

Communal Riots in India

Dr. Razia

[Ph.D.in Political Science](#)

Jamia Millia Islamia

New Delhi 110025

Abstract

The economic system of any country depends on the internal and external security of the people and the government, which make negative and positive impact on the society and their people. Likewise our nation's economic security is also depends on the internal and external security, which affected the economy of our country. A significant factor affecting the economy of our country is communal riots. Due to this violence, internal and external security of the country is in danger and the country's economy is getting affected. The article presents the consequences of communal riots which took place time to time in the country.

Communal riots have become a distinct feature of communalism in India. Whenever conflicting groups from two different religions, which are self –conscious communities, clash, it results in a communal riot. An event is identified as a communal riot if (a) There is violence, and (b) Two or more communally identified groups confront each other or members of the other group at some point of time during the violence. The reason for such a clash could be superficial and trivial, though underlying them are deeper considerations of political representation, control of and access to resources and power. There have been many incidents of riots recorded during the course of British rule and even before that. For example- In Ahmadabad there were riots in 1714, 1715, 1716 and 1750. But according to Bipan Chandra, in his book “Communalism in Modern India”, communal tension and riots began to occur only in the last quarter of the 19th century, but they did not occur in any significant scale till 1946-47. Before that, the maximum communal rioting took place during 1923-26. A clear relationship between communal riots and politics was established for the first time in 1946, when the Muslim League gave its direct action call on August 16, 1946. This chronology reveals that communal riots are not caused suddenly and also that they are rarely caused by religious hatred. They arise due to conflicting political interests,

which are often linked to economic interests. There is a significant change in the pattern of communal riots since the 1990s, which could be noticed in the later part of this chronology. This brings forth the shifts that have occurred in the nature of communal riots in India. Moreover, the aim is to underline that religion in most of the cases is not the reason why communal riots occur. The reason for the occurrence of communal violence has been different in the two different phases. During the time of partition, it was the clash of political interests of the elite of two different communities which resulted in communal riots. But, from the 1960s till the late 1980s, the local political and economic factors played a very important role in instigating riots.

The emergence of Hindutva politics in the last two decades has been a cause of communal riots in this phase where the local factors have also helped in instigating riots. Communal riots that took place from the 1960s to the 1980s follow a particular pattern. They have mostly occurred in urban towns which are either industrial belts or trading centers with the economy largely based on a particular occupation. Most of these places had a considerable percentage of Muslim population who's political or economic interests clashed with those of the ethnic violence and civic life. Moreover, the major riots occurred when the Congress was in power in these states or during the short and uncertain phase of the Janata Party coalition rule at the Centre. Riots in this phase might have occurred in the villages or rural areas like the Bihar Sharif riots, but they have often remained unreported. Therefore it is important to distinguish this phase from the 1990s during which the BJP and its sister organizations have been active in instigating communal riots.

Nowhere in the world other than India, is the life and property of a particular community (Muslims) under threat only because of its belongingness with a particular religion (Islam). The Indian Muslims are determinedly under harassment and discrimination only because they are Muslims. The number of communal riots has increased sharply in India after the establishment of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1926, which become a regular phenomenon in Indian society. According to the Home Ministry, Government of India, there were 13,356 serious anti-Muslim riots in 39 years between 1954 and 1992 which is almost one riot daily. As J.B. D'Souza observes, "It is a matter of shame that in these 47 years of independence, we have lost in communal riots many times the number of lives lost in the 150 years when the British ruled us and we accused them of a divide and rule policy."

The incidents of communal disturbance provoked sometimes on poor grounds and mostly according as the communal forces of Hindu nationalists wish to organize it in pursuance of their long-term plan deliberately chalked out for eradication of the Muslims. Communal riot in India is a one-way traffic not only because of a 7:1 Hindu-Muslim ratio, but also because of the active participation of the forces of law and order (almost all non-Muslims) with their co-religionists in accomplishing their atrocious act of butchering the innocent and unarmed Muslims and also in plundering their property. This is a unique phenomenon with the Government of India where security forces posted officially to protect the victims of disturbance actively cooperate with the hooligans in carrying on their hateful aims and that also very much with the full knowledge and logistic support of the government. It is doubtful if there is such repeated example of hooliganism in the civilized world.

