

**ANALYSING DISCOURSES ON COMMUNAL VIOLENCE:  
A CASE STUDY OF BHAGALPUR RIOT 1989**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**BINISH MARYAM**



**CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI-110067  
2009**



**Centre for Political Studies**  
**School of Social Sciences**  
**Jawaharlal Nehru University**  
New Delhi - 110067, India

Tel. : 011-26704413  
Fax : 011-26717603  
Gram : JAYENU

Date-29-07-2009

**CERTIFICATE**

It is to certify that the dissertation entitled “Analysing Discourses On Communal Violence: A Case Study of the Bhagalpur Riot 1989” submitted by Binish Maryam is in the fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of **Jawaharlal Nehru University**. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree in this University or any other University and is her work.

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
Prof. Valerian Rodrigues

Chairperson  
**CHAIRPERSON**  
Centre for Political Studies  
School of Social Sciences  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi-110067

  
Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur

Supervisor  
**SUPERVISOR**  
Centre for Political Studies  
School of Social Sciences  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi-110067

*To*

*Dadda, Papa and Ammi*

## *Acknowledgements*

The expedition was extensive and exhaustive but was amazing and extremely enriching. I felt touched by the way several people have extended their support in so many ways. Some gave me company; some gave me directions. Some others motivated and inspired me when I was feeling tired and lost. All the people whom I met during this journey left indelible impression in me in making sense of my exploration.

In the course of my work I realized that learning is passion and hence research also. My mentor Dr Manindra Nath Thakur, a passionate thinker, an activist at heart and above all a superb human being always used to charge me with energies required to tread ahead, with his ideas, critical questioning and at the end leaving several loose ends for me to tie. I am indebted to him for the patience and support he showed at every point. Sir I am really grateful to you because without your support this work would have been a distant dream

Not to mention, without the unconditional love my family has showered on me, I would not have been able to do justice to my work. Special thanks to some of my friends who really supported me throughout and made my voyage through the sea of knowledge an easier one. I am extending this thanks to my childhood friend Nidhi Sinha who through the approach towards her own work gave me the much needed inspiration that how to move on even during low moments of research work. I am also grateful to my school friend Sona Singh for the emotional support she provided and also helped me by giving a novel related to my work.

Further I would extend my gratitude to my brothers Faisal and Rameez for they showed trust in me and constantly reminded me of my duty and potential, thus boosting my moral and helping me go out of way. Also I would like to thanks Chetna, who really helped me in giving final shape to my work. Last but not the least I am grateful to the staffs of Teen Murti Library and the Central Library of Jawaharlal Nehru University for allowing me to use their facilities.

Above all, this work would not have been possible without the strength showered upon me by the almighty.

Lastly I am bearing the responsibility of any shortcomings in the work.

**Binish Maryam**

## CONTENTS

*Acknowledgement*

*Abbreviations*

**INTRODUCTION.....1-20**

Significance Scope and Method of Study.....10-12

Civic Engagement and Communal Peace.....12-20

*Chapter One*

**APPROACHING COMMUNAL VIOLENCE.....21-60**

Institutional Approach.....26-36

Civic Engagement Approach.....37-53

Bhagalpur Riot 1989: Approaches.....54-59

Conclusion.....59-60

*Chapter Two*

**THE COMMISSION REPORTS: AN ANALYSIS.....61-100**

The Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952.....63-67

Reports of Bhagalpur Riots Inquiry Commissions.....67-69

Scope or Purpose of Inquiry.....69-71

Working of the Committee.....72-76

Reading of the Reports.....76-91

From Responsibility Fixing to Healing.....91-99

Conclusion.....99-100

*Chapter Three*

**MEDIA REPORTING OF COMMUNAL RIOTS: AN ANALYSIS.....101-136**

Study of the Writings and Reports.....102-103

Political Parties and Communalism: Media Reporting.....104-111

State Administration and Communal Riots: Media Expectations.....112-121

Role of Police and Politics of Procession.....121-132

Civic Engagement: The Missing Link.....132-135

Conclusion.....135-136

**CONCLUSION.....137-140**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.....141**

## Abbreviations

BJP	Bhartiya Janta Party
COI	Commission of Inquiry
DIG	Deputy Inspector General
JD (U)	Janta Dal United
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
RJD	Rashtriya Janta Dal
SP	Superintendent of Police
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad

# INTRODUCTION

---

*“Ethnic conflict and quests for self-determination around the world are likely to be the most important factors . . . in the next decades . . . this phenomenon should not be seen as separate from other global problems such as terrorism, failed states, rivalry among the great powers, access to natural resources and clashes between the modern and the traditional or between the rich and the poor.”*

David Callahan<sup>1</sup>

Communalism in India, a problem since a long time, in its recent upsurge has become a dangerously disruptive phenomenon and a potent threat to Indian peoples struggle for a better life. Communal violence, it seems has become a part of our life in India. Despite heinous crimes and unimaginable brutalities committed during riots, our conscience is not shocked nor do we take these organized killings seriously enough to put our heads together to find some way to arrest this fast spreading canker in our national life.<sup>2</sup>

The birth of Pakistan in 1947 did not reconcile Hindu-Muslim differences or end conflicts. India has regularly experienced communal rioting since its independence in 1947, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, but has occasionally involved other minority communities too. Even before Independence, there were serious communal riots in Varanasi (1809), Bareilly (1871), Lahore and Delhi (1825), Kolkata (1851), Azamgarh (1893), Ayodhya (1912), Kolkata and Dhaka (1926), Ahmedabad and Mumbai (1941) and of course, the horrendous countrywide riots of 1946 and 1947.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Oberschall, Anthony ,Conflict and Peace Building in Divided Societies Response to Ethnic Conflict. Routledge,London and New York ,2007,p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Engineer, A.A (ed),Communal Riots in Post Independence India, ,Sangam Books,1984,p.1

<sup>3</sup> K.,Jaishankar and Debrati Haldar ,Religious Identity of the Perpetrators and Victims of Communal Violence In Post Independence India,ERCES Online Quarterly Review p.2 The Online Quarterly Review of Crime, Ethics and Social Philosophy, a new interdisciplinary international journal, is the official journal of the European & International Research Group on Crime, Ethics and Social Philosophy (ERCES). (www.erces.com)



The above data reflects on the fact that communal riots have been occurring in India even before the partition days. One would agree with, Bipan Chandra, that virus of communalism started spreading more rapidly with the coming of Britishers.<sup>4</sup> Communalism, it seems is a problem that existed since the colonial era, which took such a bad shape that it divided the country into two parts. The problem of communalism has to a large extent led to the miseries of Indian people. The British successfully played the game of 'Divide and Rule' to extend their domination and sowed the seeds of communal disharmony by creating fear, hatred and suspicion among diverse linguistic and religious cultures.

Following independence, it was expected that the fear, hatred and suspicion among the communities would be diluted gradually and Indian identity would be strengthened. It was assumed that the partition of the nation into India and Pakistan will bring in an end to the problem of communalism. After Independence, perhaps due to witnessing excessive violence or due to the euphoria of independence there was a deceptive lull and there was no significant communal tension.

However, the first communal riots broke out in Madhya Pradesh (Jabalpur) in 1961, which is considered as the first major riot between Hindus and Muslims after partition. It was shortly followed by riots in Uttar Pradesh and later in Gujarat (Ahmedabad) in 1969, where approximately 1000 people were killed. The other major riots were Ahmedabad (1965-66), Bhiwandi (1970), Jamshedpur (1973), Meerut (1973, 1987), Moradabad (1980), Bhagalpur, (1989). And then the large-scale post-Babri riots in 1992-93 in Bombay and other places.<sup>5</sup>

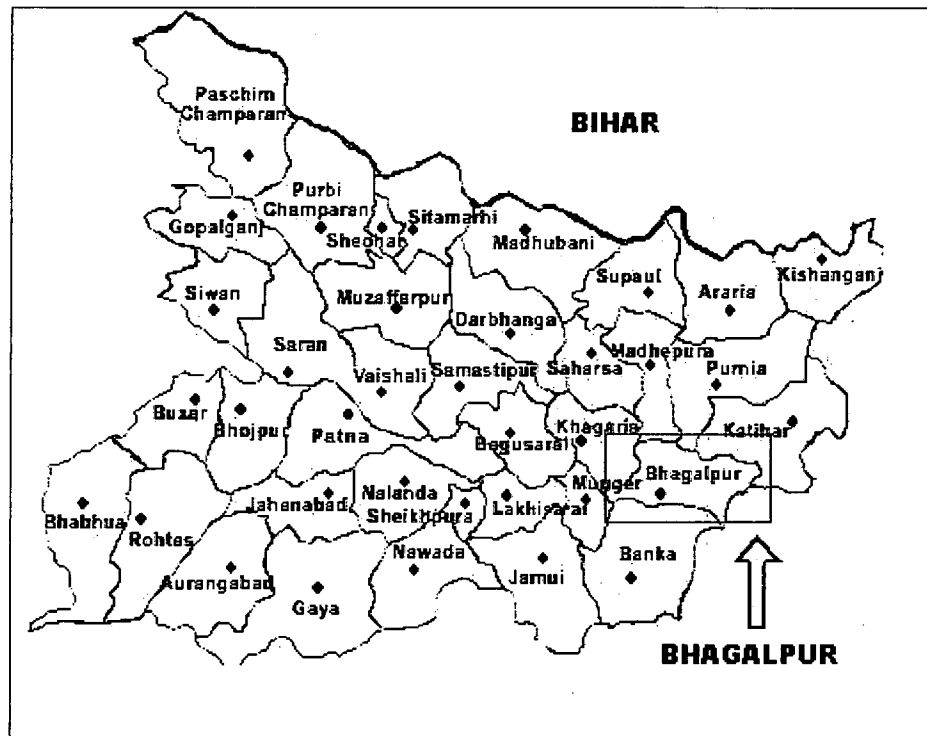
The figures including show that there has been a continuous occurrence of communal riots even after independence including the period when the Babri Mosque was demolished .But before discussing the post-Babri riot, I would discuss in brief about

---

<sup>4</sup> Chandra, Bipan, *Communalism In Modern India*, Vikas Publishing House, 1984, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> From K., Jaishankar and Debrati, Haldar, p.2.

