

Violence Against Women in Ethnic Riots
An Interpretive Exercise Based on Anti-Muslim Riots in Gujarat, 2002 and
Uttar-Pradesh, 2013 in India

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to conduct a study of communal riots of Gujarat (2002) and Uttar Pradesh (2013) through an interpretive lens. The research focuses on violence against women in these Hindu-Muslim riots in India and presents the cases of communal violence in the broader context of Indian politics. With the study of the existing literature, it presents a detailed description of the riots, followed by a discussion on the elements of complicit political forces and commonality of gender violence. It looks at gender violence through the lens of physical and symbolic violence perpetrated against women. Moreover, it attempts to develop an understanding of the riots through the perspective of hidden political motivations beneath it.

Finally, the thesis places these riots within the larger Indian political context by discussing the political history of the country, arguing that competitive electoral democracy was not present since the formation of independent India in 1947. Rather, it evolved in the 1970s-1980s with the weakening of the oldest political party, Congress Party and the rise of *Mandal-Mandir* agitations. The thesis also locates the rise of *Hindutva* politics of BJP in that period and how it has strengthened till now in context of communal riots in the country.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Glossary and Abbreviations	v
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1 Objective of the Thesis	4
1.2 Methodology	4
Chapter 2. The Communal events of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.....	6
2.1 Indian Constitution on Secularism and Equal Citizenship	6
2.2 Understanding Violence in Gujarat (2002).....	7
2.3 Understanding Violence in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli (2013).....	9
2.4 Complicit Ruling Parties of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.....	12
2.5 Violence Against Women	17
Chapter 3 Lenses for Understanding Ethnic or Communal Riots.....	24
3.1 Conceptual Definitions	24
Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Violence.....	24
3.2 The Roots of Ethnic Violence – Political Motivations Underneath	25
3.3 Ties Between Civic Society and Ethnic Violence	27
3.4 Gender Violence in Ethnic Riots	29
Chapter 4 Interpreting Communal Riots of Gujarat (2002) and Uttar Pradesh (2013).....	33
4.1 Social Fabric of the Country	34

4.2 Rise of Competitive Electoral Politics	37
4.3 Rise of Hindutva Politics	41
4.4 Gender in Communal Violence	44
4.5 Discussion and Remarks	48
Conclusion	51
List of References	56

Glossary and Abbreviations

BJP—Bharatiya Janata Party

Hindu Rashtra—Hindu Nation.

Hindutva—Hindu Nationalism as the political project of BJP

RSS—Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or National Volunteer Organization, the umbrella right-wing organization with BJP as its political wing

VHP—Vishwa Hindu Parishad or World Hindu Council, another right-wing organization as part of the family of RSS

BD—Bajrang Dal or youth faction of VHP.



Map of India—to refer to the locations of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh

Source: Maps of India <http://www.maps-of-the-world.net/maps-of-asia/maps-of-india/>

Chapter 1. Introduction

Since the bloody partition of the subcontinent in 1947, India has been witness to large scale religious conflicts and communal violence. A nation of 1.21 billion people consisting of 79.80 % of Hindus, 14.23 % as Muslims, 1.72 % as Sikhs, among other communities such as Christians (2.30 %), Buddhists (0.70 %), Jains (0.37 %) (Religion Data- Census of India, 2011) has been carved out of an enormously multicultural and diverse society. Socio-economic hierarchies and religious and caste based differences abound. The so-called largest democracy on the planet with an electorate close to a billion has also been an arena of institutionalized communal conflicts and violence. This has been the case despite the fact that through a liberal-modernist Constitution that gives fundamental rights to each citizen. The postcolonial history of the nation has been tarnished by some events that have been contrary to the democratic principles on which it was founded in 1947.

It is not unique that a diverse country like India is vulnerable to conflicts between different communities (Varshney, 2001, p. 365). The peculiarity of the religious conflicts does not lie in the fact alone that different religious, ethnic and caste-based communities have existed side by side for ages interspersed with conflict. These are common occurrences in most parts of the world and in many periods of history. And yet, each specific example throws up fresh questions and puzzles. There is always a fresh challenge to make sense of the specific example of the eruption of such a conflict – why did it happen in the given case, why did it happen at the given time and why did it take the specific form and course that it did.

After the large-scale violence between Hindus and Muslims in 1947 in the aftermath of the Partition of the subcontinent and creation of a secular and democratic nation on the Indian side, India settled into the task of becoming a modern democracy. The violence subsided rather quickly also because Mahatma Gandhi – *the father of the nation* – was

assassinated by a Hindu fanatic (The Guardian, 1948). Jawaharlal Nehru – a widely respected visionary statesman – led the complex process of carving out a modern nation based on a secular and modern constitution out of a society that had never experienced democratic forms of State and governance (Chandra, 2000). The next two decades did not witness any large scale religious or caste-based violence among communities.

This situation has changed rather drastically in the last three decades or so. Conflicts erupted in Gujarat in 1969 between Hindus and Muslims and then again in 1985 (Spodek, 2010). In the latter case conflicts along caste lines also happened simultaneously. Another major eruption of ethno-religious violence occurred against Sikhs in 1984 in the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi – Prime Minister of the country at the time – by her own bodyguard who was a Sikh and had come under the influence of radical Khalistani movement seeking an independent homeland for Sikhs (Tambiah, 1990). In yet another part of the country – in the state of Assam in the northeast – a massacre of Muslims had taken place in 1983 in a violent conflict between Hindus and Muslims known as the Nellie Massacre (Krishnan, 2015). And yet, with hindsight one can say that these were precursors to what was yet to come – a more charged atmosphere of conflicts among communities along religious-sectarian lines.

The end of the 1980s saw two major mass mobilizations, both of which played a big role in the decline of the Congress Party – till then the hegemonic political force since India's independence. The first was the *Mandal movement* (Muralidharan, 1990) that asked for reservation in jobs and in educational opportunities for the middle castes in the Hindu caste hierarchy. The so-called lower castes known as Dalits or Scheduled Castes had been beneficiaries of such affirmative action since independence. The other major mobilization, the *Mandir movement* (Panikkar, 1993), was for building a temple for the Hindu god, *Rama*, by demolishing a mosque supposedly built by Mughal emperor Babar in the fifteenth century.

Both movements were aimed at challenging the Congress hegemony and snatching from it mass base and electoral support, though in different ways. The Mandal movement aimed at taking the Hindu middle castes away from Congress, whereas the Mandir movement aimed at consolidating the Hindu majority along religious lines and against the Congress which was depicted as working against the interests of Hindus in the name of secularism.

In this great political and social churning the Hindu majoritarian strategy seems to have won decisively. The party that spearheaded this movement – the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) – and its ideological mentor – the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) – are now the new hegemonic forces on the Indian political and social scene. One key development has been that the polity and to a great extent the entire society is charged with a heightened tension of communal conflict leading to recurrent eruptions of violent conflicts among communities along religious and also along caste lines. *Gujarat 2002* and *Muzaffarnagar-Shamli 2013* are two prominent examples of violent conflicts among Hindus and Muslims.

Within the general context of communal riots there is another feature that is noteworthy. In all these conflict situations women seem to become special targets of violence. This in itself is not a peculiarity of India. In conflict situations women have been subjected to violence, including sexual violence, all over the world. And yet there are peculiarities in the Indian situation and there seem to be differences in form and in intensity within the Indian cases.

In this thesis, I will take the two major riots of recent times – *Gujarat 2002* and *Uttar Pradesh 2013* – and make an attempt to understand them in the wider context of Indian politics during the last two decades. More specifically, I will focus on violence against women during these two riots and try to understand why women were targeted in these two specific examples. I will try to understand the similarities as well as the differences in the

form and intensity of violence against women in the two cases and will try to situate them in the overall political and social contexts.

1.1 Objective of the Thesis

My research question can be formulated as follows. *How can we understand the violence against women during Gujarat 2002 and Uttar Pradesh 2013 – the two riots selected for this study? How can we understand the similarities and the differences in the forms and the intensities of VAW during these riots? How can these riots be situated in the wider context of recent political developments in India?*

The chosen cases of Gujarat 2002 and Uttar Pradesh 2013 have portrayed the targeting of women in the Hindu-Muslim clashes. Both, physical and symbolic forms of violence were perpetrated against them. At the same time, the events also highlighted the failure of the political forces and administration in curbing violence and providing protection to the minority communities. It was the complicity of the ruling party, in the case of Gujarat (Jaffrelot, 2003) and contending political forces in an atmosphere of heightened political competition, in Uttar Pradesh (Berenschot, 2014) which fomented conflicts between both communities.

In this context, I aim to study the two cases of communal violence to understand why the clashes occurred the way they did with different types of violence perpetrated against the women. Then, I will attempt to interpret the riots in the larger context of Indian politics to understand why these clashes have become more prominent now than before.

1.2 Methodology

India, being the second most populous country in the world founded on the democratic principles in 1947 has diverse communities divided along sectarian, communal, religious, and linguistic lines. But even with the formal existence of the principles of

secularism, egalitarianism and justice for all, the riots of 2002 and 2013 finding space in the country has interested me to study them in detail.

The cases of communal riots in Gujarat and Muzaffarnagar-Shamli become significant due to two reasons. One, both cases share similar communal character of violence perpetrated against the Muslim minority community. It is also noted that the violence in Muzaffarnagar-Shamli has been the largest communal upsurge since the Gujarat violence of 2002 (Berenschot, 2014, p. 15). Second, they possess the commonality of gender violence. While the Gujarat case had grotesque forms of physical violence against the minority Muslim women (Sarkar, 2002), Muzaffarnagar-Shamli is a case where the narrative of women as repositories of community's honor has been reproduced and emphasized to create tensions between communities (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 40). Thus, the patriarchal element of the Indian social fabric has been manipulated differently that has further led to the subordination of women in both cases.

Thus, the objective of the thesis is to provide an interpretation of the two riots in context of violence against women, and then understanding the clashes within the broader functioning of the Indian politics. The narration and interpretation of the riots are done by reviewing the existing literature, along with the study of human rights organizations reports and journalistic articles on the cases of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. Having said that, the next chapter provides a detailed description of the cases of 2002 and 2013. It also discusses the role of political parties in communal violence and the nature of violence perpetrated against women in each case.

Chapter 2. The Communal events of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh

The objective of this chapter is to present an overview of the communal cases of 2002 and 2013 through scholarly perspectives. The literature points out at two important elements inherent in both the riots, one, the complicit nature of the ruling party (in the case of Gujarat) or competing political entities (in the case of UP) fostering the communal riots. Second, both cases saw violence against women of the minority community of Muslims and the failure of the ruling parties in ensuring justice to all. The chapter, first, provides an outline of the rights given to the Indian citizens in the Constitution, focusing on the principle of secularism and citizenship to have a background information. Second, I briefly describe the turnout of the Hindu-Muslim clashes in 2002 and 2013. Third, the grave violations of the described constitutional principles of secularism and equal citizenship is explained through the literary works on the events.

