Hindu-Muslim Riots: Exploring Collective Violence in India

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Introduction :

Violence is such a complex phenomenon that there is no clear-cut definition for it. It is understood in different ways by different people based on different contexts. Varying countries, cultures and belief systems see violence in varying ways. However, it is essential to develop a clear understanding of violence in its specific context in order to develop effective preventive strategies. World Health Organisation (WHO), in the report on Violence and Health (2002), defined violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation". Based on this definition, a 'typology of violence' has been developed. Violence can be categorised according to the perpetrators and victims of violent acts into three broad categories: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. Self-directed violence refers to violent acts inflicted upon one's own self which includes self-abuse (e.g., self-mutilation) and suicidal behaviour (suicidal thoughts, as well as attempted and completed suicide). Violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals is called as interpersonal violence. It can be further divided into two subcategories:

Family and intimate partner violence and community violence. Family and intimate partner violence refers to violence occurring between family members and intimate partners, usually taking place in the home. Community violence refers to violence between unrelated individuals who may or may not know each other, generally happens outside the home. Collective violence can be defined as the type of violence where people identifying as members of a group commit violent acts against another group or set of individuals. Collective violence is the instrumental use of violence by one group against another group in order to achieve political, social and economic objectives, manifesting in various forms such as repression, terrorism, genocide and organised violent crimes.

Based on the nature of acts of violence, the above three categories can be further divided into more specific types of violence: physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and neglect. Physical violence refers to the intentional use of physical force, used with the potential for causing harm, injury, disability or death. This type of violence not only causes physical harm, but can also lead to severe psychological trauma. Sexual violence refers to a sexual act being committed or attempted against a victim without their consent. Sexual violence often leads to physical harm and has severe negative psychological effects as well. Psychological violence refers to the use of verbal or non-verbal communication with the intent to cause mental or emotional harm to another person. This not only leads to mental health problems, but also to severe physical problems like psychosomatic disorders. Neglect, or deprivation, is a type of abuse where a person with the responsibility to provide care for an individual, who is unable to care for him/herself, fails to do so and depriving them of adequate care. Neglect can lead to many long-term effects including physical injuries, low self-esteem, attention disorders, violent behaviour, physical and psychological illness, etc. These four types of violence can occur in each of the three broad categories and their subcategories (except for the self-directed violence). This 'typology of violence' can be used as a framework to understand the complex patterns of violence existing in a society. It helps us in understanding the nature of violent acts in its unique setting, the perpetrator and victim relationship and possible motivations for violence, especially in the case of collective violence.

However, there are situations when it is difficult to pinpoint a specific perpetrator/actor of violence. Rather, violence is the result of structures put in place that exert various forms of violence on individuals or communities. For instance, the apartheid system and its overt discrimination against a large part of population in South Africa. In this context, it is useful to refer to Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung who provided a useful distinction between direct and indirect/structural violence. Instances of violence where a clear actor or perpetrator can be identified are referred as direct violence. Direct violence may include all forms of interpersonal and self-directed violence and many forms of collective violence. On the other hand, indirect violence refers to the situations where no direct actor exists. Rather, violence is built into structures which can appear as unequal power relations and discrimination leading to unequal opportunities. Structural violence is manifested when certain groups, classes, genders or ethnicities have 'privileged' access to goods, resources and opportunities over others as part of the social, political and economic systems governing their lives. Countering structural violence requires transforming the existing structures and patterns through social and political change.

Galtung's theory, highly valued in peace and conflict studies, provides a framework for explaining the interdependence and functions of structural, cultural and direct violence in bringing about the systemic exclusion of a population (1990). Structural violence - for example, poverty - among a particular ethnic group such as Dalits, encompasses different forms of domination, exploitation, deprivation and humiliation that emanate from societal structures. In this conceptualisation, often cited to describe the prevalence of caste, class and ethnic inequalities, power relations and domination occupy a central place. Direct violence - for example, a street fights or an international war - harms or kills individuals or members of a group in a targeted manner. Cultural violence refers to those aspects of culture that are used to justify or legitimise any form of direct or structural violence against individuals or community. A good example of this is media glorification of violence (Galtung 1990). While distinguishing between forms and expressions of violence, anthropologist Phillipe Bourgeois (2001) argues that violence plays out not only in times of war but also in times of peace. He identifies four forms and expressions of violence - direct political violence (targeted physical violence and terror); structural violence (historically entrenched political and economic oppression and social inequality); symbolic violence (internalised humiliations); and everyday violence (daily practices and expressions of violence).