Bhagalpur and the communal violence of 1989 which is the focus of my work and is also considered to be one of the major post independence communal riot.



Map of Bihar (showing Bhagalpur) <sup>6</sup>

The district of Bhagalpur forms the eastern portion of the state of Bihar (see the map). The river Ganga crosses the district from West to East dividing it into two uneven parts. The river separates North Bhagalpur district from its Southern part. It is stretched in a total area of 5654 square kms and comprises both Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims are largely concentrated in mohallas with distinct Muslim names like Mulanachak, Tatarpur, Sujaganj, Kutubganj among others. As I am doing the study of the 1989 riot, therefore I am giving the population figure of that period. The percentage of the Muslims in the year

<sup>6</sup> Source: (<http://www.cextranchizone.bih.nic.in>)

1981 in Bhagalpur town was about 28.97 which further increased in the year 1989. Mostly Sunnis dominate, but there are a large number of Ansaris also present who are mostly weavers. The percentage of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population in the Bhagalpur town is 7.47 and 3.09 respectively.<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally famous for silk trade, with its development, two distinct classes of people came into being – the weavers who crafted silk were mainly Muslims. However, there was a large Hindu population too. Rich influential and commercial institutions of the Marwaris dealt with the manufacturing in and outside India. With the enhancement of commercial development, the weavers and the Marwaris wanted to encroach upon each others domain. The town that was inhabited originally by the landed gentry, zamindars, businessmen, aristocrats both Hindus and Muslims living in happy harmony was replaced by a town with the criminal elements from both the communities<sup>8</sup>. As Manoj Kumar Jha puts it that despite long and continued spatial togetherness in same localities, at least a good number of individuals from both communities do realise that two communities are increasingly getting indifferent and detached from each other. In Bhagalpur also the relationship between Hindus and Muslims had developed cracks.<sup>9</sup>

Asghar Ali Engineer has given the detail of this riot in his work, where he mentions that, just before the outbreak of the infamous riot, various incidents were occurring giving signals of deteriorating law and order situation. The tension kept marking between the Hindus and the Muslims and finally, a Ramshilla Pujan procession was to be taken out on October 24, 1989 in Bhagalpur. That evening procession turned into a marauding mob killing people and looting and burning shops and houses. According to the estimates given, around 3,932 houses were burnt to ashes, 891 shops looted and burnt, 3,000 power-looms looted and burnt, 876 Muslims, 150 Hindus were massacred and 106 people went missing. Around 206 villages were affected by this riot. Around 50000 to

---

<sup>7</sup> Report of Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission 1989, (Honorable Members Report), Secretariat Press, Bihar, Patna, 1995, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Jha, Kumar Manoj, Riots as Rituals, Manak Publications Pvt.Ltd, 2009, p.65.

60000 people lost their means of livelihood. The gruesome incidents of murder and mayhem in Bhagalpur appear worse than what happened during the partition riots.<sup>10</sup>

He further states that many were killed in the trains. The rioters found out the name of a particular community from the reservation charts and attacked them. Near Bhagalpur station a pregnant woman's body was found burst open by a heavy stone. Small children were caught by their legs and their heads pounded on the ground, killing them instantaneously in front of their mothers. In Jawahar Medical College, one can find many children whose hand or feet have been severed. So extensive was the killing in the villages that many bodies were buried, salt sprinkled over them and after being covered with earth, vegetables were grown on the land to hide the killings. Right up to the second week of January 1990, bodies were being fished out of the wells and ponds in and around the town and the local people maintain that many more lay buried in the innocuous looking unharvested paddy fields. The police and the administration have been completely communalized.<sup>11</sup> The Bhagalpur riot of 1989 was a grievous one and a blot on the secular credentials of our nation.

Numerous occurrences and issues have perpetuated the religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims over the last decade in India, and the outlook for now remains rather bleak. On December 6, 1992, a sixteenth-century mosque in Ayodhya, in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh was demolished. During the preceding months, a movement of political parties, religious groups, and cultural organizations, including the BJP, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Shiva Sena, had called for the construction of a temple on the site of the mosque as an integral move in their struggle for Hindutva, or Hindu rule. Over 150,000 supporters known as kar sevaks (voluntary workers) converged on Ayodhya, where they attacked the three-domed mosque with hammers and pick-axes and reduced it to rubble. The destruction touched

---

<sup>10</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar, *Lifting the Veil: Communal Violence and Communal Harmony in Contemporary India*, Sangam Books India Limited, 1995, p 173-183.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p.181-182.

off Hindu-Muslim rioting across the country that has killed thousands in the past few years.<sup>12</sup>

It is to note that the number of major communal riots in post-Babri Masjid demolition period went down considerably. Three major riots took place in this period, besides several small riots in which 2 to 6 persons were killed. These three major riots are Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu in 1997, Kanpur in U.P. in March 2001 and Malegaon in Maharashtra in October 2001.<sup>13</sup>

Communal violence in India reached an unprecedented level in 2002. The communal violence that occurred recently in Gujarat (2002) is considered as the genocide of Muslims<sup>14</sup> The violence in Gujarat began after a Muslim mob in the town of Godhra attacked and set fire to two carriages of a train carrying Hindu activists. Fifty-eight people were killed, many of them women and children. The activists were returning from Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, where they supported a campaign led by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to construct a temple to the Hindu avatar Ram on the site of a sixteenth century mosque destroyed by Hindu militants in 1992. The Ayodhya campaign continues to raise the spectre of further violence in the country.

Between February 28 and March 2, 2002, a three-day retaliatory killing spree by Hindus left hundreds dead and tens of thousands homeless and dispossessed, marking the country's worst religious bloodletting in a decade. The looting and burning of Muslim homes, shops, restaurants, and places of worship was also widespread. Tragically consistent with the longstanding pattern of attacks on minorities in India, and with previous episodes of large-scale communal violence in India, scores of Muslim girls and women were brutally raped in Gujarat before being mutilated and burnt to death. According to the official records, since February 27, 2002, more than 850 people have

---

<sup>12</sup> From K, Jaishankar and Debrati, Haldar p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.p.3.

<sup>14</sup> Genocide is a crime of destroying or conspiring to destroy a group of people because of their ethnic, national, racial or religious identity

been killed in communal violence in the state of Gujarat, most of them Muslims. Unofficial estimates put the death toll as high as 2,000.<sup>15</sup>

Describing the Gujarat violence, Engineer says that many eyewitnesses also pointed out that police officials also were leading marauding mobs and many places were set on fire right under the nose of police stations. The worst incident occurred at a slum in the city called Naroda-Patia where more than 100 persons, all poor Muslims, were burnt alive in full view of the police force. Many Muslim girls and women from Naroda-Patia were raped before being burnt alive. One case of a pregnant woman is heart-rending. The mob ripped her womb with a sword, extracted the fetus and burnt it before burning her.<sup>16</sup>

The above detail on Gujarat riot projects the severity with which communal riots have increased in India and the failure on the part of the Government to control it. Infact the massacre in Gujarat was more or less like genocide. It was cold blooded killing of the minority community at the hands of the majority. With full support of the state government, police and the administration, the incident led to brutal killings of the Muslim minority in large number. The Gujarat riot is supposed to be a stain on the secular mores of our nation.

More recently the history has virtually repeated itself. But this time the crisis is much worse in that, it has turned into a fountainhead of hatred. In December 2007, it was in Kandhamal that Swami Lakshmananand was attacked over a scuffle between two communities. That incident too had resulted in violence, further widening the gap between the Christian and the Hindu communities. Four people had died during the week long riot and many more were rendered homeless.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.p.3.

<sup>16</sup> Engineer, Asghar Ali, Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal Violence, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 37, No. 50, Dec 2002,p.5052.

<sup>17</sup> Singh, D.N., Kandhamal Crisis: Hatred Through The Cracks In Harmony, zeenews.com, July 15,2009,p.1.