2.1 Indian Constitution on Secularism and Equal Citizenship

The Constitution of India adopted in 1949 and implemented in 1950, right after the formation of independent India in 1947 went through the 42nd amendment that made the country secular. This meant that the state had no right to endorse any religion and would treat all the religions equally. Secondly, it will not have the right to enact any religious law or show any favored stances towards one religion. This is evident from the Article 15-16 that disallow discrimination on the basis of religion. Article 25-28 of the constitution facilitate the Indian citizens with the freedom to practice and profess any religion. (The Constitution of India, 1949). Thus, the founders of the newly democratic nation made sure that Indian secularism featured a “principled distance” (Bhargava, pp.2) of the ruling governments from all religions within the country

Another equally essential part of the Indian constitution is the equality of citizenship guaranteed in the Articles 14, 15(1) and 29(2). In the context of communal conflicts and violence against women, Article 15 becomes essential which states that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on the basis of their religion, caste, class, sex, and place of birth.(The Constitution of India, 1949)

With regards to religious violence in Gujarat and Muzaffarnagar, and failure of political forces in controlling the clashes and providing protection and justice to the victims, the above mentioned fundamental rights were in grave violation that brought Indian democracy under threat. Along with the violations of constitutional principles, the reviewed literature highlights the electoral incentives and political motivations (Wilkinson, 2006, 2005) interplaying with Hindu-Muslim civic relations (Varshney, 2001) which culminated into the communal clashes of 2002 and 2013.

2.2 Understanding Violence in Gujarat (2002)

The communal violence of 2002 in Gujarat has not been the first incident that the city has seen. In Jaffrelot's words, "[it] has long been known for its communal violence" (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 2). The western state of Gujarat with Ahmedabad as its capital witnessed Hindu-Muslim violent clashes in 1969¹ and 1985². But the violence of 2002 has been recognized as a repressive measure to turn the country into a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation) with a complete subjugation of minorities (Sud, 2008)

¹ Hindu-Muslim riots of 1969 were due to the alleged symbolic attacks, one, by a policeman who was thought to have thrown Qur'an on the ground. Second, it was believed that some Muslims harassed cows (considered to be a holy animal) of a Hindu temple in Ahmedabad. (See (Spodek, 2010)Shani, 2007, p. 161; Spodek, 2010; Sud, 2008)

² Violence in 1985 was due to social and economic issues, such as the shutting down of several textile mills, rising unemployment and socio-economic initiatives for lower castes that further angered the upper castes and classes of the state. (See Shani, 2007, p. 159; SPODEK, 2010)

The 2002 violence in the state occurred in the aftermath of the Godhra train burning incident that occurred in the month of February. The train, Sabarmati Express, returning from Ayodhya carrying Hindu *Kar Sevaks* (Hindu pilgrims/ activists/ ‘servers-in-action’ (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 3) was burnt killing fifty-eight *Kar Sevaks* (Brass, 2004). It is believed that it was the aggressive behavior of the kar sevaks such as shouting religious slogans like *Jai Shree Ram* (Glory to Lord Rama), singing religious songs and harassing the Muslim passengers that led to the clashes (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 3). Moreover, the activists’ actions such as forcing a Muslim to chant religious slogans of the Hindus, and harassing a Muslim woman and children further intensified the situation (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 3).

The burning of the two coaches of the train as the ultimate outcome occurred when it halted a few kilometers away from the station, near a Muslim locality of *Ghanchis*. *Ghanchis* are a community of street vendors and lower-class Muslim workers living near the station. Hundreds of them surrounded the train coaches with the *kar sevaks* and pelted stones and torches that led to the burning of two coaches of the train killing fifty-seven *kar sevaks* including twenty-five women and fourteen children. (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 3; Shani, 2007, p. 169)

After this incident, the state of Gujarat fell victim to massive violence that approximately led to the killings of 2000 people. The official figures by the state government stated 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were killed with 2500 injured (BBC, 2005). On the other hand, a report by the Human Rights Watch, ‘*WE HAVE NO ORDERS TO SAVE YOU*’ posited that approximately 2000 people were killed in the violence (Human Rights Watch, 2012). The Hindu-Muslim conflict had a predominant impact on the lives of Muslims with “more than 5 Muslims to 1 Hindu, inclusive of the Hindus killed on the train at Godhra” being killed in the riots (Brass, 2004, page not mentioned)

The failure of the ruling party, BJP, in curbing violence and providing protection to the Muslims culminated into one peculiar feature of gruesome attacks on women in Gujarat. In every ethno-religious violent clash, one witnesses large scale targeting of women from the communities involved. But the case of Gujarat becomes special due to the intensive degree of direct forms of violence against the Muslim women (Sarkar, 2002). By direct forms of violence, I mean violent attacks in the form of mass rapes, mutilations and burning women alive among other acts of brutality. Around 200 women became victims of the physical violence (in Gunne and Thompson, 2012) and Human Rights Watch (2012) has recorded testimonies of the women who survived the event and shared their horrific experiences while living in refugee camps since they had to evacuate the places which were hit with violence in the state. Further analysis and opinions on the communal riots and interlinked gender violence against Muslim women are discussed at length in subsection 2.5.

2.3 Understanding Violence in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli (2013)

Uttar Pradesh being the most populous state of the country constitutes the largest electoral population. The shares of the population by religious denominations are as follows: Hindus as 79.73% of the whole population, with Muslims at 19.26%, followed by Sikhs 0.32%, Christians 0.18%, Jains 0.11%, Buddhists 0.10% and others with no mention of religion constituted 0.29%. (Uttar Pradesh Religion Data - Census 2011). Keeping this complex social setting in the background, one can say that the towns of Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh have always observed a harmonious existence of Hindus and Muslims. Even after the partition of the country, these areas were the least affected while the other regions of the north India were observing turmoil, brutality and massacres on a large scale (Singh, 2016, p. 94). There are two different narratives given for the eruption of violence between Hindu Jat

community (upper class landowners) and the Muslims (mostly lower-class laborers) in the region on September of 2013. The most prominent and discussed narrative considered the alleged incident of a Hindu girl who was eve teased by two young Muslim men. In the name of protecting the honor of Hindu women, the brothers of the girl allegedly killed the eve-teaser with a consequent reaction of the two Hindu brothers being murdered by some Muslim men (Berenschot, 2014, p. 15). In the other version, it has been claimed that there was no harassment involved. Rather it was the road accident involving people from the two communities. The motorcycle accident, as noted by one news website, led to a fight between the three men and eventual deaths (Kirpal, 2013). Whichever was the reason, the situation after the deaths of the two Hindu men and one Muslim was further aggravated by the spread of inflammatory speeches by politicians in the region. Many Muslim leaders of the district and state level associated with the Congress Party, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) found to be giving hate speeches that intensified the communal tension further (Ahmed, 2013, p. 10). Similarly, the BJP with its leaders also initiated a *mahapanchayat* (public meeting) for the Hindu Jats giving provocative speeches (Ahmed, 2013, p. 10; Berenschot, 2014, p. 15). It was after the end of one of the public meetings addressed by Hindu leaders of the BJP that some of the people returning from the meeting were allegedly attacked in the Muslim dominated areas and similarly it was heard that Muslims were attacked in Hindu or Jat dominated areas. (Singh, 2016)

In the aftermath of these alleged incidents, communal riots spurred in the regions killing approximately 52 people (15 Hindus and 37 Muslims) and displacing around 50 thousand people (Berenschot, 2014). Large scale impact on lower class Muslims was observed, many losing lives and others their livelihoods after being displaced from their localities with their houses and property destroyed (Singh, 2016).

Similar to violence against women in Gujarat, Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts also witnessed 13 cases of rapes for which complaints were lodged (Press Trust of India, 2013). The incident being relatively recent in comparison to 2002 riots, there is a need for more academic research on the case. While some scholars have written on it and others have produced reports after visiting the riot-hit regions, the research is still underexplored also because there are pending cases in the court. Another element to be noted is that activists have suggested that there was large scale violence against women but only a few of them came forward due to pressurization and threats from the accused persons. Rehana Adeeb, an activist, along with a human rights lawyer, Vrinda Grover, has been actively involved in bringing justice to the rape victims in the court. Adeeb described to one of the Indian journalistic portals how the incident was a well-planned conspiracy. Her statement recorded with the news website states, "there were over 45-50 women who were raped. Yet only these seven came forward due to the social stigma and lack of support from their families" (Dhawan, 2017).

While some sources suggest thirteen cases were lodged, Amnesty International India reported that seven cases of rape and sexual harassment of Muslim women were registered. The filing of the cases took a long time, the report states that it took 6 to 14 months in registering the cases and one case still is yet to be tried. And, till this day, in none of the cases the perpetrators have been convicted. The report also mentions that due to intimidation and social pressures, two of the victims changed their statements while two others are still waiting for justice to be served. One of the victim lost her life while giving birth in 2016. (Amnesty International India, 2017)

To conclude, the communal events on Gujarat and UP are evident of the violations of the principle of secularism and equal citizenship. The failure of the state administration in curbing

violence, protecting the minority community citizens, and providing justice to the rape victims reflect at the weakening in upholding the constitutional values on which the country was founded in 1947.

2.4 Complicit Ruling Parties of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

The killings of the Hindus in the Godhra train burning incident in Gujarat was followed by a call for citywide *bandh* (close down) by the rightwing organizations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad³ and Bajrang Dal⁴. (Engineer, 2002, p. 5053; Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 3; Spodek, 2010, p. 351). The closing down of the city in the form of a general strike by the Hindus established new grounds of violence (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 4). In the aftermath of this sensitive moment filled with tension in the capital city and nearby regions, there began a new set of violence that specifically targeted the Muslim community in the region. (Brass, 2004)

Brass' study of the riots highlights the refined orchestration of violence against the Muslims through the mass killings and destruction of property and non-Hindu symbols. Around 500 mosques and shrines were demolished (Brass, 2004). Tanika Sarkar writes, "bodies were not just massacred, they disappeared, as did houses, shrines, mosques. Overnight, roads were laid, and Hindu temples were built where Muslim homes used to be" (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2873).

While the Hindu mob violence unleashed itself on the minority religious community, it continued for at least three days because the ignorant behavior of the state machinery in provisioning security to the Muslims (Jaffrelot, 2012, p. 78; Nussbaum, 2007; Spodek, 2010, p. 352). The complicit nature of the police forces was starkly visible that "either stood aside or coordinated or participated in the violence against Muslims"(Brass, 2004; Engineer, 2002, p.

³ World Hindu Council (in English). Referred further in the thesis as VHP

⁴ Youth faction of the VHP. Referred further in the thesis as BD.