Muslims and Police Atrocities in Communal Riots

Post independence era experienced number of communal riots occurred in India, where police played a very crucial role. However, police is a public servant who worked for the welfare of people and tackles their problems but in communal riots police has not fulfill its duty, in fact in few cases police instigate the people against other community. During Meerut riot 1987, UP's Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) exposed its brutality by killing the innocent Muslims in the clumsy form. They picked up the young Muslim boys from their houses, packed them in jeeps and buses, took them outside the city, gunned them down and threw the dead bodies into the nearby river. In Muradabad in 1980, the PAC opened fire on the Muslims who had assembled to celebrate Eid festival and perform their Eid Prayer collectively. During the riots that took place in Ahmadabad more people were burnt alive than died of stabbing. They were burnt not because they were caught in fire. The technique was to set fire to a group of houses belonging to the Muslims and as men, women and children rushed out, they were caught hold of, their hands and feet were tied, and then they were thrown into the fire. In these incidents, the leading role was played by the police.

In almost all the riots that has taken place in India, the police became a party in the aggravation of murder, damage, torturing, mutilating, raping, destruction, arson and plundering. At every riot, it is customary to surround the Muslim areas and pockets and take away licensed guns and even

the appliances used in the kitchen from the Muslims but leave the Hindu areas free to move about. Mass arrest of Muslims follows every riot; Muslim leaders are not allowed to visit the place till the traces of atrocities are removed. Another peculiar policy of the government is that instead of taking the hooligans to book, the innocent youths belonging to the Muslim community are arrested and harassed in an effort to clean the society from hooliganism and terrorism.

In the Bhiwandi riot in 1970, for example, 17 Hindus and 59 Muslims were killed. But the police arrested only 21 Hindus and 901 Muslims. For obvious reason, almost all the victims are Muslims, although the media almost entirely controlled by the Brahminic communal elements present such incidents in a grossly distorted manner. Indian Muslims, deprived of their democratic rights and social justice, make their own efforts to improve their living conditions but they are often frustrated in these attempts by the brute forces of Hindu fanaticism, who always want to see that Muslims do not cross the barrier of economic and social backwardness. Government machinery, instead of assisting them in their attempts to attain economic progress, often puts obstacle on their way. The residential houses and commercial establishments built by the Muslims are demolished either by the communal forces or by the government machinery in the name of enforcing law. Obviously the purpose of all these is to operate their progress and development. A recent example of such a corrupt and cruel action was the demolition of 20 multi-storied commercial complexes in Miralam at the outskirts of Hyderabad. The buildings constructed by the local Muslims after attaining proper permission from the municipality were reduced to gravel using heavy duty bulldozers even without issuing any notice to their owners. The action was reportedly taken by the municipality on the instruction of the State Government in line with its policy of uprooting the new Muslim settlements in the area.

Chronology of Communal Riots in India: Post Independence

Religious violence in India has a history, even before the Partition riots of 1947 took place. Riots in India are started from with the Kazhuhumalai and Sivakasi riots which took place in 1895 and 1899. Before the partition a caste related violence took place in the Calcutta in 1946 or also known as Direct Action Day. Other riots in India are Nagpur riots in 1927, Partition riots of 1947, Ramnad riots of 1957 and 2006 Dalit protests in Maharashtra and best bakery riot 2002. In the recent year India is again hit by religious violence in Mumbai, Assam and in Mathura. Large-

scale religious violence and riots have periodically occurred in India since its independence from British colonial rule. The aftermath of the Partition of India in 1947 saw large scale sectarian strife and bloodshed throughout the nation. Since then, India has witnessed sporadic large-scale violence sparked by underlying tensions between sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities. These conflicts also stem from the ideologies of Hindutva versus Islamic Extremism and prevalent in certain sections of the population. Since independence, India has always maintained a constitutional commitment to secularism. The major incidences include the 1969 Gujarat riots and the 1989 Bhagalpur riots.

Gujarat Communal Riots 1969

Religious violence broke out between Hindus and Muslims during September–October 1969, in Gujarat. It was the most deadly Hindu-Muslim violence since the 1947 partition of India. The rioting started after an attack on a Hindu temple in Ahmedabad, but rapidly expanded to major cities and towns of Gujarat. The violence included attacks on Muslim chawls by their Dalit Hindu neighbours. The violence continued over a week, and again the rioting restarted a month later. Some 660 people were killed (430 Muslims, rest Hindus), 1074 people were injured and over 48,000 lost their property.