The incident of the night of August 24 was the beginning of a terror that has shaken the very foundations of the amity, if there was any left, between the two communities. The Swami along with four of his disciples was brutally gunned down by still-unidentified assailants. The religious fervor at the Palsapeta ashram was soon overwhelmed by an uneasy silence. Hatred came out naked the day next. The idiocies of orthodoxy prevailed over centuries old harmony and brutal vengeance was unleashed by blood thirsty elements. Hundreds of houses, prayer houses and churches were ransacked. Worse than that, the attackers started killing people. This has now opened the floodgates for religious compartmentalization. The minority forum in the state claimed that more than 5000 people have fled to the jungles to escape the terror and about 600 churches are damaged. The common man in Kandhamal is simply torn between the fear of the loss of life and the desire to live.<sup>18</sup>

Through the above examples that I have discussed on incidents of communal eruption, I aim to show the severity of the problem of communalism in India. The communal riots that occurred in independent India after partition were no less in their magnitude for the destruction they spread. These riots are not simply a case of killing and murder; its repercussions are too bad and can lead to long lasting hatred and detestation. The fabrics of trust, faith, love and unity is torn apart between the communities because of the cowardly acts of rapacious groups of different communities. The venom of hatred is spilled out which further results in the widening of gap among people of different religion, region and caste.

India it seems has been encountering a long genesis of communal riots. The question that might baffle a persons mind is that why even after adopting secularism, socialism and pluralism<sup>19</sup> the Indian society failed to put a check on the growing menace of

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.p.1.

<sup>19</sup> Pluralism as the definition, says has the basis in operating under the principles of acceptance and diversity. It is promoted as a system for the "common good" of all. It is a coming together with common recognition and credence to all beliefs and developments of modern social, scientific, and economic societies. See Heywood Andrew, Political Ideologies An Introduction, Palgrave Macmillan,2007,p.325.

communalism. It seems to be a big puzzle that despite adopting the ideal of secularism in the preamble of our Constitution and providing the citizens with cultural and religious rights as the Fundamental Right, our nation has failed to establish a peaceful culture of unity and amity across religious lines.

In India, riot is primarily considered as a law and order problem. Therefore, most of the discourses on riots rely on the government and state administration to fight with the menace of this kind of violence. But the existence of communal violence and its rampant outbreak strongly suggests the fact that the administration single handedly is incapable of controlling communal outbreak.

The state alone cannot control the hazard of communalism, something more is needed to fight and uproot this problem completely. A simplistic way of looking at the problem of communal violence is to blame the administration and the state for its occurrence and reoccurrence. There appears to be a long tradition of blaming the state and the government or the political party for not being able to establish communal peace and order in the society.

Whenever there is breakdown of riot in any locality or area, at once administration, police force and other communal organization are blamed for failing to maintain the law and order situation in the concerned state or district. The election eve riots are assumed to be the result of a conspiracy hatched by a particular political party or parties for the polarization of a community on religion and caste basis, for minor electoral interest. Steven I. Wilkinson has also supported this idea in his work "Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India". Not only Wilkinson but other authors like Paul R. Brass, also gives the idea of 'Institutionalized Riot System', where



he says that riots are organized pogroms that occur with full support and capacity of the state.<sup>20</sup>

But if one refers to the idea that Ashutosh Varshney, provides in his book “Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life Hindus and Muslims in India”, that of inter ethnic or civic engagement for establishing peace in the society. Reading Varshney’s work piqued my interest and I began looking at the role of civic engagement and inter-community relations for maintenance of peace in the society. My purpose is to find out whether various discourses include the question of peace while dealing with riots. This dissertation will deal with issue of civic engagement and inter community relations.

### **SIGNIFICANCE, SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE STUDY**

My aim in this work is to investigate, if different discourses on riots give importance to the question of civic engagement in establishing peace. There are three types of discourses: academic writings, commission reports and newspaper coverage on communal violence. In my dissertation, I will try to analyze these different discourses and find out the status of the peace process in them.

To explore the above said issues, I will take up a case study of the infamous and bloody Bhagalpur riot of 1989. As we know, a district town in Bihar, Bhagalpur was badly struck by the communal carnage, one of the worst in post –independent India. Through the analysis the inquiry commission reports and newspaper reports, on this riot, I have tried to find out, as to how the various discourses reflect on the question of communal violence. The above discourses, I would try to look into the question of communal and ethnic conflict and try to bring out the peace process in the limelight.

---

<sup>20</sup> Brass, R Paul, Forms of Collective Violence, Riots, Pogroms and Genocide in Modern India, Three Essays Collective, 2006, p.xv.

While analysing the discourses I will try to explore if they have any significant point to make regarding the possibility of peace process in these areas. Reading them as text material, I would find out the way communalism is understood in these writings and whether they reflect on the idea of peace. Do these discourses give any legroom to the debate on the role played by inter community and civic engagement in maintaining peace. Are these discourses just discussing about communal violence as a colonial and religious problem in India or are they also giving some vital suggestions that could actually help in establishing peace process in the society?

It seems that the various discourses on communal riots and ethnic violence are not complete and fail to see things in totality. In their study, they focus on the causes and results of communal violence, where they mainly analyze the role of the state, police and the political parties in relation to riots. One can easily see that they miss out is the role of inter-ethnic engagement in maintaining peace in riot torn society.

As the methodology used in my thesis was mostly qualitative in nature and my work was concerned with reading text of the various discourses, therefore, I have applied the content analysis method. This work followed mainly the qualitative technique of content analysis, as it directed towards more subjective information such as attitudes, motives and values that are essential for the clear understanding of the texts.<sup>21</sup>

In this work, I have applied both the manifest and the latent ways of analyzing the writings. Following the manifest method, while reading the various writings, I read the paragraphs, sentences of the various books, newspapers, magazines and journals as they had appeared. Further applying the latent method, I was able to read between the lines

---

<sup>21</sup> Ahuja, Ram, *Research Methods*, Rawat Books, 2007, p.274.

and this helped me in analyzing the obscure meaning of the various writings. My objective is to find the missing link or points in the various discourses, therefore the latent content analysis proved to be useful.

### **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNAL PEACE**

Civil society, in Havel's description is a crucial condition for strong democracy, it encompasses associations ranging from churches, cultural associations, sport clubs and debating societies to independent media, academies, groups of concerned citizens, grassroots initiatives and organizations of gender, race and sexuality, all the way to occupational associations, political parties and labor unions. Havel also says that an effective civil society system is a necessary if not sufficient condition for flourishing of democracy.<sup>22</sup> Referring to the central idea of this argument, I would now try to replicate on the role a civil society can play in establishing peace in the society.

The peril of communal violence and communal riots, do impede the secular structure of a nation. The domino effect of riots is large scale obliteration of life and property in a locality, town, district or state. This is the damage which is reported and surfaced by the media, government and the political parties in relation to riots. The print media and the electronic media as well keep coming up with data related to the loss of life and property under the effect of violence.

It appears as if not much notice is taken of the other side of the damage which is also the product of these riots. The collective violence in the form of riots do spoil the inter community relations between diverse communities. The worst consequence of communal strife is the construction of the concept of 'the other' in the society. It leaves

---

<sup>22</sup> Flyvbjerg, Bent, Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society? , The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 49, No. 2 Jun., 1998, p.210.

permanent wounds in the minds and heart of the people that damages, the social fabric of peace and tranquility in the society.

The normal inter-community relations and vibrant plural society presupposes the absence of mutual mistrust and suspicion as a priori condition. The appalling memories caused by communal expressions of violence take very long in getting obliterated; it might take more than a generation or two before scars are completely over. The phenomena of communal expressions which have existed for so long, poses problem of various dimensions and hence doubly difficult are to prescribe remedy for such an issue.<sup>23</sup>

The above view emerge to illustrate the significance of good inter community relation and civic engagement as an indispensable condition for the smooth running of a plural society. Strong inter community relation could be formed only in an atmosphere of peace and conviction. There should be complete absence of feelings such as suspicion, odium and fright. However this situation is possible only in case of strong social, cultural and civic ties between two communities or more.

The worst consequence of communal riots is the tearing apart of the delicate fabric of faith and accord existing among communities. The sufferers and the survivor of the violence are generally left with a terrified memory of bloodshed. To establish communal harmony in true sense it is imperative that the inhabitants of diverse communities join hands together.

Referring to the Gandhian Approach to Communal Harmony, M.L.Sharma says that the people have not been able to outgrow their communal temperaments liberal attitudes because they have been lacking an inter-communal and inter-cultural understanding which could save one from falling prey to the vested interests, the excitement of

---

<sup>23</sup> Shahjahan, S.K ,Communal Expressions and Secular Engagements in Municipal Corporations of Greater Mumbai and Thane, PhD Thesis, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi,p.16.

communal passion and the play of religious prejudices. Besides negatively, communalism is the result of our narrow thinking and narrow perceptions. So it is necessary to counteract and combat the problem of communalism in the proper way to establish the harmonious relations among various communities.<sup>24</sup>

By bringing in over here the Gandhian approach to communal harmony, I want to advocate the significance of inter-community relations and civic engagement for the continuance and perseverance of communal peace in India. Gandhi in the above section suggests the functions that communities can play in the construction of peaceful structure in the society. In a plural society like the one India is the work of staying in peace and harmony is a collective responsibility of the people. Solely relying on the structure of state, administration and political party, for maintaining and preserving the secular character of the nation, might become too vast a task to fulfill.