5053; Jaffrelot, 2012, 2003). The killing of ex-parliament member, Ehsan Jaffrey crudely highlights the indifferent nature of the security forces. Even after countless attempts that were made by him to get police protection, Jaffrey and 39 others hiding in his house were burned alive with the police quarters stationed just a kilometer away (Engineer, 2002, p. 5053; Human Rights Watch, 2012). Furthermore, Brass and others argue in support of the strong organizational nature of the violence (Brass, 2011; Engineer, 2002, p. 5053; Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 6; Spodek, 2010, p. 352) by stating that the mobs had access to the list of voters in various localities and they used the details to “identify the homes of Muslims who were to be killed and whose property was to be destroyed” (Brass, 2004, page not mentioned).

The continuation of grotesque forms of violence in the riot hit regions of Gujarat with no attempts in ensuring law and order was made possible because of straightforward involvement of the ruling party, the BJP (Sarkar, 2002; Spodek, 2010, p. 353). In his writing, *Gujarat 2002: What Justice for the Victims?* (2012), Christophe Jaffrelot postulates that it was the then Prime Minister, Narendra Modi’s orders to halt the security measures and let the turmoil continue (Engineer, 2002, p. 5053; Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 4) He substantiates it by highlighting the statement of the Indian Police Officer at that time, Sanjeev Bhatt given to the Special Investigation Team setup by the Supreme Court. He stated that it was after the Godhra incident that a meeting was held under Modi’s presence and that was the starting point for the “official orchestration of 2002 riots in Gujarat” by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (Jaffrelot, 2012, p. 78)

With the full support of the ruling party in orchestrating the communal violence, the affiliated right-wing organization such as VHP and BD participated in mob violence in full-fledged manner (Jaffrelot, 2012, 2003, p. 5; Sarkar, 2002; Spodek, 2010). Brass also mentions about the eyewitnesses who saw the participation of these activists along with the rioters (Brass,

2004). Despite numerous complaints filed against the VHP and BD activists for their participation in riots, the administrative and bureaucratic systems had continued maintaining their connivant behavior (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 6; Sarkar, 2002, p. 2873). Moreover, it was not only VHP and BD activists, but municipal corporators, local members of BJP were also active participants in the clashes (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 6; Sarkar, 2002, p. 2873).

As discussed above, the case of Gujarat can be classified as a classic instance of institutionalized form of ethnic violence in India. Identically, the communal riots in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli also comprises the political incentives beneath that aggravated the conflict into violence. However unlike in 2002, where the literature locates direct links between the BJP and other right-wing organizations and Hindu-Muslim violence, the case of 2013 finds the involvement of several other regional parties along with the BJP in attempts to polarize the communities.

The districts of Muzaffarnagar, Shamli and other smaller regions that witnessed communal clashes in September 2013 are agrarian towns of Uttar Pradesh. Unlike, the urban nature of violence in Gujarat, UP had Hindu-Muslim riots mostly orientated in rural areas (Singh, 2016, p. 94). The regions not only have segregation based on religion but castes as well. In these regions, along with the Hindu community, Muslims are also divided between upper and middle castes and Most Backward classes. The regions have upper caste Hindus (Jats and Gujjars) as owners of agricultural lands and mostly backward class Muslims (Pasmanda) as laborers in the fields. Furthermore, the upper and middle caste Muslims have been independent laborers or owners or small businesses. In the communal clashes of 2013, mostly Pasmanda Muslims were affected in terms of loss of lives and livelihoods. (See, Singh, 2016)

The reasons for the instigation of violence have been investigated by state oriented investigative teams and independent research scholars and activists. From the latter group, a team known as *Aman Biradari* visited the districts after the riots to investigate the reasons for the violence and the hidden politics involved behind it. They highlighted the three steps of channelizing a riot. The first was deliberately manufacturing hatred among the communities. The second was the organization of the physical execution for the riot. The third was the complicit nature of the state that led the riots continue successfully. (Mander, et al, 2016, pp. 39–40)

In the abovementioned context, hatred was inculcated between the communities due to political competition in the state. The general elections of 2014, had led the political parties to devise strategies to gain support in the electorally most populous state. After the deaths of the two Hindu men, for the BJP it was the appropriate moment to begin the polarization. Having a weak base in the entire region, the party attempted to solidify Hindu support through schemes like organizing the Jat *mahapanchayat* (as discussed in subsection 2.3) (Berenschot, 2014, p. 15). Other kinds of polarization also led to further hatred between the communities. For instance, Samajwadi Party (SP), a regional party which held power since 2012 state elections had their support base within the Muslim community. Literature posit that during the violence, state police portrayed biased treatment towards the Jats while Muslim suspects were released (Berenschot, 2014, p. 15). With the polarization strategically implemented by the BJP, it further made “mobilizational capacities” of other parties like Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Congress much weaker in the region (Berenschot, 2014, p. 15). The outcome was that BJP had a majority win in the national elections of 2014 (Singh, 2016, p. 99).

To investigate the reasons for violent clashes between the communities, Justice (retired) Vishnu Sahai Commission was set up by the state government, SP. The report concluded the

failure of the police and administrative officials in curbing the violence along with the involvement of the leaders of SP and BJP in the riots (Mishra, 2015). While the report clearly stated the involvement of political and bureaucratic leaders, the accused were arrested but released soon after, and some ended up with political positions as well (Singh, 2016, p. 95). Even though Justice Vishnu Sahai Commission report mentioned the role of SP in the riots, there was significant involvement of the BJP with the vested interest of winning the General elections of 2014 as mentioned previously (Singh, 2016). The BJP leaders were found, along with politicians of other parties giving inflammatory speeches, circulating fake videos of Hindu-Muslim clashes to instigate the people in the region (Ahmed, 2013, p. 10; Berenschot, 2014, p. 15; Mander, et al, 2016, pp. 39–40).

Lastly, the impact of the communal clashes not only affected mostly the lower caste Muslims in the region. The coexistence of upper class Hindus, such as the Jats, the landowners and the lower caste Muslims, mostly cattle traders was also affected (Singh, 2016, p. 98). The mutual trust between the communities, trading healthy cattle and selling the old ones, were broken in the aftermath of the riots. Hence, the reciprocal socio-economic interactions between different classes and castes of Hindus and Muslims were intentionally destroyed to polarize the communities into two – Hindus and Muslims (Singh, 2016, p. 100). Hence, it can be concluded that the breakup of the civic ties eventually paved the way for communal violence with the complicit political forces behind it.

Having established scholars' viewpoints on the involvement of the political entities in triggering the communal violence in Gujarat and UP, the next section essentially explicates the usage of women in the two cases of riots and violence that specifically targeted the minority community women.

2.5 Violence Against Women

As mentioned in the first chapter, both Gujarat and UP had Hindu-Muslim riots where the Muslim community was comparatively more affected than the Hindus (Ahmed, 2013, pp. 10–11; Jaffrelot, 2003; Sarkar, 2002; Singh, 2016, p. 94). Within the minority community, women became special targets (See Reports-Amnesty International India, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2012). While 2002 riots saw intense forms of physical violence against Muslim women, 2013 riots spurred due to the rumors of Hindu women being targeted by the Muslim men—harassed or lured into conversion. Both cases are discussed in context of gender violence in ethnic conflicts.

The case of Gujarat witnessed the presence of the regional state and its affiliated organizations such as VHP and BD in the conflict in direct and indirect forms (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2873; Spodek, 2010, pp. 352–353). Direct involvement was provisioning equipment of violence such as kerosene oil, knives, daggers and other forms of weaponry (Jaffrelot, 2012, p. 78, 2003, p. 5), and indirect association could be in the form of failure of the police and the government in controlling the violence (Brass, 2004; Varshney, 2004). Not only that, services by the state machinery such as fire brigades and ambulances were not accessible to the people, and no concrete attempts were made by the police and magistrates to control the situation (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2873). It was observed that they even refused to record the complains and FIRs (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2873). It took the Gujarat state three days to control the situation when it could have been earlier if the bureaucracy and the state had not been ignorant. Post the riots, the complicity was observable with the lack of rehabilitation strategies and compensation to the affected (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2873).

As mentioned above, the riots in Gujarat observed extensive targeting of Muslim women. They were victims of mass rapes and killings. Tanika Sarkar writes, ‘women were "tortured,

molested, raped, and then burnt to death". Sometimes, their children were killed before their eyes. At the same time, more often than not, such atrocities were whispered about and not always confirmed openly" (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2875). The gruesome violence led to around 250 women becoming victims of direct violence in the form of mass rapes and murders (Gunne and Thompson, 2012, p. 146).

In her work *The Clash Within* (2007), Martha Nussbaum has done an in-depth analysis of the Gujarat violence. To understand the brutality perpetrated by the Hindu majority on Muslim women, she has discussed the idea of shame inherent within the former. She calls it as a 'powerful motive for aggression in human life' (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 189). This shame emerges due to the oppression faced by the perpetrators in the past, that makes them violent and oppressive on someone weaker than them. The failure to exercise power and dominate over others have long been within the Hindus. Nussbaum highlights the Mughal rule and then the colonial rule that have created a sense of shame among the Hindus who were placed at the subordinate position. She observes, 'the presence of the British in India transformed the traditional Hindu culture of manliness in two ways. First, and most obviously, it gave rise to what might be called reactive shame, in response to the British critique of Hindu myth and religion' (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 197). Thus, it is the weak social position of the Hindus that have led them to perpetrate their power over weaker sections of society, that is, the Muslim men and women to arise out of that shame. Nussbaum also writes, 'when common human experiences of need and weakness are joined to a prolonged sense of helplessness and humiliation as the result of real political events..., self-hatred can all too easily turn outward, as symbolic acts of violence' (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 189).

Along with the feelings of shame, the violent actions of the Hindus against Muslim women are explained with the association of women's bodies as pure and its violation through violence is also a way of subordinating them. Thus, Nussbaum talks about associating women's bodies with the body of nation and once the women are violated, the nation is considered to be under attack (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 201). In this context, the attacks on Muslim women not only make the Hindu men come out of their powerlessness and shame, it also aims to take revenge for the historical past when the Muslim rulers had dominated the Indian subcontinent.

The peculiarity in the violence against women in Gujarat riots was the degree of brutality perpetrated against the women. Tanika Sarkar writes, '[it was] not just their killing, not just the sadism, but the larger symbolic purpose behind the killing and the sadism that sums up the nature of ethnic cleansing, the shape of Hindu Rashtra' (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2872). With an increased obsession towards female bodies, insertion of metal objects in vagina, raping and then killing the women, killing of fetuses, and genital torture – the gruesome objectification of female bodies reflect how masculinity can act in its violent forms. Hence, it is not only shame within the Hindu men, but the fear of rise in the Muslim population along with the threat from their polygamous family structures. Tanika Sarkar explains the “dark sexual obsession about allegedly ultra-virile Muslim male bodies and over fertile Muslim female ones, that inspire and sustain the figures of paranoia and revenge” (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2874). Yet, this outlook of the Hindus as dying community is completely unsubstantiated when supported by the census data which showed the Hindu and Muslim population growth as stable from 1961 to 2001 (Nussbaum, 2007, pp. 202–203).

