocative propaganda Hindu nationalist organizations provided ideological motivations for inflicting sexual and other forms of violence against Muslims in the 2002 massacre.

Having provided the ideological motivation, Hindutva leaders contributed to the incidence of sexual violence by providing organizational leadership to the attackers. In providing this leadership, Hindutva leaders received generous support from the various strata it had mobilized in the preceding decade. Upper caste men and women either condoned the violence or justified it as a necessary 'lesson' to the Muslim community. Some of them even participated in the violence by looting Muslim shops situated in the affluent areas of the city. However, the agents of violence were primarily Dalit, OBC and Adivasi Hindutva activists who, under the leadership of VHP, BJP and Bajrang Dal leaders went around attacking Muslim people and their property.

Most importantly, these organizations received extensive support from the heavily saffronized State machinery in orchestrating the violence. It provided voters lists and tax lists

⁶⁹ Reproduced and translated in *Ibid.*, p. 135.

so that Muslim homes and properties could be identified for attack. These lists were supplied to popular vernacular newspapers such as *Gujarat Samachar* and *Sandesh*, which dutifully published them in full. In addition to aiding the identification of Muslims, the State machinery also impeded efforts to quell violence against Muslims. Senior BJP politicians took over supervision of police control rooms and prevented the police from protecting Muslims and arresting the attackers. Although the army had arrived in Ahmedabad on 28 February, the state government did not provide the decisive instructions and support it needed to halt the violence. Civil servants who decided to disregard the unconstitutional State directives to ‘let the Hindu anger express itself’, were promptly transferred to inconsequential posts. It is because of such extensive complicity of the state in aiding and abetting the ‘rioters’, that ‘Gujarat 2002’ has been described by most observers as a ‘State-sanctioned’ massacre and not a ‘communal riot’.⁷⁰

Furthermore, from 28 February itself, Hindutva leaders orchestrated and instigated the infliction of sexual and other forms of violence against Muslims across Ahmedabad. Sexual violence in the form of verbal and visual abuse was reported from Gomtipur, Amraiwadi, Bapunagar, Danilimda, Behrampura, and Vatwa, in the eastern industrial part of Ahmedabad. In these areas, sexual abuse by the police was also common. ‘Muslim ghettos’, however, such as Juhapura in south-western Ahmedabad and Dariapur in the walled city remained largely unaffected by the violence. In the affluent Paldi area, in the western part of the city, the houses of the few Muslims, including the house of a retired Gujarat High Court

⁷⁰ Interview with T. Setalvad at *Communalism Combat* office in Bombay, 24/12/07; Dr. A.A. Engineer at his office in Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Bombay, 28/12/07 in Bombay. Interview with P. Ginwala at her office, Ahmedabad, 1/11/07, S. George at Sahrwaru office, Ahmedabad, 4/11/07 and Fr. C. Prakash at Prashant office, Ahmedabad, 11/10/06 in Ahmedabad. Also see *Communalism Combat*, ‘Government of Gujarat, in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, pp. 108-114; and International Initiative for Justice, *Threatened Existence*.

Judge, were attacked with the support of the police and local Hindutva leaders.

By far the worst forms of violence against Muslim men and women in Ahmedabad were reported in the industrial labour region of Naroda. Here, the ideological motivations provided by Hindu nationalist ideology and the organizational leadership provided by Hindutva leaders together contributed to the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women. The following paragraphs describe how this happened.

On the morning of 28 February around 9 am a rumour spread in the area that Hindus were going to attack Muslims to avenge the atrocities committed on Hindu men and women at Godhra. Most telephone lines had been snapped, and the supply of electricity and water to the area stopped. By 10-10.30 am, a mob of 25,000 men wearing saffron headbands and khaki shorts and led by Jaideep Patel, senior VHP leader and BJP MLA from Naroda, Maya Kodnani surrounded the neighbourhood. Armed with swords, tridents, spears, chemicals, petrol cans, kerosene bombs, gas cylinders, private fire-arms and, in some instances, copies of *Sandesh*, the mob arrived shouting slogans like 'Burn the Muslims Alive' and 'Victory to Lord Ram'. The people who constituted this mob were Dalit and OBC members of the VHP and Bajrang Dal from Naroda's slums, and neighbouring Gopinath and Gangotri societies.

At first the mob threw stones, gas cylinders and crude bombs on Muslim houses, and incinerated vehicles owned by Muslims. Then the massacre of Muslim men, women and children started. Petrol was poured into mouths of children as young as 6 and lit matchsticks applied. Men and women were beaten and mutilated. Terrorized Muslim residents ran towards the police station and pleaded with the police and the SRP, stationed less than 300 metres from the neighbourhood, for protection. Instead of ensuring the safety of Muslims, Police Inspector Mysorewala fired tear gas shells and told them to, 'Go away, I have no orders to

save you'. Frantic calls made to the IGP and CP Pandey also went unanswered. As Muslims, many of them women, tried to flee the area, some police constables redirected them towards Gopinath and Gangotri Society. A mob of several thousands was waiting for them. Muslims were now caught between the high walls of the Society buildings, the police and the mob. Over the next several hours, men ostensibly acting on behalf of the 'Hindu community' subjected Muslim women to macabre forms of sexual violence.

Kausar - A young girl in her twenties, who was in advanced stages of her pregnancy, was beaten, gang raped, her stomach carved open with a sword, and the foetus thrown into the fire. Petrol was thrown all over her and her mutilated dead body set alight.

Najma - Barely nineteen, she was first gang raped, bitten and scratched on her breasts, and then had wooden sticks were inserted into her vagina. She was thrown into the fire and left for dead.

Noorjahan - A twelve-year old girl was stripped, gang raped by at least four men and then an iron rod was pushed up her vagina.⁷¹

In the aftermath of this macabre violence, the foot soldiers of Hindutva, who actively participated in the violence, 'explained' this violence as a necessary and desirable response to the sexual threat that Muslims allegedly pose to the Hindu nation, Hindu religion and Hindu women. The testimony of Krishna Parmar, a Dalit member of the Bajrang Dal who participated in the violence in rural Ahmedabad, brings this out.

The RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal have reached everywhere. They had told us so many stories that Muslims marry four wives, they rape and abduct Hindu women. In front of the youth, this issue is going to hurt the masculine pride very badly... this is not a small matter. If Muslims kidnap a Hindu girl, it is a big thing...On the 28th in areas where the RSS was not active, the newspapers took the information of what happened in Godhra. On reading this news, even people who were not ideologically with them, also joined

⁷¹ These three cases are reported in all investigative reports including mine and corroborated by several witnesses. See Shabnam Hashmi and Megha Kumar, *Break the Silence: Stories and Testimonies from Gujarat* (Delhi: Sahmat, 2002), p. 9 and p. 13; Communalism Combat, 'Naroda Gaon and Naroda Patiya', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, pp. 20-3, Citizens Initiative, 'The Survivors Speak', pp. 75-8.

them. They said, “Gosh! Muslims have done this to our people...it is just like the Partition”. So the RSS people incited us saying that we have to take revenge on their women. They said that we must act otherwise India will become an Islamic Rashtra and the biggest weapon Hindus have to counter this threat is *rashtrabhakti* [devotion to the nation]. To prove this devotion, we must get rid of Muslims...

We had to prove our masculinity to them. If you break a man’s arms and legs he will be temporarily weakened but that injury will heal over time. But if you rape his mother or sister then that injury will never ever heal. He will die bit-by-bit everyday.⁷²

This testimony reflects how Hindu nationalist ideology, as laid down by the founding ideologues, and circulated during the aggressive ‘Savadhan Campaign’ of 1998 and through the propaganda immediately after the Godhra tragedy, motivated men during the massacre. This propaganda harped on the alleged sexual atrocities committed by Muslims against Hindu women. As a result, Krishna had little difficulty believing that Muslims had sexually victimized Hindu women in Godhra. He unproblematically unhinged the Godhra incident from its local context and viewed it as part of a long history of Muslim ‘sexual atrocities’ and symbolic humiliation of the Hindu male. The injured Hindu male was called upon to inflict ‘retaliatory’ and pre-emptive sexual violence to redeem the lost masculine pride. This call for action was strengthened through the proclamation that Muslims are bent on converting India into an ‘Islamic Rashtra’. So, men like Krishna could believe that Muslims pose an eminent threat not only to Hindu women, but also to the Hindu nation. Through the destruction of the symbols of honour, biological reproducers and property of the Muslim ‘enemy’, Hindu men sought to prove their devotion to the Hindu Rashtra, their ‘*rashtrabhakti*’, and ‘prove their masculinity’.

The assertion of Hindutva masculinity, however, did not end with the infliction of

⁷² Interview in Ahmedabad, 20/10/07.

macabre sexual violence against Muslim women. It also involved the celebration of such violence as the most public expression of redeemed Hindu male pride. As the infamous pamphlet, *Jehad*, explicated:

The people of Baroda and Ahmedabad have gone berserk
 Narendra Modi you have fucked the mother of miyas [Muslim men]
 The volcano which was inactive for years has erupted...
 We have widened the tight vaginas of the “bibis” [Muslim women]...
 She was fucked standing while she kept shouting
 She enjoyed the uncircumcised penis.
 With a Hindu government the Hindus have the power to annihilate miyas...⁷³

Through such graphic and unabashed celebration of brutal sexual violence, the perpetrators had taken the already belligerent Hindutva ideology a step further. While the founding ideologues of the RSS, as Chapter I has argued, justified ‘retaliatory’ and pre-emptive sexual violence as a way to redeem Hindu male pride, they did not glorify this violence so vocally. In this sense, the pathological veneration of macabre sexual violence during the 2002 massacre was unique.