It is also important to distinguish between the terms 'violence' and 'crime' here. These two terms, closely linked and often used interchangeably, in fact mean very different things. Many types and forms of violence are not categorised as criminal, e.g. structural violence. Similarly, some crimes are considered violent as per definition, such as murder, rape and assault; while others crimes such as drug use, tax evasion, etc. do not involve any direct violence. Therefore, all cases of violence are not crime and all crimes are not violent. Violence and crime are two different yet overlapping terms. What constitutes a crime depends on the law of a country as crime is any 'violation of the law' or any 'act of deviance' from the established rules of any country. At the same time, which act of violence is defined as crime varies across countries and over time. However, it should be considered that this typology and classification of violence is not always clear in real life, they can overlap, influence and even reinforce each other.

Violence in India :

Similar to any other part of the world, various forms of violence are present in India. As per the violence typology discussed above, all these forms and types of violence are found in varying degrees in all parts of the country. However, this paper is an attempt to bring forth the scenario of violence in India in one specific form: communal violence. The focus of this paper is various forms of group violence as well as interpersonal violence which is seen in the larger scenario of violence committed against members of a specific group. For instance, various acts of violence are committed against women by individual perpetrators, but these statistics also point to the larger picture of gender-based violence. It should be pointed out here that a clear-cut distinction between various forms of violence is not always possible. At the same time, it is not always apparent if a violent act committed against an individual can and should be taken as part of bigger issue of a group being subjected to violence. This paper attempts to draw major patterns of violence in the context of India from the available literature, specifically focussing on the one specific form of violence listed above.

Communal Violence:

Communal violence, in simple terms, can be defined as violent acts com-mitted by a community or group against another community or group. Communal

violence is largely categorised as group violence based on religious, social or ethnic identities. In the context of India, communal violence usually refers to violence committed by one religion group (individuals identifying as belonging to one religion or sharing religious identity) against another religion group. Such violence can be unilateral as well as mutual, meaning that violent acts can be one-sided or perpetrated by both sides. It is also important to discuss a related term here - 'communalism'. As Kakar (2000) puts it, "communalism is a specifically Indian concept that signifies a strong identification with a community of believers. Communalism not only has religious affiliation but also social, political, and especially economic interests in common which conflict with the corresponding interests of another community of believers - the enemy, who shares the same geographic space" (p. 878). Any attempt to create faults in a society based on ethnic or religious identities which can be exploited to create conflicts among various communities, even leading to violence between groups, can be defined as communalism. Religious differences and tensions stemming from historical events give rise to communalism. Various forms of communal and ethnic violence are specially pronounced in post-colonial societies, including South Asia, South-East Asia and Africa. Communalism is a major issue in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Communalism has been part of our nation's history and was further fuelled and exploited by British colonialism. It has been used to create communal tensions and gain political advantage in various instances. In a muti-cultural society like India, communal tensions and conflicts are common, sometimes leading to communal violence. Most incidences of communal violence in India happened between Hindus and Muslims, which have historical roots going back to centuries of communal conflicts and disputes. Most scholars trace the Hindu-Muslim conflicts to British Colonial rule; though, these conflicts go way back before the British arrived in India. However, the role of British colonisers in fuelling and exploiting the Hindu-Muslim tensions for their own benefit under 'divide and rule' policy cannot be ignored. Various other causes cited behind continuing Hindu-Muslim conflict are: deprivation in certain groups, discontentment and disappointment among groups, exploitation of communal tensions by political leaders, revivalist movements in Hinduism and Islam, distortion of historical events, radicalisation in the name of religion, foreign interventions, etc.