On the one hand, Sarkar highlights three patterns in the cruelty against women, 'one, the woman's body was a site of almost inexhaustible violence, with infinitely plural and innovative

forms of torture. Second, their sexual and reproductive organs were attacked with a special savagery. Third, their children, born and unborn, shared the attacks and were killed before their eyes. (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2875). On the other hand, Nussbaum goes further and relates the violent actions of the Hindus with the concept of purity in their minds. She links the brutality of violence, such as penetrating metal objects in women's vaginas is symbolically associated with the Hindus keeping themselves pure and simultaneously hurting the 'other' community. She writes, 'the image is constructed of a sexuality that is so effective, so closely allied with the desire for domination and purity...The Hindu male does not even need to dirty his penis with the contaminating fluids of the Muslim woman' (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 209). Thus, the Gujarat violence reflects on the 'othering' of minority communities through gory killings and torture that creates differentiated spaces within the democratic country violating the principles of secularism and equality.

On the other hand, violence against the Muslim minority women in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli was not as intense and grotesque, yet attacking women with the aim of 'othering' of the minority community was witnessed in the case. Two narratives were overtly spread in the region—one, the issue of '*love jihad*' and second, '*beti bachao-bahu bachao*' (save daughters and daughters-in-laws) campaigns. Both claimed that the Muslim men had the agenda of undermining the Hindus by trying to 'control' or 'lure' their women.

They raised the issue of 'love jihad' which claimed that young Muslim boys were trying to entice Hindu women and trying to convert them into Islam and then reproduce babies to continue the lineage. These kinds of narratives were spread right before the election period

leading towards large scale animosity towards the Muslim community. (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 40)

Another campaign, '*beti bachao-bahu bachao*' (save daughters and daughters-in-laws) was witnessed in the districts with the organization of public meetings by political parties. The theme of the meeting, protecting the honor of Hindu women, further inculcated hatred against Muslims in the region. This hatred, turned into riots mostly affected lower caste Muslims, who worked on the lands of the upper-class Hindu Jats. The scholars noted, "their small houses were set aflame and looted, some were killed, while other terrified people fled to the safety of numbers in Muslim majority villages." (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 40). The article mentioned that "nearly 100 deaths, uncounted rapes, arson, looting and the fleeing in terror of 75,000 people" occurred in the affected areas (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 40).

The ignorance of the state mechanisms to intervene at the beginning of the turmoil reflects at the complicity. The authors write, "once violence broke out, the police forces mostly stood watching as the crowds attacked Muslim settlements, without using force or firing to disperse the furious mobs. They did not rescue those trying to escape; instead survivors depended on wealthy Muslim landowners to protect them as they fled" (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 40). Alongside, the state administration failed to provide the victims with relief camps, or health care, and failed to record their complaints and statements. They wrote, "we found little presence of the state in these camps: it did not provide sanitation, healthcare, childcare or police outposts to record people's complaints" (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 40).

As discussed in previous chapter, Justice Vishnu Sahai Commission was set up to investigate the violence, yet the independent investigation of scholars reflected the bias of the report. They highlighted that the report confirmed that dispute arose from the road accident of

the Muslim and Hindu Jat youths after which some of the Muslims went to the young Jats houses and killed them. They write, “it legitimises the majoritarian Hindutva communal version about the events and causes, and completely frees the political leadership from any culpability for the violence and displacement”. (Mander, et al, 2016, pp. 40–41)

The confidence of the survivors to return to their homes was further shaken because of the very low numbers of arrests and convictions of the men accused of murder, rape, arson and looting. Without justice, as we have learned from survivors in many sites of communal violence, neither do wounds heal nor can fresh violence be deterred. (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 42)

While scholars and activists have claimed that there were more than seven women who were gang raped, there are only seven cases registered so far. As mentioned in the previous chapter, activists noted that many women feared further harassment and intimidation that led them to either not register their cases or change their statements. As mentioned previously, judiciary and the police also sided with the majority Hindu Jat community. It was noted that “of 6,400 persons accused of crimes in 534 FIRs, charges were ultimately pursued against only 1,540 persons. Most of the cases of murder were closed without a charge-sheet or trial showing the accused as “unknown persons”. (Mander, et al, 2016, p. 42)

Due to the ongoing judicial trials, there is a lack of literature on the targeting of women in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli riots. Yet, one could observe striking similarities between this case and the 2002 riots. Although the levels of brutality differed in Gujarat and Muzaffarnagar-Shamli, Muslim women were the easy targets of the conflict to symbolically humiliate the Muslim community as a whole.

In conclusion, with the help of the literature, this chapter has already established how communal clashes between the two communities were politically motivated by the Hindu nationalist party, BJP and its affiliated organizations. The political ambition of strengthening the Hindu majority's support motivated divisive and sectarian politics in both regions. Thus, the party's political agenda of creating a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation) has found the instrument of competitive electoral politics through which it has managed to polarize the communities. But it is still unclear why political parties like BJP were not able to use the same mechanism before, such as in the communal cases of 1969 and 1985. In the next chapter, I provide the concepts and theories on ethnic conflicts and violence to build an interpretive analysis of the 2002 and 2013 riots. Having discussed the scholarly perspectives on ethnic riots, I aim to understand the role and importance of competitive electoral politics in creating divisions between Hindus and Muslims in context of the chosen cases of riots in further chapters.

Chapter 3 Lenses for Understanding Ethnic or Communal Riots

3.1 Conceptual Definitions

Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Violence

For this thesis, I define ethnicity according to Donald Horowitz's understanding as explained in his works, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (1985) and *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (2001). Ethnicity, then is understood in terms of a group belonging together, with the belief of sharing a common origin or ascriptive groups defined on the basis of their common religion, race, language, descent, sect or culture (Horowitz, 2001, 1985, p. 52; Varshney, 2001⁵, p. 365)

Ethnic conflict and ethnic violence are other important concepts for this thesis. Here, I have used the definitions provided by Ashutosh Varshney (in Boix and Stokes, 2007). For him, ethnic conflicts are not necessarily supposed to be violent in nature. In democracies, the conflicts can be channeled through institutionalized means in the form of protests in assemblies, bureaucracies, parliaments, or in nonviolent forms such as strikes, or marches, these hitherto are not categorized as ethnic violence (Boix and Stokes, 2007, p. 279). Ethnic violence, he explains, is a form of collective violence perpetrated by one group on the other, or by a group on an individual (Boix and Stokes, 2007, p. 279). While riots and pogroms⁶⁷ fall in the former category, lynchings in the latter (Boix and Stokes, 2007, p. 279). On similar lines, Horowitz defines a "deadly ethnic riot" as "an intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly planned...attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic

⁵ He also builds his analysis on ethnic conflicts and civic ties based on Horowitz's definition of ethnicity. His concepts are discussed in detail in this chapter

⁶ Both riots and pogroms have violent clashes between two ethnic groups. However, neutrality of the state is completely absent in a pogrom, as opposed to a riot where even if the state is involved, it upholds the notion of neutrality at face value. (Boix and Stokes, 2007, p. 278)

⁷ The Gujarat riots of 2002 has been termed as a pogrom by many scholars including Brass (2004). For this thesis, while I am acknowledging the involvement of the political forces in the violence, however, I am using the term communal riots or communal violence for both the cases to keep the consistency.

group, the victims chosen because of their group membership” (Horowitz, 2001, p. 1). Since Horowitz’s broader definition of ethnic riots is “synonymous with what are variously called “communal,” “racial,” “religious,” “linguistic,” or “tribal” disturbances, it becomes appropriate to apply his definitions on ethnicity and ethnic riots to understand religious violence in the Indian context , specifically the chosen cases of communal⁸ riots. (Horowitz, 2001, p. 1).

Having clarified the basic conceptual definitions, the next section presents different theoretical explanations for the reasons for the occurrence of ethnic riots. First, Steven Ian Wilkinson’s arguments on the role of political motivations in ethnic riots are discussed. Second, I explain the concept of ‘institutionalized riot system’ propounded by Paul Brass which locates the organizational and institutional nature of riots, hence, looking at the role of political administration in the riots. Third, I have contextualized the role of civil society in the occurrence of communal violence through Varshney’s explanation on intercommunal or interethnic interactions or the lack thereof creating the milieu for peaceful or violent activities. Fourth, having laid down the scholars’ explanations on the political motivations and the role of strong or weak civic relations leading to ethnic violence, the last section will provide theoretical explanations on gender violence in these ethnic clashes.

3.2 The Roots of Ethnic Violence – Political Motivations Underneath

In his work *Votes and Violence* (2006), Wilkinson posits the role of political forces in ethnic violence. It is due to their vested interests like gaining electoral majority in regions that leads them to either create polarization or prevent violence between different communities,

⁸ Thus, terms such as ‘communal’, ‘ethnic’, ‘religious’, ‘ethnoreligious’ are interchangeably used in the thesis.

whichever is more beneficial (Wilkinson, 2006). He emphasizes his main argument that “democratic states protect minorities when it is in their governments’ electoral interest to do so”

Analogous to Wilkinson’s understanding, within the field of International Relations, the rational choice theory understands ethnic war⁹ “[as a] result of the rational pursuit of individual and group self-interest... in the form of wealth, power [or] security” (Kaufman, 2006, p. 49). From the two models of the rational choice theory – pure-uncertainty model and elite-predation model, the latter emphasizes at the role of elites in the manipulation of the social and political situation and conditions that draw the region towards ethnic violence (Kaufman, 2006, p. 49). Though this model believes that it is not the masses wanting the violence but just the elites with the vested interest of gaining power that leads to provoking conflicts between ethnic groups (Kaufman, 2006, pp. 49–50).

Unlike Kaufman, Paul Brass’ concept of ‘institutionalized riot system’(IRS) not only locates the role of the elites such as the politicians and bureaucrats in communal violence, but his model also highlights the role of the masses in the riots. Brass explains IRS as “a perpetually operative network of roles whose functions are to maintain communal hostilities... mobilize crowds to threaten or intimate persons...and, if the political context is right, to let loose widespread violent actions” (Brass, 2011, p. 258). For these networks to function, he establishes the three steps in the production of riots. First, preparation/rehearsal; second, activation/enactment; and third, explanation/interpretation of the riots. The preparation and activation are the steps that work simultaneously, with intensive political mobilization due to competitive electoral politics. Mobilizations take place in the form of consolidating religious or

⁹ While it is acknowledged that the theory is one of the explanations on *ethnic war* and *genocide*, it is studied to draw explanations in context of ethnic violence in general, hence, it is used only as a supportive theory in addition to Wilkinson’s position on the reasons for ethnic violence.

ethnic groups. The third step of explanation/interpretation is how the rioting affair is reproduced—involving the role of journalists, politicians, social scientists among others. (Brass, 2011, p. 15).