This violence was also made unique by the responses of senior Hindu nationalist leaders and their supporters to this violence. CM Modi rationalized this violence by invoking Newton’s laws, stating that ‘every action has an equal and opposite reaction’. George Fernandes, Defence Minister in the BJP-led NDA government in the centre downplayed the violence by stating that, ‘There is nothing new in the mayhem let loose in Gujarat... A pregnant woman’s stomach being slit...a daughter being raped in front of a mother is not a

⁷³ Reproduced and translated in Communalism Combat, ‘Pamphlet Poison’, p. 137.

new thing. Such things have been happening for 54 years in India'.⁷⁴ Others, including women, justified this violence by describing it as necessary for the protection of Hindus and giving it a religious sanction. As the head of Shishu Mandir, the education wing of the RSS, Mrs. S. Patel stated, 'Even Lord Ram had slashed out the nose and ears of [mythological female demons] Tadka and Srupnakha'.⁷⁵

The preceding section has argued that immediately after the Godhra tragedy, Hindu nationalist organizations provided ideological and organization leadership to the attackers. In their virulent propaganda they claimed that Muslim men had sexually victimized Hindu women in order to instigate 'retaliatory' and pre-emptive sexual violence against Muslim women. Then they provided organizational leadership to the attackers so that they could single out Muslim men, women and children, and their homes and property for attack. In orchestrating this violence, Hindu nationalist organizations received from the State machinery, senior BJP politicians as well as the head of the State, CM Modi. The complicity of the State in the condoning and sanctioning this violence and the extensive popularity of Hindutva organizations led to the infliction of macabre forms of violence against women. Through this violence, the members of Hindu nationalist organizations sought to prove their devotion to the nation and assert their masculine might. Meanwhile, this brutality was rationalized, downplayed, and even justified as a religious duty by senior leaders.

However, the perpetration of sexual violence against Muslim women during the massacre was motivated not just by Hindu nationalist ideology but also by patriarchal ideas that served to eroticize the sexual victimization of women. Moreover, the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations was enabled by the breakdown of ties between

⁷⁴ Fernandes said this in the *Lok Sabha* [Lower House of the Indian Parliament] on 30 April 2002. Quoted in the *Times of India*, Delhi edition, 1 May 2002.

⁷⁵ Interview at Shishu Mandir office, Ahmedabad, 12/10/06.

Hindus and Muslims at the neighbourhood level. The following two sections focus on these two facets of the 2002 massacre.

5.4 Patriarchal Motivations

In addition to Hindutva ideology, men who inflicted sexual violence against Muslim women were also partly motivated by patriarchal ideas that normalize sexual violence as 'sex'. Indeed these patriarchal ideas were so prevalent during 'Gujarat 2002' that even some Muslim men sexually victimized Muslim women who sought to shelter in the relief camps. The following paragraphs explore how the blurring of the boundaries between 'sexual violence' and 'sex' motivated sexual violence against Muslim women.

During the massacre, the idea that the forceful appropriation of women's bodies is sexually pleasurable was an important motivation for the attackers. As an illustration consider the testimony of a member of the Bajrang Dal, Suresh Chara, who participated in the violence in Naroda Patiya on 28 February:

When thousands of hungry men go in, they will eat some *fruit* or the other...in any case the fruit are going to be crushed and thrown away.... Many Muslims girls were being killed and burnt to death anyway, some people must have helped themselves to the fruit. Might even have been more...then there were the rest of our brothers, our Hindu brothers, VHP people and RSS people. Anyone could have helped themselves, who wouldn't, when there's fruit? The more you harm them, the less it is. I really hate them...don't want to spare them. Look, my wife is sitting here but let me say... the fruit was there so it had to be eaten. I also ate... I ate once.... Just once... then I had to go killing again. [About the girl he had raped]... that scrap-dealer's girl... Naseemo...Naseemo that juicy plump one...I got on top...properly...then I pulped her... made her into a pickle. (emphasis added)⁷⁶

This testimony shows how Chara construed women's bodies as pleasurable objects ('fruits'),

⁷⁶ Charas are an OBC group. Interview with S. Chara, quoted in Tehelka, *Gujarat 2002: The Truth*, 2007, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107The_RSS_will.asp. Accessed 16/07/09.

which could be appropriated for sexual gratification. This understanding led him to perceive sexual violence against Muslim women as an erotic experience. He further rationalized this sexual victimization by insisting that the quest for 'sex', even if it requires brute force, is both a 'natural' male need and male entitlement. For instance, Chara's comment 'When thousands of hungry men go in, they *will* eat some fruit or the other' was born out of the common patriarchal understanding that men who sexually victimize women are actually acting on their 'natural instinct' to have 'sex'. Simultaneously, by saying that 'Anyone could have helped themselves, *who wouldn't, when there's fruit?*' (emphasis added) Chara was echoing the idea that men are entitled to sexual gratification even if that means the use of the violence. This self-proclaimed sense of entitlement was buttressed by the assumption that since Muslim women are going to be 'crushed and thrown away anyway' men are all the more entitled to use the former's objectified bodies. It was this perceived sense of natural male need for and entitlement to 'sex' that partly motivated men like Chara to inflict such violence.

One could argue that this infliction was motivated by the Hindu nationalist idea that Muslim women are supposedly hypersexual and thus somehow more attractive than their Hindu counterparts. However, Chara's testimony suggests otherwise. Although he said that 'I really hate them...', his feeling vacillated between hatred for Muslims in general and attraction for the particular Muslim girl he victimized. So, the sexual victimization was born out of both hatred for Muslims and the desire to force himself on the girl. These two ideas converged because through this violence he could express his hatred for Muslims, humiliate the Muslim male 'enemy' and gratify himself at the same time.

The confluence of these two ideas motivated several other men, like Chara, to perpetrate sexual violence. Some of the men, who gang-raped Muslim women during the

massacre, were reported to have said, ‘use her as much as you want now, we won’t get her tomorrow’.⁷⁷ Others, including some policemen, referred to Muslim women as ‘coloured TVs’⁷⁸ - an expensive but much desired commodity in most households. So on the one hand Muslim women were viewed as expensive sexual commodities otherwise unavailable to Hindu men for the purposes of sexual gratification. On the other hand, the Hindu nationalist idea that Muslim women are hypersexual turned them into sexual commodity that is more desirable than Hindu women. Sexual violence against them thus served two purposes at the same time – destruction of the symbols of honour, reproducers and property of the Muslim enemy, and sexual gratification. Sexual violence during the massacre was not motivated by Hindu nationalist ideology alone but rather by the mixture of this ideology and the patriarchal desire for opportunistic ‘sex’.

While this sexual violence was taking place in the massacre, Muslim women were also sexually victimized in the relief camps. These camps were set up from 28 February itself by Islamic religious organizations such as Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind and Jamaat-e-Islami, and some affluent Muslim families. In Ahmedabad alone, over 66,000 survivors sought shelter, food and protection in the camps. In these camps, several Muslim women, especially those who were single or widowed, were raped or forced to give sexual services in exchange for basic aid. In some instances, when this violence led to impregnation, women were quietly and swiftly, married off in the various group-marriage ceremonies organized in the camps. Most of the activists I spoke with during my fieldwork accepted that the incidence of such violence

⁷⁷ Interviews with survivors of sexual violence in relief camps, Ahmedabad, May 2002. Source: Fieldwork notes.

⁷⁸ Interviews with survivors of the 2002 massacre in Ahmedabad – 1 from Behrampura on 5/12/07, 4 from Vatwa on 29/11/07– 3/11/07 and 1 from Jamalpur on 20/10/07.

was widespread in the relief camps.⁷⁹ Two activists actually went to the extent of stating that some of the women were raped once during the massacre, and a hundred times during their hundred-day stay in the camps.⁸⁰ Despite such acknowledgement, however, this violence has been entirely absent from the public discourses on the sexual violence during ‘Gujarat 2002’. Whilst most activists have addressed this issue outside political forums, most senior Muslim leaders who organized much of the relief work either denied that this violence happened, or condoned it as a product of ‘natural male desire’.⁸¹ Referring to the cases of sexual violence in the camps, the state President of the women’s wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, for instance, claimed:

...If you put so many women in front of a man, of course he will take advantage of it. That is his need. A man needs a woman’s *company* (euphemism for sex). A single woman can spend her whole life by herself, but a man cannot.⁸² (emphasis added)

Although the violence that occurred in the relief camps was not as brutal as that perpetrated in the massacre, it was similarly ‘explained’ as a product of ‘natural male desire’. As the above testimony suggests, sexual violence against women was normalized by describing women as sexual objects whose bodies can be appropriated by force, or under duress, for the purposes of sexual gratification.

This section has argued that during the ‘Gujarat 2002’ patriarchal ideas that serve to normalize sexual violence as erotic were important motivations for men who perpetrated such

⁷⁹ Interview with several human rights activists whose names will not be mentioned owing to the sensitive nature of this issue. A. Bukhari, Editor of *Gujarat Today*, denied this had happened. Interview at his office, Ahmedabad, 18/10/07. Two local community workers from Vatwa denied that such violence occurred in the camps they were in charge of. Interview with A. Jahan and A. Bhai at their residence in Vatwa, Ahmedabad, 15/12/07.

⁸⁰ Interview with M. Malik and R. Malik at their office in Center for Development, Ahmedabad, 10/12/07; and R. Khan at his office, Ahmedabad, 20/12/07.

⁸¹ Interview with S. Madni at his office, Ahmedabad, 20/11/07; F. Tanvir at her residence in Juhapura, Ahmedabad, 21/11/07; and I. Shaikh at his residence in Juhapura, Ahmedabad, 2/11/07.

⁸² Interview with F. Tanvir at her residence in Juhapura, Ahmedabad, 21/11/07.

violence against Muslim women. It has shown how their desire to sexually victimize women for the purposes of sexual gratification and to sexually violate Muslim women for the cause of Hindutva manifested simultaneously during the massacre. The significance of patriarchal ideas in motivating sexual violence during the 2002 massacre is further evidenced by what happened in the relief camps. Here, powerful Muslim men in charge of providing shelter and aid sexually victimized the destitute survivors of the massacre. Like Hindutva activists, they did not distinguish between sexual violence and 'sex'. Instead, this violence was condoned or justified as a 'natural' consequence of male sexual desire.

This section has thus problematized the prevalent scholarly view that Hindutva ideology alone motivated sexual violence against Muslim women. The following section poses a further challenge to this view by arguing that the breakdown of neighbourhood ties between Hindus and Muslims during the massacre played a significant role in enabling the infliction of such violence.