History of communal Violence in India :

Tracing the history of communal violence in India is very difficult due to various reasons. Historical accounts before British colonial rule are rare and even if they are available, they are largely ignored in favour of a certain narrative. While few scholars have looked into pre-colonial religious identity and conflict, most social scientists focus solely on 'modern' India. Many historians present a picture of Hindu-Muslim life that does not fit with the real events happening in the country. We get narratives like Hindu-Muslim conflicts are relatively recent chapters in Indian history (Thapar, Mukhia and Chandra, 1969), arguing that there was peaceful co-existence and development of a composite cultural tradition and syncretic popular religion. This school of historians, more popular and influential, argue that the large-scale violence between two communities only emerged during late nineteenth century due to British colonialism. British deliberately started strengthening Muslim communal identities through policies because of the threat posed by India nationalism (Pandey 1990). There exists another school of historians who have pointed out the fundamental 'divide of a thousand-year-old civilisational conflict' between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims were militarily victorious in this conflict and gained political power over Hindus for centuries. During this period, they tried to impose Islam on their Hindu subjects through various means, from bribery to coercion and violence; but had limited success (Majumdar 1970). The vast majority of Hindus tolerated the Muslim onslaught and were successful in keeping their civilisational core intact. The centuries-old rage of denigrated Hindus was bound to explode once it found favourable circumstances (Kakar 2000, p. 880). The Hindu-Muslim conflict in the Indian subcontinent has a complex history which is said to have begun with the Jihad of the Umayyad Caliphate in Sindh in 711AD. The 'Islamic expansion' in India during the medieval period was characterised by subjugation of Hindus, destruction and desecration of temples and sacred spaces, discriminatory laws and policies and often brutal violence. The whitewashing of history by "secular historians" cannot erase the reality which is ingrained in the psyche of this nation.

Many scholars tend to make the argument that the British 'constructed' the modern Hindu and Muslim identities during colonial rule through mechanisms like the census of 1871. And it was the British who drove apart religious communities

through the "divide-and-rule" policies and promoting violence between them. Such arguments have faced rightful criticism by many scholars. India's history did not start with the British and the Hindu and Muslim identities were not constructed by British administrators. Many scholars working on Indian religions have shown that there was clear sense of Hindu and Muslim identities and the differences between the communities were well established long before British rule (David Lorenzen, 2006 and Andrew Nicholson, 2010; taken from Verghese, 2018). Historical accounts also suggest that Hindu-Muslim violence date back to hundreds of years before the British came to the subcontinent. For instance, Moroccan scholar Ibn Battuta, in the fourteenth century, wrote about the state of Hindu-Muslim relations in the south Indian town of Mangalore: "…war frequently breaks out between them (the Muslims) and the (Hindu) inhabitants of the town; but the Sultan (the Hindu King) keeps them at peace because he needs the merchants" (quoted in Verghese 2018). Colonial India experienced many communal riots, but whether colonialism created these violent outbreaks or coexisted with the true factors that created them, is a complex question. Even the increase in the Hindu-Muslim violence in the nineteenth century coincided with the rise of revivalist Hindu and Islamic religious movements, as well as increasing urbanization. To test the assumption that British increased communal conflict, Verghese (2018) compared the communal riots in British-ruled India with the provinces ruled by 'princely states' (more than 60 million population in 1901). He observed that in modern India, former princely states have more communal riots than former provinces. It should be pointed out that the author is not trying to absolve the British for the religious conflict in India, pointing out policies such as the introduction of separate Hindu and Muslim electorates which undoubtedly promoted Hindu-Muslim violence. As Verghese (2018) puts it, "in order to understand the origins of India's communal problem, we need a deeper historical perspective, one that does not start with Europeanin fluence".