The theoretical explanations of Wilkinson, Kaufman and Brass have been studied in this section to provide an explanation to the cases of riots in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. As discussed in the second chapter, the literature has looked into the role of the political parties like BJP who had played a role in orchestrating the violence against Muslims. While the riots had mostly Hindu mobs clashing with the Muslims, the participation of local leaders, activists and politicians reflect on their vested interests of gaining electoral benefits. This fits with the analysis of the scholars who have also propounded that ethnic violence cannot be understood as sudden outbursts of hatred culminating to bloodshed, but there exist a planned and organizational structuring of the clashes. As Brass termed the organizational nature of riots as ‘Institutionalized Riot System’, this was evident in both cases, with the participation of Gujarat government and administration in 2002, and competing political parties like SP, Congress and BJP who created tensions between the two communities to garner electoral support.

3.3 Ties Between Civic Society and Ethnic Violence

In his work *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond* (2001), Varshney attempts to analyze the role and structure of civil society in ethnic or communal violence. He argues that the manipulation of ethnic or religious communities by political forces depends on the structure of civic ties between different communities. Civil society, for Varshney, constitutes not only the ties between family and the state, or establishing interconnections between individuals or families or ties independent of the state, but it also encompasses informal group organizations (film clubs, reading groups, etc.) and ascriptive associations (trade unions, association of Jews, etc.) (Varshney, 2001, p. 366, p. 370). The latter become a part of civil

society as long as they “connect individuals, build trust, encourage reciprocity, and facilitate the exchange of views on matters of public concern—economic, political, cultural and social” (Varshney, 2001, p. 370).

Having said that, civic networks—intercommunal or intra-communal is built either through *associational forms of engagement* or *everyday forms of engagement* (Varshney, 2001, p. 363, author's italics). While the former has formal organizational structures such as trade unions, NGOs, business associations etc., the latter includes informal engagements such as neighborly interactions in the form of dinners, celebrating festivals, and other day to day activities (Varshney, 2001, p. 363). Varshney claims that more interethnic or intercommunal ties will lower the possibility of violence between the communities (Varshney, 2001, p. 363). Hence, Varshney's theory posits that strong intercommunal ties lead to peaceful relations whereas weak ties set the ground for political manipulation to inculcate hatred between the communities.

Yet, the emphasis placed by Varshney on the relations within the civil society giving scope for occurrence or lack thereof of communal riots explains why, for instance, the clashes in Muzaffarnagar-Shamli affected the lower caste Muslims the most. It can be interpreted that even though there were social and economic relations between the landowning class of Hindu Jats and the land tillers or independent workers of the lower caste Muslims, however the relations were hierarchical and unequal. The lower-class Muslims worked on the fields of the Hindu Jats, thus, not having interactions the way Varshney has visualized it. This interpretation is further discussed at length in the fourth chapter.

In conclusion, the elaboration of the concepts and theories of abovementioned scholars are dealt in order to substantiate the occurrences of riots in 2002 and 2013. The presence of the

political forces in manipulating the religious differences of the Hindus and Muslims for electoral gains is reflected in Chapter 2 of the thesis. Furthermore, it is not only the political incentives finding space in communal conflicts, but the social element of patriarchy is equally critical to understand violence against minority community. In the next subsection, I present a theoretical overview on gender violence in ethnic conflicts to explicate the usage of women, visualized as repositories of community's honor, in ethnic violence. These ideas are the base from which I attempt to interpret how women were used as tools by the masses and the politicians to inculcate hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims in the riots of 2002 and 2013.

3.4 Gender Violence in Ethnic Riots

It has been established that violence against women has been a prominent feature in ethnic and communal clashes. In this section, I discuss Stuart J. Kaufman's theory of symbolic politics (Kaufman, 2006) and Inger Skjelsbæk's concept of women as weapon of ethnic or religious wars (Skjelsbæk, 2012) to contextualize manipulation of women, visualized as symbols and representatives of a community's honor to exacerbate hatred between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

The symbolic politics approach, as explained by Kaufman elucidates, one, that communities are bonded together due to their shared cultural tradition and historical roots from where they believe to emerge (Kaufman, 2006, p. 50). Second, there exist the role of ethnic or national symbols that communities associate and respond through emotions (Kaufman, 2006, p. 52). Therefore, the author claims that emotionally laden religious or ethnic groups respond to the presented symbols in the form of "resentment, fear, hatred" (Kaufman, 2006, p. 52) 52. Third, it is the role of the elites, such as politicians who use these cultural and historical roots to deepen ethnic hatred among people (Kaufman, 2006, pp. 50–51).

The symbolic politics theory explains the preconditions for ethnic violence to take place. The first precondition is the prior existence of hostility between communities (Kaufman, 2006, pp. 52–54). Kauffman writes, “it must exist before a politician can manipulate it”. The second precondition is the presence of threat to their existence prevailing within the emotionally laden groups that ultimately culminate into ethnic violence. The third precondition is the political entities finding opportunity to manipulate the tensed situation for their own gains. These attempts become possible through the access to institutional mechanisms. Here, they attempt to use ethnic or national symbols “enabling [them] to reinterpret a conflict of interest as a struggle for security, status, and the future of the group.” (Kaufman, 2006, p. 52). Although, the theory is used in context of ethnic war and genocide, I have used this framework along with Skjelsbæk’s analysis of gender violence in ethnic wars and genocides for my analysis due to similar nature of the violent cases in India.

Skjelsbæk’s study of mass rapes in Bosnia has led her to posit sexual violence or rape as a weapon of war in her work, *Political Psychology of War Rape* (2012). In this work, she emphasizes on the conceptualization of gender violence postulated by Seifert (Skjelsbæk, 2012, pp. 62–63). Although in context of the Bosnian cases of violence and war, the meaning and conceptualization of sexual violence are applied for the cases of ethnic clashes within the Indian democracy.

Sexual violence in ethnic conflicts, then, has several features. One, it is a symbol of *male communication*. This means that women are used as symbols of humiliation against the male opponent. Based on the notion of women being a possession of the male counterpart, in context of ethnic conflicts, an attack on women would directly be communicated as the failure of men to save their women. It is further associated that if they are not able to save persons, how they can

manage to protect their own nation. Second, it is a way of *reaffirming masculinity*. Evidently, if women are visualized as objects possessed by men, then violence against the former or lack thereof would be associated with the community men's capacity to keep them safe during conflicts linking it to their masculinity. Third, it is visualized as a method for *destroying the culture of the opponent*. Thus, an attack on a community's women is directly associated with the attack on the community existence. By using rape as the method, not only it is bodily violation of the raped women but also a way of destructing the biological foundation of the community, ultimately with the aim of symbolically contaminating the community. Fourth, it is a result of inherent *misogyny*. Women are used in ethnic conflicts because an attack on the women of a community is how hatred is channeled between communities. Thus, they are not seen as individuals with agency, rather objects utilized to humiliate their community.(Skjelsbæk, 2012, pp. 62–63, author's italics)

To understand violence executed against Muslim women in the riots of 2002 and 2013, I will take Kaufman and Skjelsbæk's analysis of ethnic violence. As mentioned in Kaufman's Symbolic Politics theory, communities are brought and held together due to ethnic or national symbols, and they respond to the symbols through various emotions. I have attempted to interpret this explanation in context of how women of Hindu and Muslim communities are also visualized as symbols of the communities, that is, they are the embodiment of communities' honor. Moreover, through Skjelsbæk or Siefert's analysis of women used as weapons in wars, I further build my understanding on violence against Muslim women in context of how they were attacked with the motive to dehumanize the entire community. The presentation of this short analysis—specific targeting of Muslim women with the agenda of the Hindu majority to

undermine the Muslim minority community is reflected in the next chapter, which deals with the gruesome physical assaults in Gujarat and physical and symbolic violence in Uttar Pradesh.

Chapter 4 Interpreting Communal Riots of Gujarat (2002) and Uttar Pradesh (2013)

Having studied the Hindu-Muslim riots of 2002 and 2013 by a thorough review of the literature and applying Wilkinson's concept of the role of electoral incentives and Varshney's conceptualization on strong civic ties or lack thereof leading to ethnic violence, in this chapter I aim to contextualize violence against Muslim women and more generally, the riots within the larger political milieu of India. As mentioned in the Introduction, India witnessed its first communal riots during the partition of the subcontinent. However, diverse as it is, the country has observed communal conflicts since 1969 onwards till the present. But these cases had varying degrees of conflicts. For instance, the 1983 Nellie Massacre was an intense rioting affair that lasted for almost 7 hours in Assam (north-eastern region) that attempted at the ethnic cleansing of the Muslims (Krishnan, 2015). However, the riots of 1985 in Gujarat was driven by the socio-economic changes that affected different classes and castes differently (Shani, 2007). In the similar light, I have attempted to observe the cases of Hindu-Muslim riots in 2002 and 2013 which also have variations in violence against women of minority communities. The larger aim of this final chapter is to understand violence against women in both cases and provide an interpretation of these communal riots in the broader context of political developments in the country.

To provide an interpretive lens to the riots in Gujarat and Muzaffarnagar-Shamli, with the specific focus on violence against Muslim women, I provide a background of social and political context of the country. It is essential to understand them to interpret why these riots took the form they did and targeted women of the minority community of Muslims. Therefore, this

chapter will highlight three things. One, hierarchy, segregation and exclusion based on caste, gender and religion are woven into the social fabric of the country and this weaving has taken place over centuries and millennia. This has created a space for civic clashes in the Indian society. Second, the rise of vigorous electoral democracy and the intensification of the processes of political competition have further accentuated the social divisions. Third, there is a rise in polarizing activities of the political actors to consolidate Hindu majority votes by targeting minority communities and portraying them as enemies of the Hindus. Having laid down these reasons, this chapter presents a macro-analysis of how the interplay of social fabric, electoral democracy and consequent consolidation of Hindu majority against minority communities have played a role in the occurrence of these communal riots.

4.1 Social Fabric of the Country

The social setup of India is exceptionally multifaceted. It is a complex model of pluralism (Engineer, 2002, p. 5047), divided along caste, religious and linguistic lines. As mentioned in the Introduction, the society consists of Hindu majority and other minority communities such as Muslims and Sikhs among others who have lived together for centuries (See-Religion Data-Census of India, 2011). During the independence movement in the mid-20th century under the political leadership of Nehru, Gandhi, and others, the country underwent unification against the common enemy – the British colonizers. What brought together the intrinsically diverse and hierarchically divided Indian society was the common reason that they all were equally unfree in their own country.