5.5 Breakdown of Neighbourhood Ties

While examining the 1969, 1985 and 1992 riot this study made a case for the examining the nature of neighbourhood ties for understanding the infliction of sexual violence during inter-religious conflict. This section makes a similar case for the 2002 massacre. It argues that during the massacre neighbourhood ties between Hindus and Muslims snapped due to aggressive communal mobilization. The breakdown of these ties reconstituted the neighbourhood space into a gendered communal space in which sexual violence against Muslim women could occur. In order to show how this process unfolded, this section focuses on two neighbourhoods. The first neighbourhood is Naroda Patiya where macabre violence

was perpetrated on the bodies of Muslim women. The second is Gomtipur where sexual violence in the form of verbal abuse has been reported.

Naroda Patiya is part of the Naroda constituency located along the eastern periphery of the city. This constituency includes Naroda Patiya, Naroda Gaon, Gulbarg Society and Gopinath Society. Home to migrant labourers from Maharashtra, Delhi and Karnataka, the neighbourhood had a substantial Dalit and OBC population. Nearly 1,000 Muslim daily wage-earning families also lived in the area, which depended on the nearby diamond cutting, and polishing factories for their livelihood. The neighbourhood was dominated by the middle class, upper caste Patel community who lived in apartments in Gulbarg and Gopinath Society. Like most parts of the eastern labour region, Naroda Patiya was extensively segregated along community lines before the massacre began. The VHP and the Bajrang Dal had actively mobilized Dalits and OBCs against Muslims, and orchestrated violence against religious minorities in 1997-8. The region had become such a Hindutva stronghold that BJP leader Maya Kodnani won the Ahmedabad Municipal Elections in 1995 and the Assembly Elections in 2000 with a convincing majority. As mentioned earlier, Kodnani along with senior VHP leader Jaideep Patel led the mob on 28 February.

On that day, one hundred Muslims lost their lives in this neighbourhood alone and several Muslim women were subjected to macabre forms of sexual violence. The people who perpetrated this violence against Muslims were not faceless strangers but their neighbours. The testimony of Qudsiya, who lost her mother and sister that day, shows how 28 February marked the termination of all neighbourhood ties. This is what she remembered of that day:

That Bhavani [a neighbour] said come here, I am making rice and *kadhi* [an Indian curry] for all of you. We cook rice and kadhi when someone dies. Why was he cooking that while we were still alive? My mother used to tie a

*rakhi*⁸³ to that Bhavani...every year. When on Id we would slaughter a goat and cook meat, she used take some meat and feed him. When the danga [local term for riot] started here, she pleaded to him ... she said that I am sure I will die, but keep my young daughter. She is young and unmarried save her. I am sure I will die but at least protect my daughter. Don't protect me but please give my young, unmarried daughter refuge in your house. But he cut them with his sword there and then and burnt them alive...

People who used to say that you are like my sister and you are like my mother, raped them that day.⁸⁴

Qudsiya's testimony reveals how her family had established fictive kin ties with Hindus over the years by participating in each other's festivals, Rakhi and Id. However, the day the mob attacked Naroda Patiya these ties were abruptly terminated and replaced by hatred for Muslims. On that day this neighbourhood became a gendered communal arena in which people who called Muslim women their 'sisters and mothers' were pitched against their imaginary Muslim 'enemy'. Even though Qudsiya's mother tried to invoke those fictive familial relationships and pleaded for protection for her daughter, communal mobilization had led to abysmal breakdown of all ties. This breakdown enabled the manifestation of Hindutva ideology and patriarchal ideas into sexual violence in Naroda Patiya.

A similar process unfolded in Gomtipur. Home to daily-waged Dalits and Muslims, Gomtipur is located in the industrial labour region in eastern Ahmedabad. As described in Chapter 2 this neighbourhood had witnessed brutal sexual violence against Muslim women during the 1969 riot. During the 1985 riot, however, Dalits and Muslims in this neighbourhood forged a strategic alliance with one another in order to protect their own and each other's lives and property. Although extreme forms of sexual violence were not reported from this neighbourhood, Gomtipur witnessed repeated bouts of communal violence throughout the

⁸³ Rakhi is Hindu festival that is marked by the tying of a rakhi, or holy thread, by the sister on the wrist of her brother. The brother in return vows to protect her.

⁸⁴ Interview at her residence in Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad, 12/12/07.

1990s. Moreover, Hindu nationalist leaders had aggressively mobilized unemployed Dalit youths from this region against Muslims in the 1990s. As a result, like most other neighbourhoods in the industrial labour region, Gomtipur was extensively segregated along community-lines before the 2002 massacre began.

Violence started in this region on 1 March 2002. On that day, a mob of 2,000 men armed with swords, petrol bombs, and tridents attacked Muslim-dominated bastis in Gomtipur. Led by VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders, and assisted by the police, the mob singled out Muslims and their homes for violence. On that day, 260 Muslims homes were looted and burnt in Salatnagar and 200 each in Khokhra Housing Society, Soneni Chawl, Janata Nagar, Gafoor Basti, and Ansar Nagar.⁸⁵ During these attacks, men shouted sexually derogatory slogans about Muslim women. One of the men who participated in the attack on 1 March was Mohan Macwan who, as mentioned earlier, joined the Bajrang Dal in the late-1980s. His testimony reflects how neighbourhood ties between Hindus and Muslims broke down during the massacre:

On the 28th [28 February] one of the members of the VHP came and collected all of us. He told us about what had happened in Godhra and said our people have been burnt...Muslims did this and that to our people. He asked, what do you think? Do you think what happened in Godhra was right? People collected on the roads and the atmosphere got very tense. No one went to work. He said that Muslims have been attacking us for hundreds of years, now come we will teach them a lesson.

Later VHP leaders came to our basti and gave us weapons and told us that they will protect us in case police catches us or if there is any other problem...they said don't worry about anything. I also went to kill people... We thought that if we will kill Muslim men then their population will not reduce. But if we kill and rape women then it will. Even before the *danga* started, if a burqa-clad Muslim woman passed by, VHP men who socialize with us would challenge us and say 'if you are a man, then grab her... show us you if you have the guts to tease her' and we would. They told us that a Muslim woman is a thing to be enjoyed and gradually over time it got

⁸⁵ Communalism Combat, 'Gomtipur', in *Communalism Combat*, March-April, Year 8, No. 77-78, 2002, p. 39.

ingrained in our minds that this is a Muslim woman and such things should be done to her.

My grandfather used to say that during the reservation agitation Muslims had helped Dalits...they gave food and protection. He said that the savarnas [upper castes] had combined with the police and attacked Dalits. Several others like my grandfather tried to reason with us and told us not go out and do this. But we did not listen to him. No one listens to elders any way. [Muslims] think we are eunuchs. We knew if we don't go out Muslims would burn everything. They had done so much in Godhra we simply had to go out and do something. So we told our elders, you do what you have to do and sit at home. You don't even need to come out of the house. We will do whatever needs doing. We told them keep your mentality to yourself, we will go out. We are men, and we will ensure security.⁸⁶

This testimony shows how neighbourhood ties between Dalit and Muslim residents of Gomtipur broke down under the strain of communal mobilization. Hindu nationalists activists mobilized Dalits by inserting the Godhra tragedy into a supposed long history of Muslim atrocities against the Hindu community and by insisting on avenging those alleged crimes. Since the distinction between the past and the present atrocities allegedly committed by Muslims were blurred, any Muslim could be substituted for any other as a target for violence. This ideological instigation for violence was then backed up by organization support in the form of weapons and the promise of impunity. Ostensibly on behalf of the entire Hindu community, Hindu men sought to prove that they are not 'eunuchs' and 'teach a lesson' to their historical Muslim 'enemy'. In order to prove their masculinity and avenge allegedly committed by Muslims for 'hundreds of years', men like Mohan were prepared to inflict sexual violence against Muslim women. Such violence would destroy the biological reproducers, symbols of honour and property of the Muslim 'enemy', as well as satiate their desire to 'enjoy' Muslim women.

⁸⁶ Interview in Gomtipur, Ahmedabad, 20/10/07.

The space for such violence was created by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties. As the second part of Mohan's testimony shows, older Dalits who had forged strategic alliances with Muslims in 1985 and received 'food and protection' from them, tried to appeal to the youngsters to not perpetrate violence against Muslims. By reminding youngsters of the ties between Dalits and Muslims in 1985, Mohan's grandfather's appeal was an attempt to demystify the image of the 'Muslim enemy'. He tried to help young men like Mohan to view them as their neighbours, friends and even protectors. However, during the 2002 massacre there was no space for the kind of strategic alliances that Dalits and Muslims had forged with one another during the 1985 riot. The desire to 'teach Muslims a lesson' prevailed over the appeals made by elders and marked the breakdown of neighbourhood ties.

Indeed, the breakdown of such ties was an abiding feature of the 2002 massacre. Even in places outside Ahmedabad, where sexual violence took place, most of the victims recognized the perpetrators. A survey of Dahod and Panchmahal district found that in over half the incidents their neighbours participated in attack.⁸⁷ In a similar study of the violence in Sabarkantha, a victim, on being asked whether she recognized the assailants responded tersely: 'Of course I can recognize them. I saw them everyday. I grew up with them'.⁸⁸

The preceding discussion has shown that the breakdown of neighbourhood ties played a significant role during the 2002 massacre. It was this breakdown that created a space for the infliction of sexual violence that was motivated by Hindu nationalist ideology on the one hand, and patriarchal ideas on the other.

⁸⁷ Gauhar Raza and Shabnam Hashmi, *State of Ruins. The Dispossessed at the Vortex of Communal Whirlpool in Gujarat. A Report*. (Ahmedabad: Prashant and New Delhi: SAHMAT, 2002), p. 16.

⁸⁸ Citizens Initiative, 'The Survivors Speak', p. 89.

Conclusion

The period that preceded the 2002 massacre saw the entrenchment of Hindu nationalist organizations in neighbourhoods across Ahmedabad and in the State. With the arrival of the BJP in the state government in 1998, the Sangh Parivar started a mass propaganda campaign that sought to warn Hindus about the 'sexual' threat that Muslims allegedly posed to Hindu women. Since Hindu nationalist organizations had garnered extensive support from the various sections of the city's population, this campaign translated into active sexual surveillance on Hindu women and Muslim men. Simultaneously, the highly saffronized State machinery legitimized Hindutva rhetoric and activities at the level of policy. Banking on the support of Ahmedabadi population and the BJP-led provincial government, Hindutva outfits also started orchestrating violence against religious minorities from 1998 onwards. When these repeated bouts of violence and the aggressive postures of the Sangh Parivar affected the political fortunes of the BJP, the party seated Narendra Modi, a Hindutva-hardliner in the chair of the Chief Minister in 2000. Subsequently, when the 2002 massacre began, the Sangh Parivar received extensive support from the various arms of the State in orchestrating violence against Muslim men and women. A belligerent propaganda campaign was organized that sought to project Hindus as the victims of the sexual tyranny of Muslim men. Hindu men were called upon to avenge these imagined atrocities as a way to redeem their injured male pride and prove their devotion to the nation. Several men responded to this call and inflicted the most brutal forms of sexual violence against women.