Hindu-Muslim riots become a permanent feature of India's political sphere in the early twentieth century. Large scale violence between these two communities broke out immediately before and after independence. Increased levels of Hindu-Muslim riots are observed since early sixties in India. These riots may occur due to a variety of political, economic, cultural, linguistic or electoral factors (Arcandand Chakraborty 2013). Scholars have argued that the violent cases before this period were largely religious in nature and they lacked any political or economic motiva-

tions. On the other hand, Hindu-Muslim riots are rather recent phenomena. Paul Brass (2003) argues that 'riots as a form of collective action' developed in India in the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

Geography of communal Violence in India :

This section specifically focuses on the geographical context and the extent of Hindu-Muslim violence in India. It is clear from the many works carried out by researchers and scholars that Hindu-Muslim riots are not random spontaneous events. Paul Brass (1997, 2003), Ashutosh Varshney and Steven Wilkinson (2002, 2004) have shown conclusively that the "geography of communal violence in India is non-random". Research shows that Hindu-Muslim violence is concentrated in few states that experience recurring violent incidences. Varshney and Wilkinson (2004) sought to explain why communal violence occur more in some places and not others. They collaboratively compiled a 'riot database' from its source reports of communal violence published in the Times of India over a forty-six-year period from 1950 to 1995. This study shows that the largest share of communal riots is concentrated mainly in three to four states in India. Furthermore, Hindu-Muslims violence is largely concentrated in eight cities located in these three to four states, meaning that these riots are mostly urban phenomena. These are extraordinary findings, considering that 70 per cent of the population of India reside in rural areas since 1950. However, the victims of such violence, measured in terms of deaths and people suffering serious injuries or property damage, have mostly been city-dwellers. These results are in tune with research conducted not only in other parts of South Asia, but also in other parts of the world. The most riot-prone eight cities, namely Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Meerut, Aligarh, Baroda, Delhi and Calcutta, represented only 18 per cent of the India's population (Varshney, 2002). It also presents the fact that about 80 per cent of the population in India do not engage in communal violence.

Varshney and Wilkinson (2004) have shown with data that there have been fluctuations in the frequency and intensity of riots in the time period of 1950 to 1995. There are certain cities and towns that have witnessed recurring riots throughout history, especially in the northern and western parts of India. They recorded 1186 incidences of riots and 7052 people killed between 1950 and 1995 (ibid.). At

one glance, these numbers are not large compared with other more common causes of mortality, such as road accidents. This brings us to the next point of interest that overall mortality associated with Hindu-Muslim violence in India is low compared to many other parts of the world affected by ethnic/sectarian violence. Hindu-Muslim violence primarily takes place in urban areas with disproportionate concentration in eight major cities in the country that account for 49 per cent of all urban deaths due to such violent incidences (Arcand and Chakraborty 2013). Sandria Freitag, in her book "Collective action and Community" (1989), argues that new public spaces (in post-independent urbanising India) became interesting spaces for rival religious processions that became a major source of communal tensions and rioting. Looking at the trends of communal violence, there were exceptionally high levels of violence during partition and the incidence of riots declined during the 1950s, increased slightly in the 1960s, and again declined during the 1970s. The average annual number of riots during this period is 16; compared to this, an average of 48 riots occurred annually during 1982 and 1995. This time period reported a total of 674 riots with a death toll of 4687. The period between 1982 and 1995 witnessed half of the total riots and two thirds of the riot related deaths since independence till the year1995 (Varshney and Wilkinson 2004).

Causes of Communal Violence in India :

There are several theorisations put forward by scholars about violence in general and collective violence in particular. The focus of this particular section is to draw out the major causes behind Hindu-Muslim violence in India from the available literature. The communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in post-independence India are said to be political, electoral, economic, cultural or linguistic in nature. However, the real challenge is to explain the occurrence of such violence and to account for its variation across space and time in India. Several competing theories have been proposed to explain how different factors such as economic (Gurr, 1970; Gurr and Duval, 1973; Bolhken and Sergenti, 2010), social factors (Varshney, 2002), and political factors (Brass, 2003; Wilkinson, 2004) affect communal riots.