Unity in diversity in its true sense was marked with the success of the freedom struggle that led to the formation of independent India. The same cannot be said for the postcolonial nation that underwent social turmoil as can be seen from the communal clashes of 2002 and

2013. The second chapter (subsection 2.4) explicitly discusses the role of the ruling parties in polarizing the communities for electoral votes. To understand how the social fabric of the country provided space to the political parties to manipulate the cleavages to their benefit, I argue that it is essential to understand the rise and development of competitive electoral politics within the nation that made it possible. The evolution of competitive electoral politics as a mechanism within Indian democracy will be further discussed in the chapter.

In the 1940s, the independence struggle against the British colonizers was led by the Indian National Congress (INC; presently known as the Congress Party) primarily under the leadership of Nehru and Gandhi (Chandra, 2000, p. 21). While the struggle led by INC attained freedom from the colonizers, it simultaneously could not avoid the division of Hindustan, creating India and Pakistan as separate nations (Chandra, 2000, p. 27). Post partition, India as a newly democratic entity witnessed socially sensitive and critical events. First, there were intense communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims (Chandra, 2000, p. 69). The second was the assassination of Gandhi in 1948 by Nathuram Godse, a supporter of Hindu nationalism (Chandra, 2000, p. 79). After these tumultuous and tragic incidents, however, the country was peacefully administrated under the rule of INC which had the support and confidence of the Indians due to its leadership role in the freedom movement.

Chandra reflects on the strong character of the INC throughout the Nehru era. It had legitimacy due to its strong leadership in the national movement. Furthermore, the party had the support of all the classes from the capitalists, landowners to the poor farmers that contributed to its stability. The leaders also encouraged internal democracy within the party along with the emphasis on secularism and equality as important pillars of democracy that helped inculcate democratic consciousness within the people, which in turn strengthened the democratic ideals in

the country. The political hegemony of the party was so strong that even its failure in avoiding partition and the communal violence that followed killing 500,000 people still did not shake its social base within the country. (Chandra, 2000).

The hegemony of the Congress Party over people of India held quite strongly during Nehru's lifetime. Signs of its weakening had begun to emerge during the closing years of the Nehru era. The decline in the popularity and acceptance of the Congress party began more clearly after Nehru's departure from the scene and it further accelerated during the reign of Indira Gandhi (Chandra, 2000, pp. 192–194, 225, 232). It was the internal weakening and the decline in social acceptance that led to an increase in recognition of other political parties such as Bharatiya Jana Singh (BJS) and the Communist Party¹⁰ (CPI). This constructed the path for the rise in competitive electoral politics that took its true form in the 1970s-1980s.

Thus, it is important to take into account that even though the Indian democracy was established the moment it became independent, competitive electoral democracy took a few decades to get entrenched in the Indian polity. Furthermore, while BJS, CPI and other parties were recognized in the politics, the hegemonic ambiance of the INC was too strong within the Indian society. However, from the 1970-1980 onwards, social issues, such as socio-economic positions of the lower classes and castes, begin to find space within the Indian politics opening opportunities for political entities to garner support based on these issues—leading towards development of vigorous electoral democracy. This development is discussed in the following section.

¹⁰ For detailed information on the history and rise of parties other than Congress, refer to (Chandra, 2000, pp. 199–217)

4.2 Rise of Competitive Electoral Politics

Since Independence, Indian democracy has committed itself to uphold free and fair elections with universal adult franchise (Chandra, 2000, p. 2). The Congress Party exercised overwhelming hegemony over the country for nearly two decades after the independence despite the existence of other political parties. Electoral competition truly began with the weakening of the Congress Party. One of the major reasons was internal skirmishes within the INC. The traits were visible from the Nehru era itself and culminated in the division of the party between the supporters and opponents of Indira Gandhi¹¹. Along with the political conflicts between the leaders of the party, there was “increasing loss of idealism and neglect of ideology, especially as concerns social welfare and social transformation” (sic) (Chandra, 2000, p. 193). Moreover, during Indira Gandhi’s political rule, the party underwent partition between Congress (R) and Congress (O) with former having left-of-center position and the latter with right-of-center position (Chandra, 2000, p. 236).

Alongside the presence of conflicting modern and conservative ideologies within the party, the period of the 1970s and 1980s also witnessed the emergence of right-wing politics with the formation of BJP from its precursor party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS). While BJS founded in 1951 had its roots in communal ideology in support of the Hindus, it could not profess that belief in an outright manner as it was participating in secular democratic politics within the country and religion could not be used as a motive for electoral gains by electoral law (Chandra, 2000, p. 209). But, BJP, born in 1980 from the erstwhile political party of BJS, has openly promoted its rightist ideology and politics of *Hindutva* (Hindu Nationalism) (Kapur, 2006, p. 890; Menon and Nigam, 2007, p. 42). With the open association with the RSS, unlike its

¹¹ For detailed history of the partition of the Indian National Congress, refer to Bipin Chandra’s *India After Independence* (Chandra, 2000)

predecessor, BJP's way of politics driven by the political ideology of Hindu Nationalism is based on the belief of having a *Hindu Rashtra* with other communities (except Muslims and Christians) not excluded but assimilated within (Menon and Nigam, 2007, pp. 37–40).

The rise of BJP and *Hindutva* can also be contextualized within the larger electoral politics by understanding the *Mandal-Mandir* movements that arose in the late 20th century. Mandal movement was essentially an attempt to provide representation to the lower classes belonging to the middle castes in the caste hierarchy through a reservation system.¹² This meant that some sort of quota scheme was developed by the Mandal Commission that made mandatory for the public and private economic sectors to provision jobs to people from lower castes and classes (Muralidharan, 1990, p. 28). This was seen as a major threat within the upper castes of the Hindu community who believed that their socio-economic position was being threatened (Muralidharan, 1990, p. 28).

It was in response to this threat of structural change in the form of reservations that VHP, BJP and RSS launched the *mandir* campaign in the 1980s (Muralidharan, 1990, p. 28). Essentially, the demand of the movement was to rebuild Rama temple in Ayodhya, the town considered to be the birthplace of lord Rama, one of the gods of the Hindu community (Panikkar, 1993). But VHP successfully fabricated the narrative that there was a temple that already existed and Mughal emperor Babar demolished it to build what is known to be *Babri Masjid* or Babar's Mosque (Panikkar, 1993, p. 62; Van Der Veer, 1992, p. 88). The regressive campaign by the right-wing organizations culminated in the demolition of the mosque by the Hindu agitators in 1992 creating communal tensions and violence in different parts of the country (Menon and Nigam, 2007, p. 36). Hence, the right-wing collective visualized the anti-reservation agitation as

¹² The lowest castes in the caste hierarchy – designated as the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes – had a corresponding reservation system from the very beginning of independent India.

a “metaphor for a variety of divisiveness” and the demand for erection of the temple as a demand associated with “patriotism”, attempting to associate nationalism with the patriotism of the Hindus. (Muralidharan, 1990, p. 28)

As mentioned before, it was from the *Mandal-Mandir* campaigns that political parties like BJP started using religion for the consolidation of Hindu support. Thus, I argue that the *Mandal-Mandir* movements and agitations led to the flowering of competitive electoral competition as the former had the demands associated with the social and economic upliftment of the backward classes, whereas, in response the latter approached the majority Hindu community by promoting religious sentiment. The period with these social events marked the emergence of competitive electoral politics when political parties with different ideologies started using the social divisions of class, caste, and religion for their political gains. This is proven from the propaganda of the BJP and its supporting organizations – RSS and VHP. These rightwing organizations successfully manipulated the social divisions within the nation to garner the support of majority community of Hindus as visible in the cases of 2002 and 2013 (refer to Chapter 2, subsection 2.4).

So far it has been established that electoral competition in the Indian democracy was not present since independence, rather it emerged from the 1970s and 1980s with the weakening of the Congress party and the rise of movements on reservations and demands for the Hindu temple. This further establishes two important elements.

One, the Indian society has always been a divided society with caste and class hierarchies. These were downplayed during the nationalist movement because of the united goal of freeing the nation from the colonizers. However, in the post-colonial period these began to resurface in interaction with the processes of competitive electoral democracy.

Second, it also reflects upon an unusual feature of electoral politics in the Indian case. The modern and liberal concept of electoral democracy becomes a functioning phenomenon once it starts taking advantage of the social cleavages inherent in the country. As explained before, vigorous competition between political parties emerged after the internal weakening of the Congress party, but the competition drew sustenance from the manipulation of social differences undertaken for electoral gains by political parties.

The communal riots of 2002 and 2013 further substantiate the argument. In both cases, BJP portrayed the Muslim community as a threat to the Hindu majority and this effort was intensified in the run in the state and national elections approaching in 2003 and 2014 respectively. Either they overplayed the narrative of Muslims attacking and killing the Hindus, such as the case of Godhra train burning incident, or using the Hindu women's honor under threat from Muslim men in the UP case of 2013. Moreover, the *Hindutva* project of the BJP, VHP, RSS have always been anti-Muslim, considering them to be anti-national and a threat to the Hindu majority in India (Kapur, 2006, p. 893). In this context, the Hindu Right's meaning of nationalism is defined in terms of common Hindu culture and religion paradoxically situated with their recognition of the principle of secularism and equality (Kapur, 2006, pp. 892–893). It is the enforcement of common Hindu culture and religion used as a means by the right-wing organizations to strengthen their support of the majority Hindu community of India. The rise of the Hindu nationalism or politics of *Hindutva* is discussed in the next section, as it is essential to understand its development to contextualize the occurrence of 2002 and 2013 Hindu-Muslim riots.

4.3 Rise of *Hindutva* Politics

Due to the inherent social divisions within India and the electoral competition manipulating the hierarchies for their political gains, I am arguing that with the decline of the INC, political parties like BJP rose with the development of competitive electoral politics. As opposed to the nationalism of the 20th century that was characteristically a call for a united nation against the foreign rulers, the politics undertaken by political parties like BJP have risen by polarizing the diverse communities of the country. Going beyond the social, economic, religious cleavages, nationalist leaders led emancipatory movements that sought a nationalist identity as the only identity of the Indians to unite against the oppressors and gain the sole right to their own territory. Post-independence, during Nehru's political rule, the country continued to uphold the nationalist thought that had a secular bent to it (Chandra, 2000, pp. 180–182). According to Varshney's conceptualization, secular nationalism was and formally still is the “official ideology” of the country (Varshney, 2002, p. 56). To reemphasize, secular nationalism was the narrative that led to the formation of India as a secular country endorsing no religion. As opposed to having an official state religion, Nehru strongly emphasized on the importance of secularism in the making of an independent country accommodating ethno-religious diversity and harmony. The secularist narration of the Indian politics helped the leaders to reunite the fragmented and hurt country in the aftermath of partition and ethno-religious violence that erupted (Varshney, 2002).