However, this chapter has also argued that men who inflicted such violence were partly motivated by patriarchal ideas that served to normalize sexual violence as 'sex'. Men believed that sexual gratification, even which that involved the use of violence, was a male

entitlement and a 'natural' male need. So, when mobs of men attacked Muslim women, they were motivated by Hindutva ideology as well as this patriarchal idea. The manifestation of these ideas, moreover, was dependent on the breakdown of neighbourhood ties. An examination of the events that took place in Naroda Patiya and Gomtipur showed that the termination of neighbourhood ties created the space in which Hindu men could inflict such violence. Thus, sexual violence perpetrated against Muslim women during the 2002 massacre cannot be understood solely in terms of Hindutva ideology.

CONCLUSION

Sexual violence against Muslim women has been a feature of contemporary Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. The predominant academic consensus has unequivocally assigned responsibility to Hindu nationalist ideology for motivating its supporters to inflict such violence against Muslim women. It has been argued that ideologically motivated men inflict such violence in order to destroy the symbols of honour, biological reproducers and property of the 'enemy' Muslim community. Taking this consensus as its starting point this thesis set out to explore the contribution of this ideology to the incidence of such violence and to examine whether the incidence of such violence can be understood in terms of Hindu nationalist ideology alone.

The city of Ahmedabad, located in the western Indian province of Gujarat, was chosen as the case study because the city witnessed endemic communal violence in the last four decades, the worst episodes of which occurred in 1969, 1985 and 1992, and because in 2002, Ahmedabad was the epicentre of the worst anti-Muslim massacre in the history of independent India. Significantly, during the 1969 and 2002 episodes the city witnessed brutal sexual violence against Muslim women in the form of rape, gang-rape, genital mutilation. However, in 1985 and 1992, sexual violence against Muslim women took the form of verbal and visual abuse only. The variation in the form and scale of sexual violence that the city witnessed during episodes of Hindu-Muslim conflict over the last four decades made it an ideal and important site for such a study.

In order to explore the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology to the perpetration of sexual violence against Muslim women, this study undertook a comprehensive analysis of the

1969, 1985, 1992 and 2002 conflicts. In contrast to the extant literature, which is based on little, if any, primary research, this study examined these episodes by first contextualizing the eruption of violence in the wider socio-political and economic landscape of Ahmedabad between 1960 and 2002; and then closely scrutinizing the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology to the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women during the conflict itself.

Drawing on a rich pool of original primary sources, this study has tracked and interrogated the contribution of this ideology at various levels. The first level is that of the founding ideology of militant Hindu nationalism. A comprehensive critical evaluation of the writings of the founding ideologues of the RSS with respect to sexual violence has revealed that a justification for sexual violence against Muslim women lies at the core of the ideological framework of the Hindu nationalist movement. Chapter I of this thesis has argued that through a carefully constructed historical narrative Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar projected Muslims and Hindus, men and women in sharp contrast to one another. While Muslim men were projected as iconoclasts, aggressive fanatics and rapists, Hindu men were projected as inherently peace-loving and respectful towards women and religion. Simultaneously, Muslim women were shown as violent and as being complicit in the atrocities allegedly perpetrated by Muslim men on Hindu women. The latter were projected as being incapable of defending themselves against the Muslim 'enemy' and as the historical victims of the sexual atrocities committed by the 'rapist' Muslim male. As a next theme, the founding ideologues sought to show that the crimes supposedly committed by the Muslim male on Hindu women resulted in the symbolic humiliation and emasculation of the Hindu male. The third theme in their writings concerned itself with instilling a fear of further masculinized humiliation in Hindu males. The ideologues argued that the existence of

Pakistan and the presence of Muslims in India after the Partition posed an external and internal threat to Hindu women, the Hindu nation and Hindu religion. A combination of these themes resulted in the justification of sexual violence against Muslim women. The ideologues insisted on the cultivation of an aggressive Hindu masculinity so that Hindu men could avenge the sexual atrocities allegedly committed by Muslim men. Through the infliction of pre-emptive and 'retaliatory' sexual violence against Muslim women, Hindu men would assert their masculine prowess, redeem their humiliated male pride and restore the imaginary Hindu Rashtra to its lost glory. Simultaneously, by destroying the symbols of honour, biological reproducers and property of the Muslim 'enemy', Hindu men would humiliate the Muslim male, their families and their community. Thus, at the level of ideology, sexual violence against Muslim women lies at the heart of the Hindu nationalist movement.

The second level at which this study has examined the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology in the incidence of sexual violence, relates to the vertical and horizontal expansion of Hindutva organizations in Ahmedabad. As the initial section of Chapter II, III, IV, and V have argued, during the past four decades, Hindu nationalist organizations have come to pervade Ahmedabadi society and the Gujarat State machinery. This phenomenal expansion has been closely tied up with the socio-economic and politico-ideological developments that the city has witnessed between 1960 and 2002. It has been argued that the onset of the socio-economic crisis in the mid-1960s and the wider political shift towards right-wing politics enabled the rise of Hindutva in eastern and western Ahmedabad. The deepening of these crises between the late-1970s and mid-1980s, afforded Hindutva outfits the opportunity to grow still further and acquire greater support and legitimacy for their gendered anti-Muslim rhetoric. As a result, the spatial segregation, communal hostility and political

divisions between upper-, backward- and lower-castes and Muslims hardened considerably. Owing to aggressive mobilization and repeated bouts of communal violence the period between mid-1980s and early 1990s witnessed the entrenchment of the Sangh Parivar in eastern and western Ahmedabad. Their pervasive presence in Ahmedabad and beyond enabled the Sangh Parivar to make its way into the corridors of State power. Although this process of acquiring reigns of power had begun only in 1987, in less than a decade the BJP had seated itself at the helm of the State. The arrival of the BJP to power afforded the Sangh Parivar the opportunity to foment violence against religious minorities with impunity and publicly carry out its belligerent anti-Muslim activists, culminating eventually in the 2002 massacre. The journey of the Hindu Right from local shakhas in the 1960s to the highest political office in the province by 2002 is a testament to the success of the Sangh Parivar's ability to mobilize support for its rhetoric and activities.

The third level of interrogation relates to the different mediums through which Hindu nationalist organizations circulated their virulent gendered ideology. This study has shown that during the last forty years cadre-based Hindutva outfits organized shakhas and religious events across Ahmedabad. They provided material benefits to the lower income and poorer sections of the population, and set up several organizations dedicated to mobilizing particular class and caste groups. Alongside these forms of mobilization, the Hindu Right conducted several mass propaganda campaigns between 1960 and 2002. Through pamphlets, sloganeering and vernacular newspapers, the ideology was circulated during the last forty years. By the mid-1980s already this gendered, anti-Muslim ideology had gathered such widespread popularity that during religious processions shouting of sexual invectives aimed at

Muslim women, and visual sexual violence had become a frequent feature of religious processions.

The fourth level at which this study has tracked the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology to sexual violence was their activities during large-scale conflict. The study has shown that Hindu nationalist outfits provided ideological instigation for sexual violence and organizational leadership to the rioters in all the episodes discussed in this thesis. Chapter II on the 1969 riot, for instance, argued that promptly after the beginning of the riot a massive hate propaganda was organized whose contents closely mirrored the core tenets of Hindutva ideology. By circulating fictitious stories about the sexual victimization of Hindu women by Muslims, Hindutva organizations and their affiliates instigated men to inflict sexual and other forms of violence against Muslims. This ideological instigation was backed up with organizational support to rioters who singled out Muslim men and women, and their homes and property for violence. A similar picture emerged in Chapter V on the 2002 anti-Muslim massacre. Ideological instigation was supplemented with organizational support, which led to brutal sexual violence against Muslim women. Motivated partly by the desire to destroy the symbols of honour, biological reproducers and property of the Muslim 'enemy', Muslim women were subjected to rape, gang rape and genital mutilation. By tracking the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology and activists at these various levels, this study has attempted to provide a nuanced analysis of their contribution to the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women during conflict.

In interrogating the contribution of Hindu nationalist ideology, this thesis departs from and contributes to the existing historiography in two significant ways. First, it argues that it is important to take into account the contribution of certain patriarchal ideas in motivating

sexual violence against women during communal conflict. As Chapters II, III and V have argued, patriarchal ideas that serve to blur the distinctions between sexual violence and sex were important motivations for the men who sexually victimized women. In the 1969 riot, for instance, the men who attacked Muslim women viewed them as sexual objects that could be appropriated for the purposes of sexual gratification. To them, the process of threatening women and inflicting sexual violence against them was an erotic experience. Similarly, I argued in Chapter V that Hindutva activists who attacked Muslim women during the 2002 massacre were also partly motivated by patriarchal ideas which served to normalize sexual violence as 'sex'. It was this combination of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal ideology that led to the description of Muslim women as 'coloured TVs' – sexual-communal objects. Moreover, these patriarchal ideas also motivated some Muslim men to sexually victimize destitute survivors in the relief camps. Although the violence they inflicted was not as brutal as we saw during the massacre, it was similarly rationalized as a product of 'natural' male need.

The other patriarchal idea that motivated such violence against women is that which sanctions the infliction of such violence as a way to reinforce the gendered status quo and punish transgression. As Chapter III on the 1985 riot argued, the policemen who inflicted verbal and visual sexual violence sought to punish Hindu women for protesting against the State. Since Hindu women were seen as having transgressed gendered boundaries by asserting their political agency, sexual humiliation was used to deter similar transgression in the future.