One might question as to what are the ways through which this inter-community bondage can be developed that could ultimately help in peaceful co-existence of the people in the society. Many ways or processes can be practiced for the establishment of strong inter-communal ties. But I will broadly focus on the four different methods to establish sturdy mutual relation among the communities. These are civic engagements, peace committees, shared institutions and decommunalised cultural actions.<sup>25</sup>

Roma Chaterjee and Deepak Mehta give the idea that community members can play an important role in reducing the threat of violence, if at all they bring changes in their thinking. The members of the community need an ability to communicate effectively, and should have a talent for establishing good human relations. If the members of the

---

<sup>24</sup>Sharma, M.L., Communal Problem in India a Symposium (ed), Chapter Gandhi's Approach to Communal Harmony, 1988, p.182-197.

<sup>25</sup> Shahjahan, S.K., Op.Cit, p, 193.

community are strongly integrated then they can easily help in controlling the building of tensions.<sup>26</sup>

The argument made in the section above, declares the role of community as central in fighting the threat of violence. The civil society and inter community structures prove to be crucial ingredients for building the edifice of secularism and communal harmony. Here, I will discuss the importance of civic engagement, and in this context we cannot ignore the idea formed by Varshney in relation to the same.

Varshney, from his analysis of Hindu-Muslim violence in India since the 1950s argues that wherever inter-ethnic engagements exist, the chances of occurrence of violent conflicts are less. He further states that such engagements if substantially strong can even withstand exogenous factors such as political mobilizations. In his thesis, *Civic Engagements*, he discusses two aspects of this engagement such as quotidian and associational which operate as cushions against, even intense political mobilizations to a great extent.<sup>27</sup>

Varshney suggests that routine engagements, including occasional visits, informal neighborhood gatherings etc, allows people to come together and form organization in times of tension. Such organizations, though only temporary, turned out to be highly significant in dealing with tensions turning to violent conflicts. Formation and functioning of such neighborhood networks are difficult where everyday interaction do not cross religious lines, or when Hindu and Muslims lived in highly segregated neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Chatterjee, Roma and Mehta, Deepak, *Living With Violence: An Anthropology of Events and Everyday Life*, Routledge, 2007, p.28-60.

<sup>27</sup> Varshney, Ashutosh, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life Hindus and Muslims in India*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.xi-xii

<sup>28</sup> Shahjahan, S.K. Op. Cit. p.187

Varshney in his work strongly advocates the role of civic engagement and inter-community relations for developing ties between communities that will help in the establishment of communal peace. It appears that a bond of friendship between communities keeps them united and helps them in tackling with the threat of any communal violence. If people of two different communities stay as neighbors and exchange a healthy relation of love, trust and co-operation, then it will help them to stand together at time of any external threats, like riots.

To give an evidential support to the above point, I would discuss some examples from Ashish Nandy's work. He discusses the 1989 riot that took place in Jaipur. He writes, "The fate of Jamil, was decided by his Hindu neighbors. Pappu, the young son of Chatar Singh, came to know of the presence of a lone Muslim tenant in a neighboring house. While a crowd was shouting 'Jai Shri Ram' and banging at his door, Chatar Singh and another neighborhood, Babulal Bijwala, leapt across the roof and persuaded Jamil to open the backdoor. 'We dragged Jamilbhai to safety', Pappu says."<sup>29</sup>

Quoting another example from Ashish Nandy, where he talks about Gangadevi, the wife of Babulal Bijwala, she recounted her family's close relation with the Muslims Manihar family. She says: "For twenty years we lived in a basti in huts. They [the Manihar family] had a hutment and so did we. Then they were allotted a plot. We had very good relations with them, no sense of being Hindu or Muslim." Gangadevi was shocked that religious violence had erupted in Jaipur at all. "This is the first time I've heard of such a thing [the riot]. But nothing happened in our neighborhood."<sup>30</sup>

It can be assumed from the examples cited by Nandy in his work that the role of "civic engagement"<sup>31</sup>, can help keeping the community united even at the time of crisis. The external forces even if they try to damage the communal harmony existing between

---

<sup>29</sup> Nandy, Ashish, *Exiled at Home, Creating a Nationality*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p.152.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p.153.

<sup>31</sup> As used by Ashutosh Varshney.

communities, if the bonding is solid then it is not so easy to spread hatred among people. There is a need for the people to come together and amalgamate their ideas, culture and social habits. The people of different communities need to understand the importance of togetherness and if a respect and love is developed in the hearts of each other than it might help to strengthen the ties and community bondage. Then people can co-exist in a harmonious environment.

The peace committees are another plausible way to reinforce the bonds of unity between communities. These informal peace committees can be formed by the coming together of the members of the two communities and then they can give lessons and teach people the importance of mutual co-existence. Toleration and respect for each others culture, religion and tradition is an essential criterion for peaceful co-existence. The peace committees can instruct or edify the members of various communities to live in peace and harmony. They can spread the message of humility, tolerance, liberal attitude, self purification, love, compassion and loving attitude towards the member of the other community. By informing the subjects of the danger of violence, detestation or hatred they can help building a peaceful attitude in the minds of the people. So that whenever violence breaks the member of various communities fight the menace together and prevent it from spreading.

Here I will put forward Oberschall's idea and how he gives importance to the role of inter-ethnic, civic engagement as important tools of ethnic conflict management. To quote he says:

The school will become a learning experience for ethnic conflict management. In the long term, the logic of ethnic separation will lose force both within and outside the schools, and ethnicity will reduce to in-group preferences in private and intimate domains that it is not the business of the state to interfere with in a free society. The reason that sharing is preferable to separation and avoidance is that recent history has repeatedly shown how "live and let live" separatism rapidly descends into ethnic warfare in a crisis, as in the Balkans. Trust, inter-ethnic relations, social capital, cooperation, and



ethnic conflict management are learned in shared institutions and are transferable to all domains of ethnic relations and from one generation to the succeeding ones.<sup>32</sup>

The above lines talk about the significant role a 'shared institutions' can play in maintaining peace and enhancing the trust and unity between the communities. Anthony Oberschall gives the idea of school which can become a learning room for ethnic conflict management. If the members share a common school where secular education is imparted, then it can further coagulate the tie between them. Drawing from Oberschall ideas, I feel that through shared institutions, people will come to know more about each other and they can get a common platform where they will be able to share their ideas and experiences. It might enhance the level of communication among the members of community and thus help in their assimilation and integration.

Finally, decommunalised cultural action also plays a vital part in enhancing inter-community relations. "Culture is both a uniting factor as well as most contested terms in analysing social relations. Cultural action has to be the path by which people become aware of the shaky bases of the myths and stereotypes they hold close to their minds vis a vis others. Community celebration of festivals forms a part of the collective memory of the local culture. Several participants recollected such celebrations as one such opportunity which brought people of a locality together irrespective of the religious community they belonged to. Conscious revival of such traditions is reported to have the potential for breaking inter-religious barriers in social interaction."<sup>33</sup>

The above idea projects the fact as to how mutual cultural action can bring in the people together and help building a peaceful relation. There would be no fear or feeling of suspect among people. A sense of respect and recognition will come out for the traditions and culture and customs of each other that will act as a cementing factor of relations between communities. Thus this section on civic engagement and communal

---

<sup>32</sup> Oberschall, Anthony (2007), p.234.

<sup>33</sup> Shahjahan, P.K, Op.Cit., p.193.

harmony tries to transport the importance of civil society and ethnic engagement in maintaining peace in the society.

This thesis has three chapters. The first chapter has looked into the academic writings where I have focused on the work of Paul R. Brass, Steven I. Wilkinson, Ashutosh Varshney and Asghar Ali Engineer. In the later part of the chapter, I have discussed the writings which are specifically on the Bhagalpur riot of 1989. The purpose is to understand the text and look into the question of peace. The chapter also discusses the two broad approaches in academic discourses on riots. Through this chapter, I have examined whether the academic writings deal with the question of peace while dealing with riots. The aim of the chapter is to see as to how these writings imagine about peace.

The second chapter deals with various reports that include the two reports of the Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission 1995; N.N.Singh Commission Interim Report 2006 and the Survey Report of the Muslim United Front that came on the Bhagalpur riot in 2006. This chapter talks about the commission and how they are constituted and role the commission has played. I have discussed in detail also the Inquiry Commission Act 1952 and made some critical examination of it. In this chapter I would look into as in what is the focal point in these reports, what things they reflect upon and what are the points that they fail to notice. The aim of this chapter is to see whether these reports only do the responsibility fixing job or do they work on healing and peace building.