Some scholars argue that the 'real' cause behind any violence is always 'economic' in nature which entails some form of a 'class-struggle' between the rich and the poor. Such class struggle has been cited as the cause behind the anti-

semitic pogroms in 14th century Spain (Wolff 1971), the anti-Catholic riots in the 19th century London (Rude 1964) and Catholic-Protestant violence in the 16th century France (Estebe 1968; Davis 1987). Similar claims have been made regarding the Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India (Engineer, 1984; Arslam and Rajan, 1994). This kind of reasoning falls under the Marxist class-struggle theory and the deprivation theory of collective violence. Some scholars also see the conflict between groups as a consequence of competition for resources, in which people believe that their group can benefit at the expanse of the other group. This falls under the contemporary formulation of the rational-choice theory (Hardin 1995; taken from Kakar 2000).

Another school puts more emphasis on the wider political contexts of such conflicts for an explanation. One recurring theme is the changing power relations due to the end of an empire or the end of the colonial rule. Hindu-Muslim conflict in India is often seen in the context of the end of Mughal Empire and later the end of the British colonial rule (Horowitz 1985). When an empire ends and political power shifts, it is often followed by struggle for political power between various competing groups. Political questions about the power, dominance and influence arise which lead to heightened perception of ethnic, religious and cultural differences. It is well documented that the end of colonialism led to the politicisation of ethnic and religious differences and the rise of fundamentalist groups in various parts of the world (Marty and Appleby 1991, 1993). Some scholars of this political school have focussed more on the local causes rather than the macro political context to provide an explanation for Hindu-Muslim violence. Varshney and Wilkinson (1996) have argued that Hindu-Muslim riots occur in cities and towns where formal professional and trade associations that have people from both Hindu and Muslim communities are weak or non-existent.

The social-psychological school emphasises the threat of loss of identity posed by modernisation and globalisation as the major cause behind increasing conflict between groups in various parts of the world. Traditional crafts and skills are disappearing which used to define traditional work identities and relations. This sense of loss and helplessness is profound in many groups across the globe. Increasing urbanisation, along with dislocations and migrations from rural areas to shanty towns, add to the helplessness and misery. Traditional cultural ideals and

values are becoming irrelevant. All this leads to increasing association with 'group identity' as people seek to remedy the damages to self-esteem and to ease their fears (Kakar, 1996). 'Social identity' theorists would argue that Hindus and Muslims need each other as enemies; they can even be seen as each other's necessary repositories of hateful feelings. As a psychoanalyst, Kakar notes that violence between Hindus and Muslims is a complex demographic, political, economic, historical, social and psychological phenomenon (2000, p. 881).

Other scholars do not adhere to these complex theories for the causes leading to violence between religious groups. Instead, they point to the demographic factors as the main cause behind incidences of riots: urban areas with Muslim population ranging between 20 to 40 per cent of the total have always been prone to communal riots (Engineer 1984; Saxena1984; Krishna 1985). Their argument is based on the presumption that with a population below 20 per cent, a minority is too scared to retaliate to any real or perceived provocation; and the violence will have the nature of a pogrom and not a riot. These explanations always seem to rely on the narrative of a minority population being at the receiving end of violence and the majority population to be the aggressor and perpetrator of violence. We can, of course, flip this argument and deduce that the minority population shows more tolerance and less aggression towards the majority population when they are low in numbers and this scenario changes as they gain in numbers in any area.

Paul Brass (2003) asserts that no single causal explanation can successfully explain all Hindu-Muslim riots or even most instances of such violence in India. Varshney(2002, 2008) and Wilkinson (2004) argue that most riots in India are planned or orchestrated, and are generally political in nature where ordinary citizens get recruited by political operatives. However, Brass (2003) and Wilkinson (2004) have completely opposite views regarding the role of political competition as the main cause of riots in India. Wilkinson (2004) cites higher levels of party competition to be statistically associated with lower levels of Hindu-Muslim violence. On the contrary, Brass (2003), focusing specifically on the patterns of Hindu-Muslim riots in Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh) over the past 40 years, points to strong political competition to be the main cause behind communal riots. He asserts that the communal riots (especially Hindu-Muslim riots) are both 'institutionalised' and political ploys to gather political support from 'a specific

group of strategic voters.' On a different note, Varshney (2002) argues that the increase in Hindu-Muslim violence is the result of a decline in civic associations/engagement or the decline in social capital for the two communities. He cites 'polarised politics' to be the most important mechanism that links civic networks and ethnic conflict. Varshney (2008), focussing on the Gujarat communal riots of 2002, highlights the role of political parties as an integral component of the civil society in multiparty democratic system like India.