The subversion of secular nationalist model has occurred with the shift from anti-colonial nationalism towards religious nationalism. Varshney states that religious nationalism can be either Muslim nationalism as in the case of Pakistan which has Islam as its official religion (Article 2, The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973) or Hindu nationalism. The rise of Hindu

nationalism has been a gradual process as visible from the downfall of the Congress party, the formation of BJS and the succeeding party, BJP. He observes “the aim of this narrative is not only to emphasize the centrality of Hinduism to India but, when used in politics, to build Hindu unity” (Varshney, 2002, p. 57). For Varshney, the Hindu unity gradually strengthened due to three reasons. One, 1989 onwards, there was the rise of BJP in electoral politics, although the rise of Hindu nationalism as the political ideology was a faltering one in the beginning since the party shared power through coalitional politics within Indian democracy. Second, the separatist movements from the 1950s onwards till the 1990s gave space to Hindu nationalism. For instance, the secessionist movements of Nagaland and Mizoram and of Punjab and Kashmir played a role in Hindu mobilization¹³. Third, the decline in support for Congress from the civil society and decreasing internal democracy within the party during Indira Gandhi’s political term shifted attention to other parties such as BJP and the Communist Party of India (CPI). Lastly, there was an opportunistic twisting of secular principles in Indian politics with the rise of anti-secularists’ claim that secularism is a modernist ideology with its foundation in principles of Enlightenment and Reformation. Therefore, the concept is inapplicable in the Indian context which is traditionally and religiously inclined. (Varshney, 2002, pp. 76–77)

Hence, it can be stated that there has been a significant shift from secular to a majoritarian political philosophy with the hidden political incentives in the background. The *mandal-mandir* issue followed by instances of communal violence in Bombay after the mosque demolition in 1992¹⁴, Gujarat riots in 2002 and the recent Muzaffarnagar-Shamli communal riots show similar patterns of political mobilization using the social fabric as the means to electoral gains to strengthen Hindu unity. While on one hand, the Hindu nationalist narrative in the

¹³ For details, refer to Bipin Chandra (Chandra, 2000, pp. 114–116, 318–320, 325–330)

¹⁴ For details, refer to Asghar Ali Engineer (Engineer, 1993)

context of the temple issue began as a non-violent campaign, it escalated into reactionary responses in the form of violence that was visible in the riots. Hence, the political project of Hindu nationalism has resorted to both non-violent and violent means to spread their stronghold in the country. The case of 2002 and 2013 are instances which had the elements of violence and non-violent events spreading tensions and hatred among the communities before culminating into riots.

The case of Gujarat and Muzaffarnagar-Shamli are evident examples where political competition has led to a polarization of the Hindus and Muslims. The BJP orchestrated the 2002 riots in Gujarat because of their weakening position in the state (Wilkinson, 2006, pp. 155, 157). After their loss in the municipal elections of 2002 (Wilkinson, 2006, p. 155), an organized campaign of spreading hatred against Muslims began in the form of communal violence. Muslims constituting only about 9% of the state population (Census of India, 2001) meant lesser benefits in the form of vote bank, making them adopt a “weak and biased stance toward the riots” (Wilkinson, 2006, p. 155). Rather, the party wanted to consolidate their votes for the state elections of 2003 by bringing together the Hindus through spreading hatred and showing the minority community as a threat to their identity (Wilkinson, 2006, p. 157).

On similar lines, the 2013 violence in Uttar Pradesh was owed to the political incentives of the BJP to develop the ground for *Hindutva* politics and the complicity of ruling party in taking action against the rioters to not lose their support (Berenschot, 2014, p. 15).

The degree of communal tension differed in both cases due to the strong base of the BJP or lack thereof in the regions. While Gujarat has been a region characteristically under the political influence of the BJP since 1995 (Spodek, 2010, p. 361), the state of Uttar Pradesh had the presence of BJP but in alliance with other political parties (Yadav, 2017). It was not until the

recent 2016 state elections that a sweeping majority victory came to the party which historically did not have a stronghold in the state (Yadav, 2017).

The grounds of communal violence in Muzaffarnagar-Shamli can be located in the party's non-violent campaigns such as '*love jihad*' and 'save our daughters and daughters-in-laws' as recurrent themes in the public meeting that played a role in polarizing the Hindus and Muslims. Just as the reservation system played a role in creating an atmosphere of threat among the upper caste Hindus, the party used Hindu women as symbols of honor that were under threat from the Muslim men (subsection 2.5, Chapter 2). Thus, it is not just the stratifying social elements of caste and class that political parties have manipulated for political victories, but gender differences are also put to political use. Equating the honor of women with the honor of community has been played up consistently by political parties in the Muzaffarnagar-Shamli riots. On the other hand, brutal violence against Muslim women in Gujarat reflects on Hindu mobs' attempts to dishonor the Muslim men and the community as a whole. Using the patriarchal social values for electoral gains is further analyzed in the next section.

4.4 Gender in Communal Violence

Having discussed the rise of Hindutva politics of the right-wing political organizations owed to the development of competitive electoral politics, in this section I attempt to explain how patriarchal values of the Indian society has also been appropriated by political parties for electoral gains. It has already been explained in the subsection on violence against women in the second chapter, how women have been used as a mode to trigger hatred between religious communities. Large scale violence against Muslim women was observed in Gujarat whereas, in Muzaffarnagar-Shamli, only seven cases of rape were filed even though activists claimed that

more women were victims of violence but did not come forward due to the fear of disgracing the honor in their community (subsection 2.5 of Chapter 2). The hard-hit narrative for violence against women during Hindu-Muslim riots is constructed on the belief that Hindu women are under threat from the Muslim men who have the agenda of converting them to Islam. The response to these threats against ‘their’ women has been of two kinds – one, it is enacted by perpetrating brutal physical violence against the Muslim women to violate the community. Second, it is done through non-violent initiatives to ‘protect oneself’ from the influence of the minority community. While the first narrative was observed in the Gujarat case where Muslim women were victims of brutal forms of physical violence against them, the second narrative was visible in the Muzaffarnagar-Shamli case. The aim is not to underemphasize physical violence against women that took place, but a major operation was undergoing before the actual ripening of the communal violence in 2013. These were in the forms of campaigns and public meetings such as ‘*love jihad*’ and ‘*beti bachao-bahu bachao*’ (save daughters and daughters-in-laws) respectively.

Unlike other cases of communal violence within the country, the case of Gujarat had a peculiar nature in terms of high intensity of violence against the minority community women. Not just that Muslim women were victims of mass rapes, mutilations, and burnings but the acts portrayed the high degree of aggression, hatred, and feelings of threat within the Hindu men. As mentioned in the literature review chapter, Nussbaum (2007) has explained the hidden shame among the Hindu men of being subordinated under the Mughal and the colonial rule as a reflection of the weakness of their masculinity. Secondly, along with the feeling of humiliation, the need to establish their masculinity as a symbol of strength explains the aggressive nature of violence towards Muslim women. Although Skjelsbaek (2012) has studied violence against

women as weapons of war in the Bosnian mass rape cases (Chapter 3, subsection 3.4), the concept can be applied in the case of Gujarat due to the war-like hatred that the incident has portrayed between the Hindus and the Muslims. Women being perceived as the honor of a collective or community in patriarchal societies and their violation is considered to be the way to dishonor a community, has been clearly established in the case of Gujarat violence. Sarkar argues while analyzing the case, that rape as a tool in communal riots serves collective dishonoring which is possible due to “the patriarchal order that designates the female body as the symbol of lineage and community purity”(Sarkar, 2002, p. 2875). And the violation of women by an outsider is a straightforward attack that makes the community “impure and polluted” (Sarkar, 2002, p. 2875).

The 2013 case of communal violence evolved in a similar fashion. Women as repositories of community’s honor were reproduced within the narratives of *‘love jihad’* and *‘beti bachao-bahu bachao’* (save daughters and daughters-in-laws) that raised the need to save the Hindu women from Muslim men with the latter having a preplanned agenda to increase its population by taking over and subordinating the Hindu community. The campaign of *‘love jihad’* is a Muslim fundamentalist project as claimed by the Hindu organizations such as VHP, and RSS. They state that the project has young Muslims participating who attempt to persuade, lure, or abduct Hindu women to convert them to Islam (Pandey, Pathak, 2013). These “constructed” (Gupta, 2009, p. 13) narratives spread by the rightwing organizations successfully apply the logic of Hindu women being under threat from the Muslim population who are trying to violate the purity of Hindu women and virility of Hindu men to weaken the Hindu community (Gupta, 2009). The rise in inter-caste and inter-religious marriages is used to underline the perceived threat to the Hindu population and to reinforce the Hindu nationalist idea of *Hindu Rashtra*.

Hence, to keep the Hindu community solidified, fabrication of such conversion projects is rumored that play a role in entrenching hatred between the Hindus and Muslims. They create abhorrence towards social and cultural practices such as polygamous familial structures of Muslim families to reinstate how the latter is attempting to increase the Muslim population through conversion of Hindu women to Islam to transform the majority Hindus into a minority community in the country (Gupta, 2009).

Similar tactics of spreading hatred against Muslims was observed in the aftermath of the deaths of the two Hindu brothers in Muzaffarnagar. As discussed before, it was due to the alleged violent conflict between the Hindu men and a Muslim man with the belief that the latter had harassed the Hindu brothers' sister. In response, the region observed the organization of a *mahapanchayat* (large public meeting) on protecting the Hindu daughters and daughters-in-laws. Just like the campaign of 'love jihad', this too located women as a symbol of community's honor and to protect the community (Naqvi, 2013), it was crucial to protect the Hindu women from the 'aggressive' Muslim men. The public meeting eventually created a sensitive environment that was further flamed with the followed inflammatory speeches by the politicians in UP that finally culminated in the form of communal riots in the region (Refer to Chapter 2, subsection 2.3).

Not to deny, the case of Gujarat also had rumors and tales of attacks on Hindu women to create a sense of threat within the Hindu community. The independent report, 'The Survivors Speak'(2002) noted how the regional newspaper reported the Godhra train burning incident in a provocative manner and the report stated the baseless stories and rumors that the newspaper spread by printing statements such as, "10-15 Hindu women were dragged away by a fanatic mob from the railway compartment" and the, "[m]ob dragged away 8-10 women into the slums". (Naqvi, Manorama, et al., 2002)

Hence, it is evident from the Gujarat and Muzaffarnagar-Shamli violence, that hatred against Muslims has not only been through the violence perpetrated against them, but also in the form of repertoire where they are reflected as the villains in the country who are defiling the purity and sanctity of the Hindus by violating their women. And these are done by fabricating stories, rumors, and organized campaigns and hate speeches.