Thus, this study has argued that it is important to take into account the significance of patriarchal ideas that normalize sexual violence as 'sex' and sanction its infliction for reinforcing the gendered status quo and punishing transgression, in motivating sexual

violence against women during inter-religious conflict. In doing so, I have challenged the efficacy of understanding the incidence of sexual violence against Muslim women during inter-religious conflict in terms of Hindu nationalist ideology alone.

By making a case for taking into account the nature of neighbourhood ties in understanding such occurrences, this study makes another significant departure from the existing historiography. In Chapters II and Chapter V, I argued that the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal motivations in acts of sexual violence was enabled by the breakdown of neighbourhood ties. Taking the neighbourhood of Rakhial in the mill district of Gomtipur as an example for 1969, and Naroda Patiya and Gomtipur for 2002, I argued that under the strain of communal mobilization neighbourhood ties based on everyday interaction were abruptly terminated following the eruption of violence. This breakdown of ties reconstituted the neighbourhood space into a gendered communal arena in which Hindu-Muslim rivalry was played out in the form of sexual violence against Muslim women. At the same time, the breakdown of neighbourhood ties also enabled the manifestation of patriarchal motivations for sexual violence. With ethical-moral codes out of the way, some men availed themselves of the opportunity to sexually gratify themselves through the infliction of sexual violence. In this way, the breakdown of neighbourhood ties during the 1969 riot and 2002 anti-Muslim massacre enabled the manifestation of Hindu nationalist and patriarchal ideas into acts of sexual violence against women.

The necessity of taking into account the nature of neighbourhood ties for understanding the incidence of sexual violence during inter-religious conflict is further buttressed by the findings of Chapter III and Chapter IV. In these chapters, which focus on the 1985 and 1992 riots respectively, I argued that during these particular episodes of conflict,

neighbourhood ties endured communal mobilization, which seems to have had the effect of preventing brutal sexual violence. In order to make this case, Chapter III examined the nature of neighbourhood ties in the mill district of Gomtipur, which had in fact witnessed brutal sexual violence in 1969 and verbal and visual sexual violence in 2002. Unlike the 1969 riot however, during the 1985 riot Harijans and Muslims found themselves under violent attack by upper castes. As a result, instead of attacking one another, as they had done in 1969, these two communities forged a strategic alliance with another at the neighbourhood level. This strengthening of neighbourhood ties between Harijans and Muslims seem to have prevented the incidence of brutal sexual violence against Muslim women during the 1985 riot.

In Chapter IV, I focused on the nature of neighbourhood ties during the 1992 riot in Behrampura. I argued that aggressive communal mobilization had considerably strained ties between Dalits and Muslim residents in this neighbourhood. As a result, when the riot erupted Dalits attacked the shops and homes of some of their Muslim neighbours. However, despite this violence, neighbourhood ties forged on the basis of everyday interaction in Calico Mill, and genuine friendships, did not snap entirely. These ties, although fragile, seemed to have prevented extreme forms of sexual violence against Muslim women. Thus, this thesis has argued that it is important to take into account the nature of neighbourhood ties between Hindus and Muslims in order to have a better understanding of such violence during inter-religious conflict.

Furthermore, by emphasizing the role of neighbourhood ties in preventing the occurrence of sexual violence this study foregrounds the heterogeneity and complexity of the gendered politics of the subaltern classes that manifests itself during conflict. By focusing exclusively on Hindu nationalist ideology the existing historiography presupposes that during

the large-scale conflict, the politics of subaltern classes is submerged by the compulsions of anti-Muslim communal politics, and interests of 'normal times' such as those based on class, caste and neighbourhood alliances, are temporarily terminated. However, by making a case for the positive role of neighbourhood ties in 1985 and 1992, this study has questioned this presupposition. As the case of the 1985 riot showed, at times when caste-based and religion-based politics contradict one another, inter-religious alliances can prevail over inter-religious hostility and thus have the effect of preventing sexual violence. Similarly, an examination of the events that occurred in Behrampura during the 1992 riot revealed that ties based on everyday associations and genuine friendships can endure widespread communalization of neighbourhood space and extensive anti-Muslim mobilization. These two findings suggest that the politics of Dalits and Muslims continued to be mired in the complex interplay of competing interests throughout the course of these riots. It is important therefore to account for the unique local context of every episode of large-scale inter-religious conflict as well as the plurality of subaltern ideological discourses. The currency of reductive Hindu nationalist ideology-based explanations in understanding occurrences as complex and devastating as large-scale Hindu-Muslim conflict in India and sexual violence therein, is indeed surprising.

While I hope that this study genuinely contributes to the literature on sexual violence during large-scale conflict and communal violence in India, there is wide scope for further research in this area. We would, for instance, benefit from disaggregating the category of 'Muslim victims' of sexual violence on the basis of class identity. Although this thesis has shown that much of this violence has occurred in poor neighbourhoods in the industrial labour region of Ahmedabad, suggesting that victims of such violence are poor women, a more detailed study on the protection that affluence affords women during conflict would be

welcome. Moreover, a study on sexual violence against Hindu women during Hindu-Muslim conflict would greatly enrich our understanding of this subject. Whilst the discussion on the 1985 riot did address this issue, the focus of this study has been on Muslim women. Further research on the connections between everyday and episodic forms of violence and more extensive surveys of neighbourhoods would also augment the findings of this study. While my research has examined the significance of patriarchal ideas in motivating sexual violence and the perpetration of such violence at the level of neighbourhoods, this area certainly calls for greater attention. Nonetheless, this study constitutes an important intervention in the field of sexual violence in inter-religious conflict.

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List of Interviews

Sr. No.	Name	Occupation (Name of the Organization)	Venue	Date
1	J. Ahir	Social Worker	At her residence, Guptanagar, Ahmedabad	23/12/07
2	M. Ajmer	Cloth Factor Owner, Businessman	At his residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	12/12/07
3	Y. Altaf	Homemaker	At her residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	15/12/07
4	Q. Amin (pseudonym)	Factory labourer	At her residence in Naroda Pati Ahmedabad	12/12/07, 13/12/07
5	J. Andheria	Activist (Anandi)	At my residence, Ahmedabad	22/10/07
6	Prof. J. S. Bandukwala	Academic and Activist	At his residence, Baroda	21/11/07
7	A. Bano	Homemaker and self-employed tailor	At her residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	29/11/07
8	M. Bano	Homemaker and self-employed tailor	At her residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	20/11/07, 22/11/07
9	N. Bano	Self-employed, Homemaker	At her residence, Behrampura	18/1/07
10	R. Bano	Homemaker	At her residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	29/11/07, 30/11/07
11	J. Barot	State General Secretary, BJP	BJP office, Ahmedabad	24/10/07
12	A. Bhai	Activist (Nyaya Graha)	At his residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	15/12/07
13	Bharat Bhai	Social Worker,	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	12/12/06

14	M. Bhai	Activist, Sunni Muslim Committee	At I. Shaikh's residence, Juhapura, Ahmedabad	2/11/07
15	A. Bukhari	Editor, Gujarat Today	Gujarat Today office, Ahmedabad	18/10/07
16	Dr. B. Das	Director, Centre for Social Studies, Surat	CSS office, Surat	22/11/07
17	R. Das	Journalist, Hindustan Times	At his residence, Ahmedabad	25/10/07
18	Dr. M. Desai	Academic and Activist (Amwa)	At her residence, Ahmedabad	20/11/07
19	S. Dhruv	Writer, Poet and Activist (Darshan)	Darshan office, Ahmedabad	21/10/07
20	Dr. A.A. Engineer	Academic, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism	CSSS office, Bombay	28/12/07
21	H. Gandhi	Activist (Darshan)	Darshan office, Ahmedabad	17/10/07
22	S. George	Activist (Sahrwaru)	Sahrwaru office, Ahmedabad	4/11/07
23	P. Ginwala	Activist and Independent Researcher	At her residence, Ahmedabad	1/11/07
24	A. Hussain (pseudonym)	Shopkeeper	At his residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	11/12/07
25	F. Iqbal (pseudonym)	Local community School Teacher	At a meeting of Muslim women survivors of 2002 organized by Action Aid, near Lal Darwaza, Ahmedabad	28/10/07
26	B. Jadhav	Activist (Action Aid)	Action Aid office, Ahmedabad	20/10/07, 28/10/07
27	A. Jahan	Activist (Nyaya Graha)	At her residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	15/12/07
28	A. Jahan	Homemaker	At R. Bano's residence, Vatwa, Ahmedabad	30/11/07

29	N. Jahan	Homemaker	At a meeting of Muslim women survivors of 2002 organized by Action Aid, near Lal Darwaza, Ahmedabad	6/11/07
30	Prof. G. Jani	Academic, Gujarat University	At his office, Ahmedabad	25/10/07
31	P. Kathuria	Activist (Swati)	At her residence, Ahmedabad	24/12/06
32	A. Khan	Rickshaw driver	In his auto rickshaw, Juhapura, Ahmedabad	16/11/07
33	I. Khan (pseudonym)	Shopkeeper	At his shop, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	8/12/06
34	R. Khan	Activist	Identity undisclosed	20/12/07
35	S. Khan	Activist (Safar)	Safar office, Ahmedabad	20/11/07
36	S. Khan	Casual Labourer	At her residence, Juhapura, Ahmedabad	21/12/07
37	Dr. M. Kotdani	Politician, BJP MLA, Gynaecologist	BJP office, Ahmedabad	10/11/07
38	S. Khurshid (pseudonym)	Homemaker	At a meeting of Muslim women survivors of 2002 organized by Action Aid, near Lal Darwaza, Ahmedabad	6/11/07
39	Dr. H. Lakdawala	Activist (Sanchetna)	Sanchetna office, Ahmedabad	30/11/06
40	Fr. L. Lobo	Academic (Centre for Culture and Development)	CCD office, Baroda	24/11/07
41	M. Macwan (pseudonym)	Bajrang Dal Activist	Identity undisclosed	20/10/07
42	S. Madni	State President, Jammata-e-Islami Hind, Ahmedabad	At his office, Ahmedabad	2011/07