Bohlken and Sergenti (2010), focusing on Hindu-Muslim riots in India during 1981-1995, finds strong evidence for a negative link between growth rates and riots. They used the level of income as the measure of economic development instead of growth rate and they also used a more recent and broader definition of state-level per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP). They did not use any explanatory variables which are designed to capture differences in institution and the role of political parties operating in a given state. Their study concluded that, a) political competition and presence of 'Hindu nationalist' parties in a state are positively and significantly correlated with the incidences of communal riots; b) presence of a coalition government or regional or left-wing parties lead to the opposite scenario; c) economic development does not have any negative impact on communal violence; d) the likelihood of occurrence of communal riots increases with greater proportion of Muslim population in any area; e) past events seem to have a positive and significant recurring effect on current riots; and f) civic participation seems to have no role in occurrence of a Hindu-Muslim riot in India. Arcandand Chakraborty (2013) used a unique state-level Hindu-Muslim riots database in India collected by Varshney and Wilkinson (2004) to examine the socio-politico-economic basis of these communal riots or the factors behind that violence during 1981-1995 for the 16 major states of India. This particular time period reported more than half of the total number of riots and 65 percent of the killings. They essentially tested the theories of two contemporary political scientists (S. Wilkinson and P. Brass) on Hindu-Muslim violence of India. They found ample evidence in support of the multiplicity regarding the causes of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India and these causes in the post 1980s are not mutually exclusive. Past events of communal Hindus-Muslims violence significantly increase the likelihood of present ethno-communal violence. They also point out that the presence of Hindu nationalist party at the state level increases the likelihood of

riots; whereas, presence of local or regional parties and left parties have the opposite effect. They also found evidence of more Hindu-Muslim riots in areas with higher level of economic development. Their study also confirms the theory that communal violence in India is generally an urban phenomenon. They hypothesized that ethnic riots cannot exclusively be a result of a very limited number of factors, such as economic growth, electoral politics or civic mismanagement. Rather a complex interplay of several factors is at work.

Some studies point out that higher economic growth lowers the incidences of violence among ethnic groups (Gurr, 1970; Gurr and Duval, 1973). Economic factors like the economic well-being of a state could very well influence the occurrence of a communal violence, i.e., the case of Hindu-Muslim violence in India (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Miguel et al., 2004; Harms and Zink, 2005; Bohlken and Sergenti, 2010). On the contrary, political scientists such as Huntington (1968) and Olzak (1992) suggest the opposite to be true, i.e., economic development seems to play a positive role on the likelihood of Hindu-Muslim violence. Some scholars argue that economic conditions do not seem to have any effect on ethnic violence (Horowitz 2001; Varshney 2002; and Wilkinson 2004). On a slightly different approach, Mitra and Ray (2010) built a simple theory of inter-group conflict driven by differences in group-wise economic progress. Combining the dataset on Hindu-Muslim violence with large-scale household surveys on consumer expenditure conducted quinquennially by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) of India, they report that an increase in Muslim well-being leads to a large and significant increase in religious conflict three years down the road, while an increase in Hindu well-being has no significant effect on future conflict. Their results show that the level of development is positively and significantly correlated with the occurrence of a communal violence. In other words, Hindu-Muslim riots increase with higher level of per capita income. Mitra and Ray (2010) demonstrated that the difference between the logarithm of violence and the expected violence would increase by 0.582 units for every one-point increase in the level of development, given the other factors are held constant. Arcandand Chakraborty (2013) did not find any significant effect of the level of development on the likelihood of a Hindu-Muslim riot.