Sikh Communal Riots 1984

The 1984 Sikh Massacre was erupted in 1 November 1984, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi and continued for days, killing around 800 Sikhs. The national capital Delhi was the worst affected area along with Yamuna river areas.

Varanasi Communal Riots 1989

The holy city of India is witnessed three consecutive riots since 1989-90 to 1992. Varanas riots of 1989 were the first communal violence between Hindu and Muslim in the city. A mini riots were also broke out in 2007.

Bhagalpur Communal Riots 1989

The silk City Bhagalpur has experienced large scale communal riots in October 1989. Bhagalpur riots are one of the worst communal riots in India since Independence, which claimed over 1000 lives and lasted more than two months.

Bombay Communal Riots 1992

Bombay Riots is one of the worst riots in India, happened in December 1992 and January 1993. The disturbing incidents which affected both Hindus and Muslims badly resulted the killing of more than 1,000 people. The demolition of Babri Masjid is the starting point of Bombay Riots.

Gujarat Communal Riots 2002

Gujarat Riot is another worst riot in India; it was a series of violent incidents between Hindus and Muslims which results long lasting violence in the state. The burning of Sabarmati Express train was the starting point of Gujarat riot. Muslims were blamed for the incident which largely remains contested. Which resulted violent Attacks on Muslims by Hindu fundamentalist groups, thousands of Muslims killed and displaced. Most of these displaced are still languishing in relief camps. In this case where police remain mute spectators. Gujarat riots was a definition of horror and brutality of human and human.

Aligarh Communal Riots 2006

Aligarh is well known as one of the communal sensitive zone in Uttar Pradesh. On 5 April 2006 violence between Hindus and Muslims has resulted large scale destruction of property, lootings and loss of life.. At least six to seven people died due to communal riots began during the Hindu festival Ram Navami.

Assam Communal Riots 2012

In the month of July 2012 a communal violence is got triggered between the Bodos and Muslim settlers. More than 80 people had died and over 1 lacks have taking shelter in relief camps during that riot.

Muzaffarnagar Communal Riots 2013

The infamous Muzaffarnagar riot have claimed 48 lives and injured 93 in the Muzaffar Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh. It is one of the worst religious violence in India.

On the basis of all the above discussion it can say that communal violence occurred time and again within two different communities. In these communal riots most of the time Muslims are at the receiving end. They have lost their lives, homes and children even that they don't get any kind of assistance to improve their poor condition. It can say that government or government

agencies particularly police, have played discriminatory role towards Muslim communities. Police attitude always be worst towards Muslims in communal violence and even in some cases police provoke and instigate the riots.

References

- Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing Home, 1984.
- Asghar Ali Engineer, "Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal Violence," *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 14, 2002.
- "Communal violence shows 24% jump in first five months of 2015, shows govt data", *The Times Of India*, 22 July, 2015.
- "Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II (1986-2011)", *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, 16 June 2015.
- Asghar Ali Engineer, *Communal Riots in Post-independence India*, Hyderabad, Universities Press, 1991.
- Asghar Ali Engineer, *Communalism and Communal Violence in India: An Analytical Approach to Hindu-Muslim Conflict*, New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1989.
- Asghar Ali Engineer, *Communal riots after independence: a comprehensive account*, New Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2004.
- Jitendra Narayan, *Communal riots in India: a case study of an Indian state*, Patna, Ashish Publication House, 1992.
- V.V Singh, *Communal Violence*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 1993.
- Srikanta Ghosh, *Communal riots in India: meet the challenge unitedly*, Patna, Ashish Publication House, 1987.
- Zenab Banu, *Politics of communalism: a politico-historical analysis of communal riots in post-independence India with special reference to the Gujarat and Rajasthan riots*, New Delhi, Popular Prakashan, 1989.
- Yasmeen, Peer, *Communal Violence in Gujarat: Rethinking the Role of Communalism and Institutionalized Injustice in India*, Washington, D.C., American University Library, 2006.
- Steven Wilkinson, *Religious Politics and Communal Violence*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2005.
- P.R. Rajgopal, *Communal violence in India*, New Delhi, Uppal Publication House, 1987.