43	M. Malik	Activist (Center for Development)	At CD office, Ahmedabad	10/12/07
44	R. Malik	Activist (Center for Development)	At CD office, Ahmedabad	10/12/07
45	M. Mansuri	Activist, Gujarat Mahila Sewa Trust	At her office, Juhapura, Ahmedabad	4/11/07
46	Meenabehn (pseudonym)	Service	At her residence, Juhapura, Ahmedabad	12/10/06, 13/10/06
47	Mujibbhai (pseudonym)	Retired Post Office supervisor	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	15/12/06
48	Naeembhai (pseudonym)	School teacher	At his residence, Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad	12/12/07
49	Nafisabehn (pseudonym)	Sex worker	At her residence, Ekta Nagar, Ahmedabad	16/01/08
50	Nagmabehn (pseudonym)	Sex worker	At Nafisa's residence, Ekta Nagar, Ahmedabad	16/01/08
51	Najmabehn (pseudonym)	Sex worker	At Nafisa's residence, Ekta Nagar, Ahmedabad	16/01/08
52	F. Naqvi	Activist	At her residence, Delhi	25/1/07
53	V. Pandya	Journalist, Former Editor, Sadhana	At his residence, Ahmedabad	19/12/06
54	K. Parmar (pseudonym)	Trader	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	15/1/07
55	K. Parmar (pseudonym)	Bajrang Dal Member	Identity Undisclosed	20/10/07
56	V. Parmar (pseudonym)	Trader	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	19/1/07
57	S. Parmar (pseudonym)	Unemployed	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	21/1/07
58	G. Patel	Lawyer and Political Commentator	At his residence, Ahmedabad	27/11/06

59	S. Patel (pseudonym)	Head, RSS's education wing, Shishu Mandir, in Gujarat	Shishu Mandir office, Ahmedabad	12/10/06
60	I. Pathak	Activist (Awag)	AWAG office, Ahmedabad	26/12/06
61	S. Pathan (pseudonym)	Community Social worker	At her residence, Behrampura	15/1/07
62	Fr. C. R. Prakash	Activist (Prashant)	Prashant office, Ahmedabad	11/10/06
63	M. Qureshi (pseudonym)	Student	Darshan Office, Ahmedabad	20/10/07
64	A. Rafiq (pseudonym)	Casual Labourer	At her residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	18/1/07
65	K. Rathod (pseudonym)	Trader	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	28/1/07
66	Sakinabehn (pseudonym)	Unemployed	At her residence, Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad	12/12/07
67	T. Setalvad	Activist and Editor, Communalism Combat	CC office, Bombay	12/01/07, 24/12/07
68	D. Sethi	Counsellor, Jyoti Sangh	Jyoti Sangh Office, Ahmedabad	2/10/06
69	G. Sethi	Activist, Janvikas	Janvikas office, Ahmedabad	22/1/07
70	G. Shah	Independent Activist	At her residence, Ahmedabad	5/1/07
71	Prof. G. Shah	Academic	At his residence, Ahmedabad	29/11/06
72	T. Shah	Counsellor, Jyoti Sangh	Jyoti Sangh Office, Ahmedabad	2/10/06
73	S. Shaikh (pseudonym)	Local community worker	At her residence, Juhapura, Ahmedabad	21/10/06
74	I. Shaikh	Activist associated with several NGOs including Amwa	At his residence, Juhapura, Ahmedabad	2/11/07

75	Shamsulbhai (pseudonym)	Unemployed	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	20/1/07
76	Sumanbehn	Sahkaryavahika, Rashtriya Swayamsevika Samiti	Samiti's office, Ahmedabad	3/11/07
77	Sajidabehn (pseudonym)	Casual Labourer	At her residence, Relief Colony, Vatwa	25/10/07
78	F. Tanvir	State President of the women's wing of the Jammat-e-Islami, Ahmedabad	At her residence, Ahmedabad	21/11/07
79	S. Tepre	Gujarat and Rajasthan State Pracharika, Rashtriya Sevika Samiti	Rashtriya Sevika Samiti office	29/11/07
80	B. Thakkar	Editor, Sadhana and old Jan Sangh worker	Sadhana office, Ahmedabad	26/11/06; 5/12/07
81	Waqarbai	Local community worker in Godhra	Darshan office, Ahmedabad	22/10/07
82	Dr. S. R. Yadav	Academic and Incharge of BJP's Media Cell	BJP office, Ahmedabad	10/12/07
83	A. Yagnik	Academic and Activist (Setu)	Setu office, Ahmedabad	30/10/07, 4/11/07
84	Yasminbehn (pseudonym)	Casual Labourer	At her residence, Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad	13/12/07
85	I. Yaqub (pseudonym)	Casual Labourer	At his residence, Behrampura, Ahmedabad	29/1/07

Appendix: Hindu Nationalist Propaganda Material

**Figure 1(b): Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 'Savadhan Campaign' (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1998)
(Flip side of Figure 1(a))**

કર્્યા પછી એક જ મહિનામાં તે જ મુસ્લિમ બીજા લગ્ન કરતાં હિન્દુ યુવતીએ ઝેર ગટગટાવ્યું.

- ★ કર્ણાવતીના એક કરોડપતિ હિન્દુ પરિવારની શિક્ષિત યુવતીને કારે પ્રાઇવીંગ શીખવતા મુસ્લિમ ફસાવી તેનું અપહરણ કર્યું.
- ★ સુરત જીલ્લામાં બસમાં અપડાઉન કરતી સગીરવંચની અનેક હિન્દુ યુવતીઓને-વિદ્યાર્થીનીઓને મુસ્લિમ પ્રાયવરો ફસાવી રહ્યા છે.
- ★ કર્ણાવતીમાં કોલેજના દરવાજેથી ગ્રેજ્યુએટ યુવતીને 'રાજુ' નામધારી મુસ્લિમ ફસાવી લગ્ન કર્યા પછી હિન્દુ યુવતીને જાણ થઈ કે તે મુસ્લિમના હાથમાં ફસાઈ છે.
- ★ કર્ણાવતીમાં સૌંદર્ય પ્રસાધનોની દુકાન ચલાવનાર મુસ્લિમ તેની ગ્રાહક એવી હિન્દુ યુવતીઓને ફસાવી.
- ★ રાજકોટની બ્યુટી પાર્લર ચલાવતી હિન્દુ યુવતી પાસે સામાન વેચવા આવનારા મુસ્લિમ ફેરિયાએ તેને ફસાવી.
- ★ ભરૂચમાં મુસ્લિમ સિનીયર વકીલે તેની જુનિયર તરીકે કામ કરતી હિન્દુ યુવતીને ફસાવીને તેની બીજી પત્ની બનાવી.
- ★ કર્ણાવતીમાં શિક્ષિત હિન્દુ યુવતી સોનલને મુસ્લિમ બીજાનો બંગલો પોતાનો છે એમ કહીને, પોતે સારી નોકરી કરે છે, તેવી ખોટી વાતોમાં ભરમાવીને લગ્ન કરી લીધા પરંતુ લગ્ન પછી તેને ગોમતીપુરની ઝુપડપટ્ટીમાં રાખી. ત્યાંથી સોનલ ઘરે પરત ભાગી આવી.
- ★ નવસારીમાં મુસ્લિમ ડોક્ટરે તેની સાથે કામ કરનારા હિન્દુ ડોક્ટર બહેનને ફસાવ્યાં.
- ★ બારડોલીનાં હિન્દુ વહેપારીનાં મુસ્લિમ પાર્ટનરે હિન્દુ વેપારીની બહેન વર્ષાને ફસાવી, અપહરણ કરી લગ્ન કરી લીધા.

હિન્દુ માતા-પિતાને સાહવાન

- જો તમે આવી દુર્ઘટનાનો ભોગ બન્યા હોવ તો લોકલાજની ચિંતા વગર તરત જ પોલીસ કેસ કરો.
- આપણી દીકરીને સન્માન સહિત ઘેર પાછી લાવો.
- સંકટ સમયે વિશ્વ હિન્દુ પરિષદ, બજરંગદળ, દુર્ગાવાહિનીનો સંપર્ક કરો.
- આપની જાણમાં આવેલ જુના અથવા નવા આવા કિસ્સા વિગતવાર લખીને નીચે જણાવેલ સરનામે મોકલીને કાર્યમાં સહયોગ આપો.

હિન્દુ સમાજમાંથી એક વ્યક્તિ મુસલમાન કે ખ્રિસ્તી બને એટલે એક હિન્દુ ઘટયો એમ નહીં પણ હિન્દુ સમાજનો એક દુર્ઘમન વધ્યો.
સ્વામી વિવેકાનંદ

વિશ્વ હિન્દુ પરિષદ

ડો. વણીકર સ્મારક ભાવન, ૧૧, મહાલક્ષ્મી સોસાયટી,
મહાલક્ષ્મી ચાર રસ્તા, પાલડી, કર્ણાવતી.

કારક : વિશ્વ હિન્દુ પરિષદ ડો. વણીકર સ્મારક ભાવન, ૧૧, મહાલક્ષ્મી સોસાયટી, પાલડી, કર્ણાવતી. ફોન - ૬૬૦૪૦૧૫
પ્રેસ : એલાઈડ ઓફસેટ પ્રિન્ટર્સ (ગુ.) પ્રા. લિ. ૧૪/૨, કાલીદાસ મીલ કમ્પાઉન્ડ, ગોમતીપુર, અમદાવાદ-૨૧ ● ફોન : ૨૧૪૧૨૩૮, ૨૧૬૫૮૫૦, ૨૧૬૮૧૪

Figure 2 (a): Vishwa Hindu Parishad, *Bharat ke Isaikaranka Shadyantra*
(Ahmedabad: VHP, 1998)

भारतके इसाईकरणका षडयंत्र

भारतके निम्न प्रदेशोमें इसाईकरणकी वृद्धि हिन्दुओकी तुलनामें बहुत ज्यादा है।

१९८१- १९९१ की वृद्धि

प्रदेश	हिन्दु वृद्धि %	इसाई वृद्धि %
अरुणाचल प्रदेश	७३.३४ %	२२५.९८ %
गुजरात	२१.१२ %	३६.९६ %
मणीपुर	२४.१८ %	४८.६ %
मेघालय	४८.३४ %	६३.६ %
उडिसा	३६.८३ %	३८.६७ %
पंजाब	१२.७३ %	२१.७५ %
सिक्किम	३०.६ %	९१.२ %
त्रिपुरा	३०.२ %	८६.८४ %
लक्षद्वीप	२९.९१ %	१२४.८ %