There can be a significant causal link between urbanisation and modernity with ethnic and communal violence, given the fact that Hindu-Muslim violence in India is primarily an urban phenomenon. Current modernity theory emphasises more on human development rather than just economic growth. Scholars have made attempts to compare communal violence with the level of human development. Amartya Sen (1993, 1996), for example, pointsout that Kerela, which has the highest literacy rate in the country scores low on the occurrence of communal riots. Whereas, states of North India, with low human development score, have witnessed more incidences of communal violence. It should be noted that this argument was based on the comparison of Kerala with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. However, this argument falls apart if we compare Rajasthan, another North Indian state ranking low on the HDI, with Kerala (Arcandand Chakraborty 2013). Kerala with highest literacy rate also ranks high in the overall crime rates in the country. Furthermore, both Gujarat and Maharashtra, have literacy rates as well as high incidence of riots. Rural India, which is not the primary location for communal violence, also has considerably lower literacy rates than urban India. Varshney (2002) has shown that there is no systematic relation between literacy and communal violence as literacy rate does not reflect whether a city is prone to riots or not. However, some scholars have shown the opposite scenario in their studies (Engineer 1984; Dhattiwala 2012). Dhattiwala (2012) also finds that intensity and occurrence of violence as well as the probability of the riot turning fatal are positively linked to the rate of literacy in a town. Engineer (1984) also carefully notes that more than illiterate masses, educated elite from both the communities play a role and aggravates the communal situation.

Another significant factor worth looking into is the presence of deterrence mechanisms as such mechanisms adopted by the local or the state authority can heavily influence incidences of crime and communal violence (Wilkinson 2004; Chakraborty et al. 2007). State governments use police forces to prevent riots and effective policing can vastly reduce such incidences. Spilerman (1970), Engineer (1984) and Wilkinson (2004) argue that demographic factors like the share of the

minority group in a town or state could influence the likelihood of an ethnic violence. Riots are more likely when majority and minority groups have similar share in the population. The higher the percentage of Muslims in the total population, higher is the probability of a riot. To put it differently, the more the conflict of interest exists, the greater is the odds of a Hindu-Muslim communal riot. The significance of the population is not unexpected, since, almost every comparative study of ethnic and non-ethnic violence finds that the level of violence increases with the increase in the minority population. Increase in total population significantly increases the likelihood of a Hindu-Muslim riot as well. Scholars also point to the possible 'spill-over' effects of a riot (Engineer 1984; Gubler and Varshney 2008; Urdal 2008). Studies show that the likelihood of riots is significantly and positively affected by riots occurring at one-period lag. This aligns with what Paul Brass (2002) termed as "institutionalized riot networks" that fuels violence. The level of current violence could be a culmination of factors like revenge for past events or past violence in the area.

Conclusion :

This paper dealt with the broad conclusions concerning the persistence of Hindu-Muslim communal violence in the specific form of communal riots in India. In summary, all possible factors that might influence a Hindu-Muslim riot are- economic (log of per capita GDP, literacy rate and urban inequality), spill over effects (riots in the adjacent states and lagged riots), deterrent mechanism (police personnel per 100 sq. kilometre), demographic factors (total population, percentage of Muslims) and political institutions (coalition government and political competition). Communal or Hindu-Muslim riots in India have caused immense human and economic loss. For example, the economic damage from the 1992 Mumbai riots alone has been estimated at around INR 9,000 crore or USD 3.6 billion (Wilkinson, 2006). However, the death rates' stemming from Hindu-Muslim riots in India is low when compared to death rates resulting from other well-known ethnic conflicts. For example, the relative number of deaths during 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland since around 1969 were fifty times higher. But the significance of Hindu-Muslim divide in the context of India does not lie in the numbers of deaths or the economic loss. Considering that these two communities coexist side by side throughout the extent of the country, this communal divide poses much greater threat to the nation (Horowitz, 2000).

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