The third chapter has looked into the newspaper reports on the Bhagalpur riot of 1989. The four newspapers I have taken are The Hindustan Times, The Hindu, The Times of India and the Aryavarta (Hindi edition) on this riot. The chapter starts by discussing the importance of the role of media. The print media plays a vital role in moulding the attitude and behavior pattern of the members of the society. It helps in educating the masses on any vital issue. It is one of the way through which the people are informed about any incident. My chapter inquiries into the newspaper and magazine report and

find out how they deal with question of communal violence in their work. The aim again of this chapter is to see if the print media brings in the question of peace while writing on riots.

To sum up, this dissertation intends to bring out the question of peace. It tries to look on the peace building process through these various discourses. My aim is to transport the idea that civic engagement and inter community relations are vital for establishment of communal peace and harmony in the society. I would investigate the issues on which the various discourses have highlighted while dealing with the question of communal riots and the common point where the various discourses fail to reflect upon. My thesis will look into the whole subject of ethnic conflict management and the ways peace building and peace settlement can be done in the divided societies. The research will try to give a peaceful solution to the whole question of communal violence that is so rampant in the present society. And I will strive to reflect on the importance of inter ethnic co-operation in maintaining peace and avoiding violence.. The importance and relevance of Inclusive Community System in establishing communal harmony will be reflected upon and do the various discourses reflect on this system in giving a solution to communal riots will also be looked upon.

**APPROACHING COMMUNAL RIOTS**

Communalism in India, a problem for a long time, has become, in its recent upsurge, a dangerously disruptive phenomenon and a potent threat to Indian peoples struggle for a better life. Scholars of diverse persuasions have sought to understand and explain it, often with a view to help in the struggle against communalism. This chapter intends to focus on the dominant approaches that are applied in the study of understanding communalism in India. I will be focusing on two main approaches of communal violence:

- a) "Institutional Approach"
- b) "Civic Engagement Approach"

Under the institutional approach I have analyzed the writings of Steven I Wilkinson and Paul R Brass, whereas under the civic engagement approach I have focused on the writings of Ashutosh Varshney and Asghar Ali Engineer. My aim here is to investigate the question of peace in the study of riots. Does inter ethnic engagement play any vital role in the whole question of communal violence or the state is the sole organization responsible for all affairs related to communal riots. If we look into the history of post partition riots, we will find that soon after independence many riots did occur but its intensity was not too high. The major breakthrough came in the year 1962, when the riots broke out in Jabalpur. The intensity was so severe that soon after the riot Jawaharlal Nehru decided to form the National Integration Council. <sup>34</sup>The National Integration is a non-constitutional body, to deal with welfare measures for the minorities on an all India

---

<sup>34</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar, Communalism in India: A Historical and Empirical Study, Vikas Publishing House, 1995, p.96



TH-17397

basis. The National Front Government revived it in 1990, with a broad based composition, including not only Union Ministers and Chief Ministers of States, but also representatives of national and regional political parties, labour, women, and public figures as well as media representatives. The issues before its meeting were communal harmony, increased violence by secessionists, the problems in respect of Punjab, Kashmir, and Ram Janambhoomi- Babri Masjid.

After 60's India has been facing many communal riots, some very severe in character. The Bhagalpur riot of 1989 was considered to be one of the major post partition riots. The recent Gujarat riot is also an example of the worst genocide of its kind. The worst thing to be noticed in most of these brutal acts of violence is the nature of their cruelty. Women are raped, even the pregnant ones are not spared, and people are charred to death ranging from an adult to an infant. Citing one example from the Bhagalpur riot of 1989, The Hindu reported in one of its article that an army official said a pregnant woman had her stomach crushed with the stones by a mob on the railway track near the Bhagalpur station in broad daylight resulting in abortion and immediate death.<sup>35</sup>

There has been a series of discussion and debate done on the dynamics of communalism. The social science study has often stayed engaged with solving the puzzle of communal violence. Since long, that is from the colonial period the virus of communalism has been troubling the minds of the intellectual class, the elites, the political leaders and the common masses. Various contesting ideas are forwarded by the scholars while defining and discussing the problem of communal violence. Here I will present a range of perspective attached to the idea of communalism in India. Though there are supposed to be a number of approaches to look into the question of communal violence, like historical, economic, socio-religious, institutional and the civic engagement approach, the concern of my thesis would revolve round the last two approaches.

---

<sup>35</sup> "Bhagalpur's Day of Terror", The Hindu, 1 November, 1989.

To talk of the historical roots of communalism is a dated academic approach. The Ancient hatred (AH) assumes that ethnic identities and group membership are primordial, sharply distinct, resilient to change, salient across all institutions and activities, and present high risk for repeated destructive conflicts.<sup>36</sup> AH is pessimistic about ethnic conflict management and about establishing lasting peace. Only separation will ensure lasting ethnic peace. Mixing or remixing (after ethnic cleansing) the ethnic groups in the same territory invites renewed violent conflict.” To discuss the case of India , here also the historical images of Mughal emperors like Babar and Auarngezeb or the concept of jiziya<sup>37</sup>, or the memories of pre partition are often kept alive to maintain a gap between the two communities and keep the communal divide open.

Further moving on to the other dominant approach is the economic approach that gives a different idea to the concept of communalism. “The process of fragmented and uneven capitalists development has created conditions of backwardness which in turn has facilitated the growth of communalism. Economic stagnation has led to a situation in which certain groups treat each other not only with suspicion and hostility, but also as rivals in the scarce market for jobs, concessions and subsidies.”<sup>38</sup>

The economic factor has resulted in communal violence in many of post independent riots in India. For instance as S.K.Ghosh says, some riots based on the economic approach can be seen in the case of Agra, the leather industry; in Varanasi, silk and zari industry; in Moradabad, the brassware industry; in Ferozabad, glass industry; in Mirzapur, the carpet industry. In these places the artisans are almost entirely Muslims, who have passed the skill from generation to generation and traditionally brought the raw materials and sold the finished products to Hindu traders. In recent years however,

---

<sup>36</sup> Oberschall, Anthony, *Conflict and Peace Building In Divided Societies, Response To Ethnic Conflict*, Routledge, 2007, p.9.

<sup>37</sup> Jiziya was the tax system in the medieval era when the Hindus were supposed to pay the taxes whereas the Muslims were not. This policy was supposed to be anti Hindu.

<sup>38</sup> Hasan, Zoya Khaliq, *Communalism and Communal Violence in India*, *Social Scientist*, February 1982, Vol.10, p.28.

Muslim traders have entered the field and this has led to growing rivalry between them, frequently ending in communal riots<sup>39</sup>

To take another example, of Asghar Ali Engineer in his study of riots in India, has mentioned the economic factor as one of the causes for outbreak of communal riots. To him economic competition between the two communities often lead to social tensions which can be easily turned into communal tension by exploiting certain situations on the occasion of religious festivals, etc.<sup>40</sup>It seems business rivalry and economic competition causes heartburn and rivalry among members of different communities. The communal discord thus might occur as a result of stiff economic competition also. It might not appear to be the direct factor for violence, but economic factor in many cases remains the underlying cause for communal riots.

The next approach, which is considered vital in the study of communalism, is the socio-religious approach. faith. Religion seems to be a factor misused by some for their narrow interest. Mark Juergensmeyer in his work defines terrorism as public act of destruction, committed without a clear military objective, that arouses widespread sense of fear. To him this fear turns to anger when one discovers the other characteristic that frequently attends these acts of public violence: there justification by religion. Most people he says feel that religion should provide tranquility and peace, not terror. Yet in many of the cases of violence religion has supplied not only the ideology but also the motivation and the organizational structure for the perpetrators.<sup>41</sup>This factor it seems to exist forever and with rising of the problem of terrorism, it has taken a more serious and aggressive shape.

There have been many occasions when small issues have led to breaking of serious communal riots. Some of the common events that result in riots discussed by Zoya Hasan: religious festivals, music before mosques, cow slaughter and alleged desecration

---

<sup>39</sup> Ghosh, S.K, Communal Riots in India, Ashish Publishing House, 1987, p.31.

<sup>40</sup> Op.Cit.p.36-37.

<sup>41</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark, Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, University of California Press, 2000, p.5.

of temples provide occasions for aggravation of communalism. Such issues become contentious because rumors, pamphlets and incendiary speeches reminding Hindus of the humiliations suffered by them during the Mughal rule. In such an environment, even the smallest spark can ignite a riot.<sup>42</sup> It is well known that religion and faith are matters that are attached to a person's emotion. People generally are found to be too sensitive about their belief and faith. The cultural and religious difference between the Hindus and the Muslims has always remained so stringent that it often leads to communal outbreak

There are scholars like Paul R. Brass who point to the crucial role of the Indian elites in manipulating religious issues to mobilize communities at some times and not in others. The fact that many of these movements are timed to take place before elections is strong evidence of their instrumental and political trends. It is simply not true that religious belief is the prime motivation for such movements because the issues chosen by politicians are in any case frequently not those that are most integral to a particular religious tradition.<sup>43</sup>

Francis Robinson responds to Brass by arguing that religious beliefs are much more important than the instrumentalists acknowledge. First, Francis points out that many of the elites who led religious movements, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, were themselves quiet devout and often –as for instance in the case of the Muslim League leader the Raja of Mahmudabad –willing to bear significant economic costs for their beliefs. This devoutness and willingness to sacrifice for a cause seems to call into question the rather simple cost benefit analysis that the instrumental perspective suggest.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar, *Communal Riots in Post Independence India* (ed), Chapter 6 *Communalism and Communal Violence In India*, Zoya Khaliq Hasan, Sangam Books India Limited, 1984, p.81.