अन्तर पूर्वाचलमें इसाई वृद्धिका दर गत ९० सालमें

साल	इसाई
१९०१	१.२३%
१९०५	७.८%
१९७१	१२.५%
१९९१	३९.८%

रिजर्व बैंक के अनुसार इसाईको मिल रहे विदेशी धन

- १९५०-५४ - २९.२७ करोड रुपिया
- १९८०-८६ - २००० करोड रुपिया
- अक्तु - नवे, डिसें १९९८ - १४ करोड रुपिया

वर्ल्ड क्रिश्चियन एनसाइक्लोपिडीया के अनुसार

- विश्वमें इसाईयतका वार्षिक बजट ६५,००० करोड रुपिया
- पूर्णकालिन इसाई प्रचारक ४१,००,००० (इकतालीस लाख)
- चर्च के द्वारा चलाई जा रही लायब्रेरी - १३०००
- चर्च के द्वारा चलाई जा रही युनिवर्सिटी - १५००
- चर्च के प्राइवेट टीवी रेडियो - १८००
- विविध भाषा के मेगेजीन - २२,०००
- बडी मीशन संस्थाए - ४,०००
- विदेशमें जाकर काम कर रहे पादरी - २,६२,३००

७८८ मतांतरकी बडी योजनामें

- १ करोड कार्यकर्ता वर्षमें काम करते है।
- १८,००० करोड रुपियाका बजट - वार्षिक

१५५ मतांतरके वैश्विक योजनाए

- १५,५०,०० कार्यकर्ता
- ६२०० करोड रुपियाका वार्षिक बजट

Figure 2 (b): (Flip Side of Figure 2(a))

३३ मतांतरके राक्षसी वैश्विक योजनाएं

- ३३,००,००० (तींतीत लाख) कार्यकर्ता
- १२,२०० करोड रुपियाका वार्षिक बजट

चर्चकी भारतमें भावि योजनाएं

इसाईकी मीशन मेन्डेट पुस्तकके अनुसार

- भारतमें ९,००,००० नये चर्च बना
- हर गांवमें एक चर्च
- हर हाथमें एक बाइबल

हिन्दुओंकी वनवासी एवं दलित जातिओंको मतांतर करके हिन्दुओं प्रति धिक्कारकी व्यापक योजना बनी है ।

इसाईयोंकी Why North India - documents में से

- उत्तर भारतमें नये - ७५००० चर्च
- नये १,००,००० मिशनरीज तैयार करनेकी योजना बनी है ।
- भारत के ५१२ जिल्लोमें चर्च बनानेकी योजना 'क्रिस्मेटिक न्यु लाईफ' चर्चने बनाई है ।

OM India (Operation Mobilisation)

- भारत के १० करोड लोगों तक इसा मसीह के संदेश पहुंचाने की योजना
- मध्यप्रदेशमें ३०,००० नये चर्चकी योजना
- राजस्थान : प्रत्येक ब्लोकमें एक चर्च
- हरियाणा : प्रत्येक ब्लोकमें एक चर्च
- भारतमें इसाईओंकी मतांतरकी ताकत
 - १,१९,२५० इसाई पादरी
 - ९०,००० इसाई नन्स
 - १०,०० विविध शिक्षाकी संस्थाए { २२, नवेम्बर १९९५ - }
Indian Express
 - २४०, कोलेज
 - ७०४ अस्पताल
 - १७९२ मेडीकल डिस्पेन्सरी
- भारत के २.२५ करोड इसाईमें २-लाख (एक प्रतिशत) मतांतर के कार्यमें लगे हैं ।

हिन्दुओं के देवताओं का अपमान

- राम कृष्ण..... मुक्तिदाता नहीं हो सकते, क्योंकि सबके सब.... वुराईओंमें लिप्त थे ।
- वह (कृष्ण) चोर... था
- राम.. पापी था ।

नियोगी कमिशनने पान नं. ११९-१२० पर इसाईयोंकी पत्रिकामें से उपरोक्त लिया है

Why North India के इसाईओंके डोक्युमेन्टमें हमारी तिर्थ नगरी बनारस के शेतानकी नगरी कहा है ।

इसाई भेगेजीन के Operation Agape अक्तुबर १९९८ के अंकमें


- भारत देशको - शत्रु भूमि कहा है ।
- भारत देशको जितना है - एसा कहा है

एसी युधकी भाषाका प्रयोग भारत ओर हिन्दुओ के विरोधमें किया गया है ।

प्रकाशक :

विश्व हिन्दु परिषद, गुजराज. ११ महालक्ष्मी सोसायटी, पालडी, कर्णावती - ३८० ००७.

Figure 3: Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 'Bajrang Dal – Vishwa Hindu Parishad' (Ahmedabad: VHP, 1998)



જય શ્રી રામ

વહે માતરમ "ધર્મ : રક્ષિતમ્ રક્ષિતઃ" ભારત માતા કી જય

બજરંગ દળ - વિશ્વ હિન્દુ પરિષદ

મણીનગર સ્ટેશન, પ્રખંડ દક્ષિણ કર્ણાવતી.

પ્રિય ધર્મબંધુજનો,

પ્રિય ધર્મપ્રેમી માતાઓ, બંધુઓ, બહેનો આપ સૌ વિશ્વ હિન્દુ પરિષદ અંતર્ગત સંસ્થા "બજરંગ દળ" વિશે આપ કશું પણ જાણતા જ હશો. છતાં, વિશેષ જાણકારી આપવા માંગીએ છીએ.

"બજરંગ દળ" યુવકોનું વિશાળ સંગઠન છે.

"બજરંગ દળ" નું ધ્યેય

- દેશની રક્ષા એટલે ભારત માતાની રક્ષા કરવી.
- હિન્દુ સમાજની ઉપેક્ષા કરનાર સામે ભુલંદ અવાજ ઉભો કરવો.
- ધર્મ, સંસ્કૃતિની રક્ષા કરવી.
- હિન્દુ બેન-બેટીની રક્ષાર્થે કામ કરવું.
- રાષ્ટ્ર વિરોધી તત્વો સામે ઝઘમઘવું.
- ગૌહત્યા સામે જેહાદ જગાવવી
- હિન્દુ કન્યાની મુસ્લીમો દ્વારા ફસામણી તેમજ ખ્રિસ્તી મીશીનરીની રાષ્ટ્ર વિરોધી કામગીરી સામે જન જાગૃતિ અભિયાન.
- બજરંગ દળ એટલે રાષ્ટ્ર શક્તિ - હિન્દુ શક્તિ.
- જગત જનની માં જગદંબા, એ જ દુર્ગા માતા એ જ માં ભારત માતા તો તેમના રક્ષણ માટે ચાલો રાષ્ટ્ર હિત માટે જોડાવ "બજરંગ દળ" માં
- "દેશનું અસ્તિત્વ તો, આપણું અસ્તિત્વ"
- તો દેશ માટે ચાલો યુવાનો ઉમટી પડો.
- "બજરંગ દળ" માં જોડાઈ ભારત માતાનું ઋણ અદા કરીએ.

❁ ત્રિશૂલ દિક્ષાન્ત વિધિ કાર્યક્રમ ❁

મહોદય શ્રી

મુખ્ય મહેમાન : શ્રી હસમુખભાઈ પટેલ (મુખ્ય વક્તા - કર્ણાવતી-બજરંગદળ સંયોજક)

અતિથિ વિશેષ : શ્રી દિલીપભાઈ પટેલ (કર્ણાવતી દક્ષિણ જીલ્લો બજરંગદળ સંયોજક)

શ્રી બચુભાઈ લાડવા (વિશ્વ હિન્દુ પરિષદ દક્ષિણ જીલ્લો - મંત્રી)

દિનાંક : ૧૫-૯-૯૮ વાર : મંગળવાર

સ્થળ : સ્વામિનારાયણ મંદીર, સમય : સાંજે ૭:૦૦ કલાકે

રામબાગ, મણીનગર કર્ણાવતી.

● નિમંત્રક ●

શંકરરાવ મોરે (કાર્યકારી અધ્યક્ષ વિ.હી.પ) સુધીર સૈની (બજરંગ દળ સંયોજક)

ભીખાભાઈ પ્રજાપતિ (મંત્રી) અમૃત દેસાઈ (બજરંગ દળ સહ સંયોજક)

ડો. દેવેન્દ્ર શર્મા (સંયોજક, વિ.હિ પ પ્રમુખ)

નોંધ : વરસાદ હશે તો પણ કાર્યક્રમ ચાલું રહેશે.

પ્રાંતીય કાર્યાલય : વિશ્વ હિન્દુ પરિષદ ડો. વણીકર ભવન, ૧૧, મહાલક્ષ્મી સોસાયટી, પાલડી, કર્ણાવતી. દુરભાષ : ૪૧૪૦૧૫

મુદ્રક : શ્રી સાંઈનાથ પ્રિન્ટર્સ અમીનભવન મણીનગર, અમદાવાદ-૮.

Figure 4: Anonymous, 'Jai Shri Ram' (Ahmedabad, n.d.)