The detailed explanation on the social fabric of the nation, rise of competitive electoral democracy, and the beginning of manipulation of social cleavages by political parties like BJP set the wider context of the journey of Indian politics. In this journey, the *Mandal-Mandir* movement of the 1960s and 1970s was the turning point in the Indian political history when the inherent social stratification and divisions were motivated and triggered in the form of violent clashes in electoral competitions. As mentioned before, it laid the roots of competitive electoral politics that were not existing before, since the independence of the country. In the final subsection, I situate the interpretation of the two riots in context of Wilkinson and Varshney's conceptualizations to argue that even though the theories are essential to understand the relations between competitive electoral politics and communal riots, it is also essential to understand the transition from secular nationalist democracy to the rise in Hindu nationalist politics in context of the evolution of competitive electoral democracy.

4.5 Discussion and Remarks

In this chapter, I have attempted to understand the larger Indian political context that has given space to the occurrence of the communal riots of 2002 and 2013. It is established in the thesis how BJP had attempted to use the ethnic and religious differences to create polarization within the country for electoral victories. While the 2002 communal riots strengthened its base within the Hindu majority community in Gujarat; Muzaffarnagar-Shamli riots did not instantly

lead to the strengthening in the state, but the communal polarization helped setting the ground for the gradual process of *hinduization* of the state. The polarization in some ways was successful for the BJP as it fragmented the support for the regional parties such as the loss of former ruling party, Samajwadi Party in the State elections of 2017 (BBC, 2017). The political success was finally visible in the 2014 National elections (Times of India, 2014) and 2017 state elections of Uttar Pradesh where BJP won and formed the government singlehandedly (BBC, 2017). The usage of communal politics finding space within the competitive electoral politics reaffirms Wilkinson's argument (2006) on ethnic or religious violence finding motivation from the political parties for their electoral profits. Hence, the Gujarat riots and clashes in Uttar Pradesh show the instrumentality of the divided social fabric of the country in electoral politics.

As opposed to Wilkinson, Varshney's approach explores the role of the civic society in ethnic and religious conflicts (2001). As explained in the third chapter, internal communal activities or lack thereof create cleavages between communities, which are then manipulated by political forces. But the manipulation is made possible due to the interaction or lack thereof between diverse communities. Here, I differ from Varshney's approach because as explained previously, the social fabric in the Indian context has always been stratified. Varshney's association between civic ties and occurrence of communal violence is unsuccessful in explaining two things in the Gujarat case. Gujarat saw only minor communal conflicts before the violence of 1969 (Sud, 2008, p. 1255). Therefore, first, with the Indian society being inherently hierarchical, why there were only minor clashes before 1969 and major Hindu-Muslim riots 1969 onwards to 1980s and then 2002. Secondly, the intense nature of 2002 violence (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 2) does not get explained from the concept of inter-communal or intra-communal engagements of society which, as already established, was always divided along ethnic and sectarian lines.

Hence, it becomes essential to locate the rise of competitive electoral democracy that was taking place on the same time, in the 1970s-1980s.

It is also significant to highlight that even though the 2002 and 2013 cases were instances of ethnic or communal violence, there have been non-violent operations undertaken by political parties such as BJP which have intensified the party's base within the Hindu majority community. Initiatives in the form of '*love jihad*' and '*beti bachao-bahu bachao*' have managed to solidify the Hindu majority community internally by using the discourse of protecting their women from the Muslim men in order to protect the honor of the community. This also reflects how political parties have yet again manipulated another element of Indian social fabric – patriarchy for electoral gains.

To conclude, Wilkinson's conceptualization looks at the role of electoral incentives in communal violence, however it does not explain why some cases of violence are intense over others. Similarly, Varshney's conceptualization only situates the reason for ethnic violence in the web of relations within the civic society. Hence, they do not explain shifting intensity of violence in the Indian context of the development of competitive electoral politics which as explained it got evolved through time in the 1970s and 1980s. I have also established how their conceptualizations and their analyses of communal violence in India are helpful in understanding communal conflicts and violence in the country but they do not explore the gradual emergence of electoral competitive democracy that I explained by portraying the political history of the country and the usage of stratified social fabric for political benefits.

Conclusion

Since the birth of Indian democracy from the anti-colonial movement, the principles and ideas of democracy have undergone significant changes from 1947 onwards till the present day. Independent India, founded on the principles of egalitarianism, equality before law, and secularism among other constitutional principles is now under the democratic reign of BJP which won singlehandedly in the National Elections of 2014. While this reflects how the country has upheld the notion of universal franchise and equal political rights of its citizens, the right-wing Hindu nationalist party being elected by the Indian citizens cannot be taken for granted. In the aftermath of communally oriented incidents of Gujarat (2002) and Uttar Pradesh (2013), the majority win of the party with the agenda of creating a *Hindu Rashtra* or Hindu nation cannot be overlooked. In this regard, this thesis has attempted to understand the communal riots of 2002 and 2013 with respect to the larger context of the Indian politics.

The aim of the thesis has been to understand gender violence in these chosen cases of riots and conduct an interpretive exercise of how violence against women happened in 2002 and 2013. As laid out in the thesis, there were physical and symbolic forms of violence observed against Muslim women in the riots. While, rioting affairs in a democracy is not only a violation of the ideals of secularism, however, specific targeting of Muslim women in the Indian context is also a grave violation of the principle of equal citizenship. A community's honor associated with the honor of their women, as a patriarchal value reflects on the non-existence of women as equal citizens in the country. The grotesque forms of violence in 2002 and the implementation of symbolic value of women within the Hindu community in Muzaffarnagar-Shamli case portray the inherent gender inequality that was used as a weapon in the riots. It is also essential to highlight that political forces manipulated the patriarchal element of the Indian social fabric to

bring the Hindu majority in their support. Thus, in the case of Muzaffarnagar-Shamli, narratives such as '*love jihad*' and '*beti bachao- bahu bachao*' helped the political forces to construct the belief that Hindu women were under threat from the Muslim men which consequently harmed peace in the region leading to violent clashes between the communities.

Having said this, the thesis has also attempted to interpret the riots in context of larger Indian politics. It has looked into the complicit nature of the political parties in the riots due to their agenda of gaining electoral votes by polarizing Hindus and Muslims. This has also highlighted how competitive electoral democracy when instituted in the Indian society with the social fabric being religiously, ethnically and linguistically diverse, has further accentuated communal violence in the society. Moreover, the patriarchal element of the Indian social fabric has been acquired not only by the majority Hindu masses in perpetrating hatred against the Muslims, but political parties such as the BJP have also enabled themselves to manipulate 'protection of Hindu women' as a narrative to polarize the citizens. Thus, the thesis has attempted to provide an interpretation to the riots in context of the hidden political incentives and the manipulation of the diverse social and cultural fabric of the country such as religious diversity and the element of patriarchy.

While on one hand, the thesis has dealt with the cases of riots in detail by a review of literature, as aforementioned, it has also placed the explanation and analysis of the riots by providing the larger political history of the country. Thus, the rise and fall of the Indian National Congress, the political party that led the independence movement, the evolution of competitive electoral politics with the Mandal-Mandir agitations in the 1970s-1980s, and BJP's consolidation of its Hindu majority support base through Hindutva politics provide the political context of the country. This context helps in understanding the riots in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh more clearly

where competitive electoral politics drove the communities against each other. This has been further supported by the theoretical arguments on the role of political incentives (Wilkinson, 2006) and strong or weak civic ties (Varshney, 2001) culminating towards ethnic or communal violence. It has further led me to raise two important observations. One, the theoretical frameworks of Wilkinson and Varshney are critical in evaluating the communal riots of 2002 and 2013 since the role of the right-wing organizations and weak social relations between the Hindus and Muslims laid the grounds for violence between the communities. Having said that, secondly, I argue that these frameworks are not able to explain why communal clashes have different degrees of violence. Hence, as discussed in Chapter 4, the theories do not explain the reasons for varying intensities in riots, for instance, in the 1960s or the 1980s, considering the Indian society was still the same – hierarchical and segregated. Therefore, I have argued that the development of competitive electoral democracy in the Indian context needs to be studied to understand the reasons for varying intensity of communal violence in the country.

Thus, in this thesis, by constructing a narrative of Indian political history, I have argued that the hierarchical social elements—religion, language, sects, patriarchy have always been present within the Indian society. This social fabric, unified by the anti-colonial movement, with the emergence of competitive electoral democracy became a tool of the political forces to manipulate for electoral gains. This manipulation has been practiced by BJP and its affiliated organizations which, in process, have spread their politics of Hindu nationalism to consolidate the support of Hindu majority community. The consolidation of the Hindu majority support has been evident from the riots of Gujarat (2002) and Uttar Pradesh (2013), with both places awaiting the state elections of 2003 and national elections of 2014 respectively. In both situations, BJP emerged as a victorious party at the state and national levels. This highlight that

even with their complicit nature and violent and non-violent capacities in polarizing the Hindus and Muslims, their support base within the Hindus have been strengthened due to their long-term agenda of having a *Hindu Rashtra*. Essentially, their strengthened support base in the country has been due to the element of competitive electoral democracy that they managed to manipulate in their favour.

Having discussed the interpretive bent of the thesis, I believe that this research provides scope for further analysis on the role of competitive electoral politics in polarizing the Indian society by reflecting on the electoral outcomes from 1960s onwards till now. Secondly, this research can further raise questions on the extent of inevitability of such conflicts and associated violence. Therefore, in continuation of this research, it can be further investigated if political agents possess options and strategies to avoid eruptions of communal violence in a country. In context of India, communal violence from 1960s to 2013 can be comparatively studied to reflect on the inevitability of the riots. Moreover, this will enhance the discussion on the journey of Indian democracy and can substantially test the nature of Indian democracy and if it is undergoing a change. Thirdly, this research has mainly focused on the political content of these communal conflicts and violence. But, a look at the economic and legal dimensions of communal violence can also additionally contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

This thesis, therefore, provides further scope in the study of communal riots and violence against women in the riots. While, in a democracy, conflict between diverse communities is self-evident, however an analysis of the nature and intensity of violence can provide answers about the impact of democratic principles in the region. Therefore, in-depth analysis and investigations of cases of communal and ethnic violence is crucial in understanding the concept of democracy itself. The success or failure in upholding the democratic principles within a country can be

studied by contextualizing the eruptions of communal and religious conflicts and the motivations or lack thereof of political forces in providing equal rights and protection to the minority communities. This thesis has taken one step in the direction of interpreting the cases of riots, embedded gender violence, and attempted to understand them within the wider political context of India. At the same time, it has managed to open various doors to investigate further on communal or ethnic violence in democracies.

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