<sup>43</sup> Wilkinson, I Steven, *Religious Politics and Communal Violence*, Paperback, Oxford University Press, 2008, p.5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p.5.



Further Robinson asks a key question that needs to be answered by anyone who highlights the role of elite manipulation: why do the followers follow? Robinson suggests that Muslim elites were always constrained by the strength of religious feeling and religious organization among Muslims as a whole. If elites highlighted Muslim issue he argues that this reflected both their own religiosity as well as their calculation that religious appeals were likely to be much more effective in motivating a community for which religion was important than other appeals.<sup>45</sup>

The point being made over here by both Brass and Robinson is that whereas for Brass the religion factor is applied by the politicians for their political interest, but Robinson criticizes Brass on ignoring the role of passions, beliefs and emotions and giving too much stress on the role of the elites and politicians. It is generally assumed that directly religion is not the reason for communal riots rather it is manipulated by the politician, elite and inter group for economic and political incentives. Even Engineer in most of his writings suggests that “religion is not the root cause of communalism; it is rather a powerful instrument in the hands of those interests which seek to play their game through it.”<sup>46</sup> Though the religious factor might be used as a tool by the parties for political gains, but it has always been the cause of ruthless communal violence. With the coming of the Right wing politics, the factor of religion is being utilized to divide the society and cause communal upheavals whenever needed.

### **INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH**

This approach is one of the most talked about and an accepted formula in the study of communalism. There are a number of scholars who support this theory of riot. This approach focuses on the role of the political party, state administration, police etc. in terms of riot. It means that irresponsible behavior of the politicians and weak law and

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.p.5.

<sup>46</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar, Communalism and Communal Violence in India: An Analytical Approach to Hindu Muslim Conflict, Ajanta Publications, 1989, p.2.

order situation lead to riots. The politicians are believed to escalate Hindu Muslim violence when it is in their interest. To put in the words of Moin Shakir who suggests, that riots which used to be two three day affair formerly now continue for weeks together, showing that there is what may be called a methodical and organized madness. They are pre planned and politically oriented, preceded by almost identical incidents which rouse religious passions and followed by the desired similar results conducive to the growth of anti secular politics.<sup>47</sup>

As Wilkinson idea suggests that the state has the capacity to control violence as rioters are not heroes, further he proposes that the political party or administration will control riots or protect the minorities if it is in their electoral interest. Even Brass comes up with this proposal that the politicians try manipulating religious issue to mobilize communities at times when it is serving their political or electoral interest.

Taking some examples of politically motivated riots to name a few are the Bombay Bhiwandi riots of 1984, it was due to the campaign of Shiv Sena to revive the party that was then going through a bad phase. The election frenzy had sparked off the riots in Aurangabad in 1988. Aurangabad riots are a clear indication of the dangerous implications of political parties fighting. Serious communal disturbances that took place in Meerut 1987 and the Bhagalpur in 1989 were directly the result of Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. Undoubtedly the controversy was essentially political in nature.<sup>48</sup>

To start my investigation, under the institutional approach I would start by discussing the work and idea of Steven I Wilkinson. For more than a decade Steven I Wilkinson has worked on the Hindu Muslim conflict. He was trained first as a historian, wedded to quantitative methods and to the power of the archives. He has increasingly moved

---

<sup>47</sup> Shakir, Moin, *Analytical View of Communal Violence*, in Engineer, Ali Asghar, *Communal Riots in Post Independence India* (ed), Sangam Books India Limited, 1984, p.91.

<sup>48</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar, *Communal Riots after Independence; A Comprehensive Account*, Shipra Publication, 2004, p.18.

towards qualitative mode of analysis.<sup>49</sup> Wilkinson's theory is based on three inter related concepts. He talks about the State Capacity, Party Competition and the Electoral Incentives as the three basic areas related to communal riots in India. Let me first take up his argument regarding state.

Wilkinson argues that the government responsible for law and order (the 28 states in the Indian federal system) chooses to prevent violence or intervene quickly to stop it when it does break out. Rioters are not heroes and the state police and the paramilitary forces – even in states like Bihar where the general quality of administration is far from high – have shown themselves capable of preventing communal riots when given the right direction by the ministers.<sup>50</sup> It appears that Wilkinson has full faith in the role of the “state and its capacity” to control riot. In brief this aspect in Wilkinson's work reflects the idea that the state has the full capacity to control Hindu Muslim Violence. The author very well analyses the capacity of the rioters and says that they stand nowhere when compared to the power of the state forces and the state is capable enough to prevent riots from breaking.

To support his view, Wilkinson takes the example of Bihar, and argues that Bihar is known for weak and poor administration, but after the coming of Laloo Prasad Yadav in power, he has controlled any incident of riot from breaking in Bihar. In 1992, when Hindu Muslim riots broke out throughout India after the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque, Bihar was one of the few states to remain peaceful.<sup>51</sup> This seems to be a valid point made by Wilkinson, as we all know that Bihar under the rule of Laloo Prasad Yadav was strictly considered to be a backward state, where the condition of law and order was bad. But the record suggests that there was no outbreak of communal riots in Bihar under the RJD rule.

---

1. Wilkinson, I Steven , Communal Riots in India , Economic and Political Weekly , October 29, 2005, p.4768

<sup>50</sup>Wilkinson, I Steven, (2008) p.14.

<sup>51</sup> Wilkinson, I Steven, Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India, Cambridge University Press, New York.p.86.

If one draws conclusion from Wilkinson's idea it can be stated that the state has the full capacity to control riots, if an under developed state like Bihar can control violence, than there is no excuse left for the developed state to give, in their failure to control riots. The point that Wilkinson wants to make here is that, if we compare the communal riots data of a decade back between Bihar and Gujarat. Bihar being a backward state has successfully put a check on any unlawful incidents breaking under the threat of communal violence but the Gujarat government has parallely proved to be a failure in preventing riots despite its capacity to do so.

After discussing the state capacity explanation for communal riots, Wilkinson proceeds by putting forward the question as to what decides the role of state in regard to communal riots. When will the state act to control riots and under what situations it will ignore. To this query Wilkinson puts forward the 'Electoral Incentive' theory. He writes "the state government protected minorities when it is in their electoral interest to do so...."politicians in government will increase the supply of protection to the minorities when .....minorities are important part of their party's current support base, or support base of one of their partners in the coalition government; or when the overall electoral system in a state is so competitive in terms of effective numbers of parties (ENVP) that there is therefore high probability that the governing party will have to negotiate or form coalitions with minority supported party in future...<sup>52</sup>.

Wilkinson once again, falls on his basic argument where he states that it is just electoral interest that lets a political party from controlling riots. If the minority votes are of importance to any party then it will definitely try to keep communal harmony and peace in that particular electoral constituency. To be more explicit we can put Wilkinson's point, by mentioning that a minority vote if it is worth enough for a political party to gain

---

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.p.6-7.

him power, then definitely that political party will do everything to ensure communal harmony.

Advancing ahead from the above argument, the question that can be raised over here is that when does the party or the state decide to prevent anti-minority riots. Here Wilkinson gives his idea of 'Party Competition' and, states that ,high level of political competition combined with strong backward caste movements that regard Muslims as acceptable and valuable coalition partners puts Muslims in an extremely good position to demand security as the price of their votes. <sup>53</sup>

In support of his above argument, Wilkinson says that, "in Kerela and Tamil Nadu, the Communists and the DMK were only able to win power by actively wooing Muslim voters. Similarly, in recent years parties such as Janta Dal in Bihar and Samajwadi party in Uttar Pradesh have only been able to win power by building coalitions that include Muslims. Because these parties rely on Muslim votes, they have in turn taken strong action to protect Muslims from communal violence." <sup>54</sup> The above argument of Wilkinson makes it clear that he falls in the institutional approach category towards communal violence. For him the state, the political party and the role of the police and the government in power is vital in relation to the riots. The author clearly states that it is lust for political power in his term "electoral incentive" that leads to the occurrence of communal violence in a place mainly organized by the parties, which will benefit from this kind of violence.

Wilkinson has made a relevant point that as level of party competition goes up the level of communal violence in the state will come down. He has tried to prove his point by taking example of Uttar Pradesh, BSP and SP parties and in Bihar the party of Laloo Prasad Yadav (RJD), Ram Vilas Paswan (LJP), Nitish Kumar (JD-U). So with increase of number of parties the level of competition increases and all these parties depend on the

---

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.p.203.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.p.203.