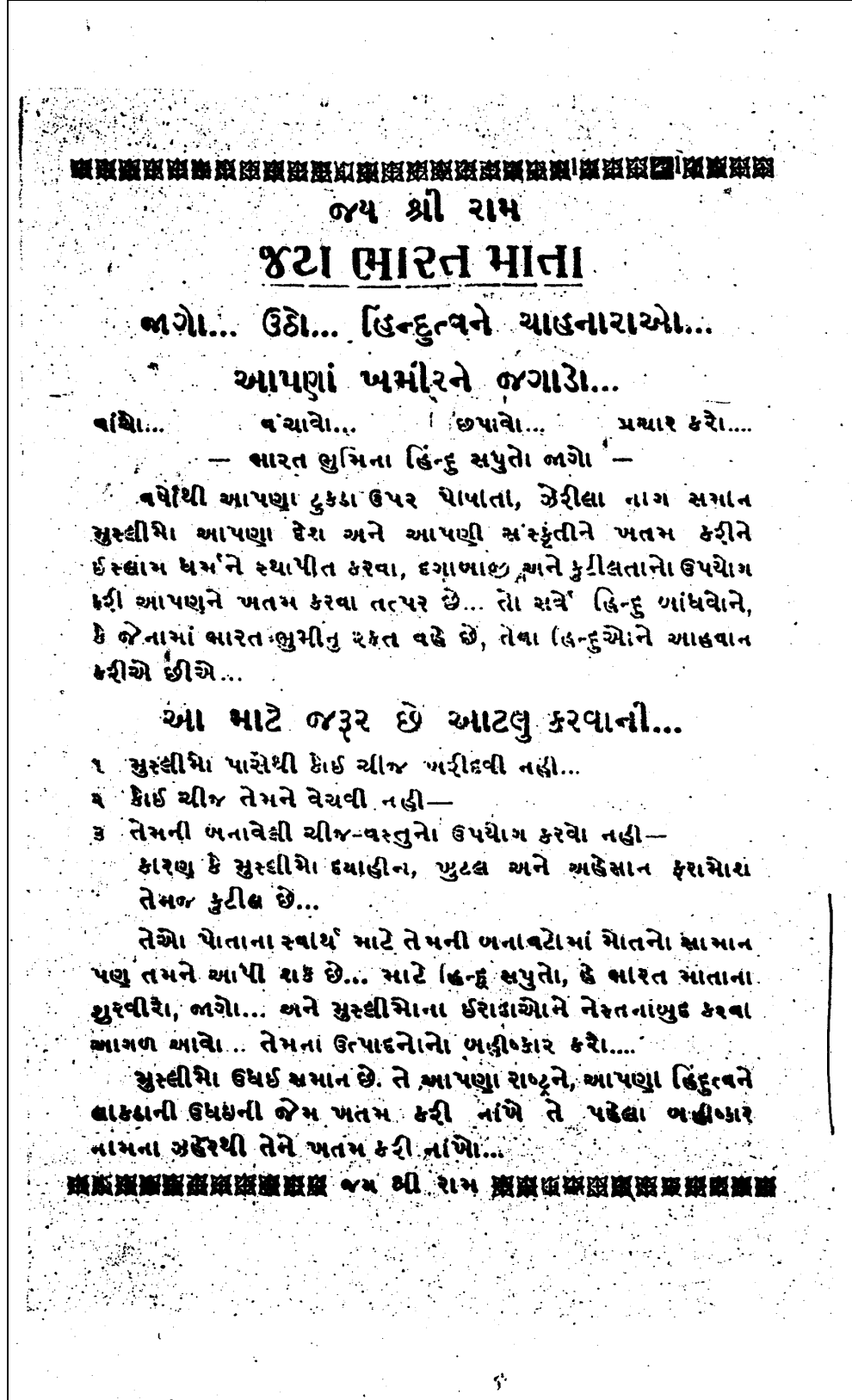


Figure 5: Babu Bajrangi, 'Navchetan Group' (Ahmedabad: Navchetan Group, n.d.)

॥ શ્રી ઉમિયા માતાય નમઃ ॥
॥ જય શ્રી રામ ॥

નૂતન વર્ષાભિનંદન

નવચેતન ગ્રુપ



હર ઘરમાં એક જીવતો ભોંભ છે. ગમે ત્યારે ફાટી શકે છે. જીવતો ભોંભ કોણ છે ? આપણી દીકરી.

ઈતિહાસ સાક્ષી છે કે આપણા પુર્વજો જે જમીન અને જોરૂ માટે લડતા રહ્યા છે. પણ આજનો જમાનો અલગ અને વિચિત્ર બની ગયો છે. હર વ્યક્તિને એસો આરામની જરૂરિયાત કરતાં પણ અતિ સંપત્તિ પાછળ દોડી રહ્યો છે. ક્યારે નથી વિચાર્યું કે પૈસા પાછળ પાગલ છું પણ મારા પુર્વજોના સંસ્કારો ભારતીય સંસ્કૃતિના સંસ્કાર, હિન્દુ સંસ્કૃતિના સંસ્કારો અને ઋષિમુનીયોના સંસ્કારોની તરફ ક્યારે વિચાર કરીને નંથી જોયું તેથી આજના યુગનું પરિણામ છે કે આપણી દીકરી ક્યાં ભટકતી હોય છે. તમારી દીકરી સવારથી નીકળે છે. કોલેજ જવા માટે કાં તો જોબ કરવા માટે નીકળે છે. મિત્રને મળવા માટે જાય છે. આપણું ધ્યાન ના હોવાથી આપણી દિકરીને બદમાશો આજના લર્ફગાઓ ફોસલાવી પટાવી ઉંધે રસ્તે લઈ જાય છે. દિકરીને એવી રીતે ખોટી લાગણીઓથી ફસાવે છે કે દિકરી એમની બની જાય છે. અને માબાપને ઓળખવા તૈયાર નથી હોતી.

આ નાદાન દિકરી સમાજ માવાનું કાર્ય કરતી હોય છે. આપણા ઘરની દિકરીને સંસ્કારોથી વંચીત રાખીએ છીએ. કાલે એ દિકરાને જન્મ આપે છે. ત્યારે આજ નિર્માણ કરવાનું કામ કરતી હોય છે. પણ જ્યારે આજના યુગના દિકરા દિકરીઓને વડીલોના સંસ્કારો આપવાનું કામ નહી કર્યું હોય તો આવતી પેઢીને સંસ્કાર સિંચવાનું કામ નહી કરીએ તો હિંદુ સમાજનું પતન ચોક્કસ છે.

ભાઈઓ-બહેનો આજ આજ જોઈ રહ્યા છો ટીવી ચેનલો અમેરિકન પશ્ચિમી વિસ્તારનું આક્રમણ આપણા ઉપર થઈ રહ્યું છે. એના કારણે આપણી દિકરી અને હિન્દુ સમાજની દીકરીઓ ટુંકા કપડાં પહેરી નીકળતી હોય છે. ત્યારે એમને સમજાવવાનું કામ કોનું છે ? ભારતમાં રહેતા હર વ્યક્તિની જવાબદારી બને છે. આપણે જોઈ રહ્યા છીએ. આ યુગનું પતન થઈ રહ્યું છે. પણ આપણે બધા ચુપ છીએ.

દીકરીને શિક્ષણ આપવું જોઈએ એક તરફમાં શિક્ષણ અને બીજા તરફમાં ભારતીય સંસ્કૃતિ અને સંસ્કારો આપવા જોઈએ. જો માતા પિતાને પોતાની દીકરીને કોલેજમાં મોકલવાની હોય અથવા તો આપણી દીકરી કોલેજમાં ભણતી હોય ત્યારે જેવી રીતે આપણે ધંધામાં સવારથી સાંજ સુધી એક લાલચી બની એના પાછળ દોડતા હોઈએ તો આતો આપણું અમુલ્ય ધન છે. તો એના પાછળ આપણે ધ્યાન આપવું જોઈએ.

એક બાપની દિકરી જ્યારે ધરણે છે. ત્યારે વિદાય આપવાના કાણે દિકરીનો બાપ ગમે તેટલો મર્દ હોય પણ વિદાય વખતે બાપના આંખમાંથી અને હૃદયમાંથી આસુઓનો વરસાદ વરસે છે. એ ઘડી કંઈ અનોખી હોય છે. પણ એજ બાપની બીજી દીકરી કોઈ લર્ફગાના ષડયંત્ર (પ્રેમ)માં આવી ગઈ હોય અને એ એના સાથે ભાગી જાય ત્યારે એ દીકરી વિદાય થઈ કહેવાય પણ ત્યારે એના બાપના આંખમાં આંસુ તો આવે પણ કેવા આવે એમની સમાજમાં ઈજજતદાર લોકો આંગળી ચીંધે કે જોવો પેલાની દિકરી એક લર્ફગા સાથે ભાગી ગઈ છે. તેનો બાપ જાય છે. સમાજના લોકો અને પરિવારના લોકો રોજ સંભળાવે છે કે તમે દીકરીને સંસ્કારો નથી આપ્યા તેનું આ પરિણામ છે. હવે તમે ભોગવો.

જો કોઈ દિકરી પોતાનું ઘર કે સમાજ ભુલી ગઈ હોય તો તેને સમજાવવાનું કામ વિનામુલ્ય કરે છે નવચેતન ગ્રુપ.

જો કોઈ આપના એરિયામાં કોઈપણ દિકરી ઘર ભુલી હોય તો દિકરીને પુછો કે બેટા તું કોન છે. તારા મા બાપ કોન છે અને એને સમજાવો જો ના સમજે તો આપણી અમારો સીધો સંપર્ક કરો. જો આપ એક દિકરી બચાવો છો તો સમજો કે આપ સો ગાયમાતા બચાવો છો. એક દિકરી બરાબર સો ગાય માતા છે. દિકરીએ આપણા ઘર અને સમાજની ઈજજત છે. એને બચાવી આપણે હિન્દુ ધર્મ છે. અને હિન્દુ સંસ્કૃતિ છે.

દિકરી ભાગવાની ભુલ કરે છે એ આપણને ડંખે છે સમાજ વિના પુરી જુંદગી દુખી થાય છે એ ક્યારે ચલાવી લેવાય નહી

તો આવો આપણે ભેગા થઈને ભોંભ બચાવવાનું કામ કરીએ ભોમ કોણ છે. આપણી દીકરીઓ.

સર્વ ભાઈબહેનો દિવાળીના શુભકામલાઓ સાથે ભોમ બચાવવાનું કામ કરીએ.

બાબુભાઈ બજરંગી

રાષ્ટ્રીય અધ્યક્ષ,
નવચેતન ગ્રુપ

॥ જય શ્રી રામ ॥

તથા નવચેતન ગ્રુપ સમગ્ર ભારતના કાર્યકર્તાઓ

રજનીભાઈ એમ. પટેલ

કેન્દ્રીય મહામંત્રી,
નવચેતન ગ્રુપ

સૌજન્ય : ઘનશ્યામભાઈ પટેલ તથા ભુપેન્દ્રભાઈ એડવોકેટ (કિરણ પટેલ)

કેન્દ્રીય કાર્યાલય : ત્રીજો માળ, અવંતા ઈલોરા શોપીંગ સેન્ટર, ગેલેક્સી સિનેમા પાસે, નરોડા, અમદાવાદ. મો. ૯૮૮૮૧૮૨૬૦૧