Muslim votes to win election so naturally the threat of communal violence is lessened in the area.<sup>55</sup>

The above points made by Wilkinson justify his support for institutional Approach. But his writings fail to recognize the role played by ethnic engagement in relation to riots. A peace researcher might not be convinced solely by the idea given by Wilkinson about electoral incentives and violence. To establish harmony in the society is it enough to rely on the political parties. Is it not important to look for an answer to the peace process which goes beyond all this? Putting aside the part played by party organization, is it not worth to search for a peaceful solution. The question of inter community relation and civic engagement as put forward by Varshney has been ignored in Wilkinson's writing, I will talk about this in detail in the later part of the chapter where I have discussed Brass and Varshney debate.

Another exponent of this model is Paul R.Brass.His work on communal violence in India is an extensive one. He has done a through empirical study of the subject, before giving his idea on communal riots in India. There are various dimensions covered in his writings, though it is not easy to summarize his ideas in one chapter, but I will try presenting his basic argument on the subject, his understanding of riots in India and his debate with Ashutosh Varshney who is the pioneer of the civic engagement theory.

He has said Riot is neither spontaneous, nor it is primarily conflict between Hindu and Muslim crowds rather it is Institutionalized Riot System. Hindu Muslim riots in India of the past several decades are misnamed, that they could not have been carried out with such force in so many places, in many cases for extended periods of time, and repeatedly, without the complicity of the police and the failure of the political parties in

---

<sup>55</sup> Wilkinson, I Steven, "Weak State and Low Violence? Explaining State Variation on Hindu Muslim Violence: Paper presented at the August 2001 meeting of the American Political Science Association ([http:// pro. Harvard.edu/papers/012/012007](http://pro.harvard.edu/papers/012/012007)).

control of government and administrative and police officers in the districts to prevent riots or at least to contain them once they had begun.<sup>56</sup>

Before giving any detail, it is essential to understand that Brass is an advocate of Institutional approach to communal violence. He uses the term “production” while discussing the nature of Hindu-Muslim riots in India. “Production” as a term has several meanings like construction, creation or manufacture etc. Brass use of the term “production of riots” means that riots are formally prepared act of violent behavior and it is not a spontaneous eruption of violence. Brass explicitly explains that riots are not just sudden eruption of violence rather it is well planned process which is executed at the time when required.

To gain a holistic understanding of communal violence, it is necessary to understand the role of the state, political parties and police relating to riots. Brass explains the occurrence of violence, as planned action executed by some force behind it, for their basic electoral or political gains.

For Brass the riots are not just simple violent eruptions rather they tend to take form of ‘pogroms’ which means organized persecution of an ethnic group. He in his study projects that the Muslim minority groups are generally the soft target in these institutionalized eruption of violence. The lines below justify this argument where Paul Brass has said “that what are labeled Hindu Muslim riots have, more often than not, been turned into pogroms and massacres of Muslims, in which few Hindus are killed. Infact, in sites of endemic rioting, there exists institutionalized riot system, in which the organizations of militant Hindu nationalism are deeply implicated.”<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup>Brass,R, Paul, Forms of Collective Violence, Riots, Pogroms and Genocide in Modern India, Three Essays Collective, 2006, p.4.

<sup>57</sup> Brass , R Paul ,The Production of Hindu Muslim Violence in Contemporary India ,Seattle University of Washington Press,2002 and New Delhi Oxford University Press ,2003.

Giving importance to the role of organizers in riots, Brass puts forward the idea that riot are planned at times , if not always He has used the idea of “endemic” riot occurrence and in support of his idea he has given the example of Aligarh, where situation of endemic riots prevailed. The point he wants to make is that there are places where riots are prevalent and common. To understand this endemic riot situation, Brass identifies three stages of riot production. He explains riots in three phases which are preparation/rehearsal, activation/enactment and explanation/ interpretation<sup>58</sup>.

As Brass puts it, in sites where riots are endemic, occurring from time to time, and tensions between communities do not simply simmer, waiting to explode. On the contrary, they must be kept alive by focusing on, and distorting, everyday incidents that involve, in actuality or by inference, an insult or threat from a member or members of one community directed against a member or members of the other community. But, the second stage of activation/enactment does not follow automatically: the time must be ripe, and that time, depends on the political circumstances. Explanation and interpretation, in the third stage, seek to displace blame, drawing attention away from the production aspect of riots and placing blame on the mass of the people, the police, and the politicians in general. <sup>59</sup> It seems that Brass, tries to give a proper idea as to how riots are being organized by certain groups .The three stages of production of violence that he discusses portrays the point as to how this whole system of massacre is executed in a well organized step by step method. Stressing on the institutional approach to understand riots Brass has closely looked into the conditions that lead to outburst of riots.

---

<sup>58</sup> Brass, R Paul, *The Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence*, Princeton University Press,1997.

<sup>59</sup> Brass, R Paul, *Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Contemporary India: From Partition to the Present*, (Prepared for the Hiroshima Peace Institute Conference on Comparative Research into Genocide and Mass Violence, Hiroshima, Japan, March 22-26, 2004),p.6-7.



The problem that seems to appear in his work is that he has ignored the role that civic engagement can play in combating violence. Brass in the above explanation, where he discusses the second stage of enactment/activation says, “When the time comes for a riot, the instigators will go and recruit in specific localities and pay people to carry out acts of violence. When it is time to produce the violence, the signal is given, certain actions take place, and a riot is produced”.<sup>60</sup>The argument made by Brass here suggest that a small group of men (Sangh Parivar) reach the people when the time is ripe, and give the call for breaking violence. But what Brass seems to be missing is the role that the community members can play in preventing riots. Taking the idea from Varshney who talks about “civic engagement” and its importance in building peace. The point that I want to make here is that if the inter-community relation is strong, then will not it act as a bulwark to the spread of rumors and defeat the instigators of violence in their plans.

Further in his work Brass talks about the two special roles, what he calls of the “fire tender” and the “conversion specialist.” The first role is occupied by the person or persons whose task it is constantly to keep intercommunal tensions and animosities alive and active. It is his job to receive reports of the occurrence in the town or city neighborhoods and roadsides of various types of incidents such as the elopement of a Hindu girl with a Muslim boy, which will be immediately characterized as a kidnapping of the former by the latter; the finding of a dead cow on a street or roadside, which will be characterized as a poisoning;. When the fire tender receives such reports, he must then decide whether to act upon it. His job is not to create a riot, but to inform others in the community In short, this role is deliberately tension-producing and tension-enlarging. Discussing over here the role of the fire tenders Brass suggests that they are mainly those who spread rumors and instigate the people and create situations that might lead to outbreak of violence. But what I believe, again after reading Varshney, is that rumors are such that can be nipped in the bud. If the inter community relation is strong and cordial, then it might suppress the rumor from spreading in negative manner.

---

<sup>60</sup> An Occasional Publication of ethics and Public Policy Centre:Muslism in Hindu Nationalist in India:A Conversation with Asghar Ali Engineer and Paul R. Brass,Centre Conversations April 2004, p.6

The role of the conversion specialist, Brass says, is most often occupied by a local politician, who may walk alongside a provocative procession or address a crowd gathered to demonstrate over any of the types of incidents described above. There are also specific ways in which crowds are organized and directed that give a hint as to whether or not intercommunal conflict is desired. Further talking about the 'conversion specialist' whose role is to pacify or inflame the crowd after the fire tenders have done their job of spreading rumor. They according to Brass walk along side a procession and may provoke the crowd in such manner that might lead to opening of riots. But in my understanding if the inter community ties are able to defeat the fire tenders in achieving their notorious aim of spreading rumors, then the conversion specialist will not be left with any role to play.<sup>61</sup>

In his explanation of riots in India Brass has put a lot of stress the role a political party can play. He through his study has found that the right wing parties have remained the main instigators of violence for the last fifteen years of the Indian political system. He explains the involvement of politicians with the police where the police acted in a very hostile manner towards the Muslims. Brass also uses the term "Politics of Curfew", where he highlights on the role played by police in institutionalized riot system. The police use the tool of curfew as means of control, victimization and outright violence against target rather than as devices to bring peace for the benefit of all. Curfew gives the license to hunt people and attack communities under target. Even state uses curfew as a method of punishing a segment of its own population. The riot according to Brass has varied political significance and involvement.

He like Wilkinson gives an electoral theory to the breaking of riots. In an attempt to explain the "institutionalized system of riot production"(IRS) that are first created and then activated during periods of political mobilization or at the time of elections , Brass focuses on two riots in Meerut that occurred in post independence India and were

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.p.7-8

divided by a gap of twenty years . The 1961 riot is posed as a benchmark to contrast with later communal events of 1982.”<sup>62</sup>

Brass states that there is a clear connection in both cases between timing of the riots and elections, legislative assembly elections in 1961-1962 and municipal elections in 1982, and involvement of local politicians in the events that led up to riots. Under the case study of the Meerut riot Brass highlights various points stating that it leads to polarization on both sides and consolidation of communal voting. -riots and electoral politics are closely connected.<sup>63</sup>

Hence if we closely analyze as to what Brass is trying to convey is that endemic riots occur with full information and assistance of the political party in power and the police system .Brass like Wilkinson, holds the view that politician do help in the instigation of riots when it is in their electoral interest. He states that riots are the results of the institutions that do get favorable results from them. Here the author wants to say that large scale endemic riots takes place mainly for political mobilization and electoral competition where riots are used as device to win over the support of ethnic, religious or culturally marked community, by emphasizing the need for solidarity in the face of rival group. The institutionalized approach strongly makes an argument, that state actors are wholly responsible for communal violence. The role of the non state actors is wholly ignored over here. This approach tends to give a lot of stress in searching out the reason for the outbreak of violence. There is no dialogue being made on the role the community can play in bringing peace. Moving to the next section we will see what the civic engagement approach has to say.

---

<sup>62</sup> Brass, R Paul, Development of an Institutionalized Riot System in Meerut City, 1961 to 1982, Economic and Political Weekly, October 30, 2004,p.4839.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.p.11-12.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH**

This section will deal with the other approach to look at riots that is the civic engagement approach. Here I will start by discussing as to what do we mean by this approach and later will talk about the main exponents of this approach and its relevance in the discourse on communal violence. As Clifford Manshardt says that in order to break down breakdown social segregation and the resulting stereotypes, Muslims and Hindus should participate in civic improvement organizations devoted to common goals such as improvements in sanitation and housing .The secret of the success of these organizations is that they deal with common problems and through dealing with common problem other problems are made common. Common interests are created where they do not exist. the friendship gained through these activities are a powerful solvent of matters of controversy Communal harmony will not come until a man realizes that his own interests are the interest of his brother.<sup>64</sup>

In recent times the some of the scholars have come with the idea of civic engagement and inter ethnic relations as a tool to fight communalism. It is a latest means developed that is believed by some, that it can reduce communal bigotry and violence. “The broader social science case for this was put forward in 1950’s by the psychologist Gordon Allport, who explored the impact that equal status social interaction towards common goals could have on reducing racial conflict in the USA. The positive effects of inter ethnic social engagement on Hindu –Muslim relations in India were first highlighted even earlier than this, by the missionary and social worker Clifford Manshardt.”<sup>65</sup>The point they make seem to be germane, if social bonds are tightened than it will not be easy for the third party to spawn difference so easily.

They suggest that if inter ethnic engagement is tight; it might help in maintaining communal harmony in the society. If the persons in a community form strong inter

---

<sup>64</sup> Wilkinson, I Steven (2008), p.10-11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.p.10.

community relation then there are chances that they could fight the threat of communalism together. The idea of civic engagement has been strongly proposed by Ashutosh Varshney in his work. He uses the term “Institutionalized Peace System”. and says that when organizations such as trade unions, associations of businessmen , traders ,teachers , doctors, lawyers and at least some cadre based political parties(different from the ones that have an interest in communal polarization) are commonly integrated , countervailing forces are created associations that would suffer from a communal split fight for their turf , making not only their members aware of the dangers of communal violence , but also the public at large Civic organizations for all practical purposes , become the eyes and ears of administration. In the end polarizing politicians either don’t succeed or eventually stop trying to divide communities by provoking and fomenting communal violence.<sup>66</sup>

The idea projected above by Varshney gives a solid base to this approach. He shows his trust in the role of community members in building peace. If the inter communal ties , according to him, are strong then definitely the dividing community on religious, ethnic, class and caste identity will not be an easy job. Besides relying on the administration and the state for maintaining harmony in the society, people can depend on themselves for maintaining peace.

Asghar Ali Engineer has also supported the idea of civic engagement for building communal harmony. He says, it is only proper awareness among people and active role of civil society actors which can help contain major mishaps. We need aware and vibrant civil society to contain outbreak of major communal violence.<sup>67</sup> He thus gives importance to the role of civil society and how they can be effective in dealing with communal disturbances. At one place Asghar has also stated that openness of mind, a willingness to interact, to forgive and forget, are the qualities that should be imbibed in the hearts of the Indians to wipe out the evils of communal violence from the country.

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.p.11.

<sup>67</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar,Communal Riots 2006 Indian Muslims,2007,p.3.

This is all the more important in view of the fact that the effective participation of the people is needed in reducing the frequency and intensity of communal incidents.<sup>68</sup> Therefore Engineer has also given importance to the role of civic engagement in combating violence.

The civic engagement approach should not let one think that the role of the institutions that is the state, police and political party are totally ignored by these advocators. Rather they do give importance to the role played by the above institutions in relation to violence, but they try also incorporating the idea of civic engagement which according to them can help reducing violence. The scholars of institutional approach, we find gave primary importance to state, police and political parties in relation to riots and the role of civic engagement in preventing riots is a secondary idea to them. At the moment my focus will move on to writings of Ashutosh Varshney and Asghar Ali Engineer, the two whom I have largely clubbed in the civic engagement approach.

Though one might wonder as to why I am considering the idea of Asghar Ali Engineer under this approach. Despite the fact that 'civic engagement' theory is more close to the writings of Varshney, but my concern is not only to discuss the importance of the idea of civic engagement; rather the aim of my thesis is to look for a peaceful solution to the problem of communal violence. And Engineer has in several of his work discussed the ways to achieve communal harmony, where he has discussed about inter religious dialogue, civil society etc. Therefore his suggestion regarding establishment of communal harmony can be taken into consideration.

The civic engagement approach does try to give a holistic perspective, where it reflects both on the role of the state organization and non state organization equally in respect of riots. The state organization as commonly understood, does play a major role in the breaking of violence but do we ever question ourselves as to what role does the civil

---

<sup>68</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar (2004), p.24.

society have to play in respect of riots? Here I would try finding the answer to this question.

This approach is a move towards giving a peaceful solution to the problem of riot. It besides criticizing the role of the state bodies and the various institutions also tries to study the role a community and civil society can play in fighting communalism. I consider that fixing responsibility, is one thing and finding out a peaceful solution to a problem is another thing altogether. Through the institutional approach we seem to have clearly understood the role of state and political parties in relation to riots. This approach in my view will let one understand the importance of inter community and ethnic engagement, and the vital role that they can play in fighting communal violence.

No doubt the role of the institutions at any time cannot be relegated when discussing the topic of communal riots but if some peaceful solution is being presented to solve this problem ,then I think its essential to understand what it says. In this direction I would first start by discussing the work of Ashutosh Varshney .Before the work of Varshney came into light communal ideologies and the behavior of the state was held responsible for communal riots.

Without minimizing the role of dangerous ideologies, such as Hindu Muslim Communalism, can play, or the impact vicious state behavior can have, his work emphasized the role, civil society organizations especially inter communal organizations, if extensive, can neutralize the violent implications, of communal ideologies and irresponsible state conduct. His argument though did not say that communal ideologies should not be fought, or that pressure should not be exercised on the state to mind its way and deliver on its constitutional obligations to protect life and property. Rather it pointed to another way the problem had been dealt with in many parts of India, and

could potentially be dealt in the future through integrated civic networks and organizations.<sup>69</sup>

Varshney's argument in his book "Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life Hindus and Muslims in India" is called as "Quasi Gandhian"<sup>70</sup> because Mahatma Gandhi also emphasized on the role of non state activity and Congress was turned into a mass base organization, with communal integration as one of its main purpose. I consider it is not wrong to term Varshney approach as Quasi Gandhian, because Gandhi in while discussing the question of harmony, felt that the role of the members of the different community are more important and they can play crucial role in establishing communal harmony. Gandhi believed that harmony could be established through inter community and inter -cultural ties. He stressed on the need for inter community interaction and understanding for building peace in the society. Similarly Varshney also discusses the importance of inter community ties for establishing peace.

Further Varshney idea of civic engagement nowhere means that the role of the state and communal ideologies should not be given importance when dealing with riots. Rather it means that equal importance be also given to establishing inter ethnic alliance and integration so that it works as a threat to the challenge of communal violence and Hindu Muslims non state organizations and associations can be faithfully viewed as possible vehicle of peace.

Before getting into the details, in brief I will discuss the method adopted by Varshney in his work. The author raises a question as to why in the same state, like Uttar Pradesh Aligarh is riot prone but Lucknow is not; or in Gujarat Ahmedabad repeatedly goes up in communal flames whereas Surat rarely does. The question that Varshney tries to raise

---

<sup>69</sup> Varshney, Ashutosh, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002.p.x.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*p.x.



here is that as to why the same police and the state government tries to instigate violence in one place and leaves the other place in the same state as peaceful?

To answer this question with respect to Hindu-Muslim violence in India, Varshney went through all reported Hindu-Muslim riots in the country between 1950-95. Two results were crucial. First, the share of villages in communal rioting turned out to be remarkably small. Between 1950-95, rural India, where two-thirds of Indians still live, accounted for a mere 3.6 per cent of the deaths in communal violence. Hindu-Muslim violence is primarily an urban phenomenon.<sup>71</sup>

Secondly, as Varshney puts it, within urban India too, Hindu-Muslim riots are highly locally concentrated. Eight cities -- Ahmedabad, Bombay, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Meerut, Baroda, Calcutta and Delhi -- account for a hugely disproportionate share of communal violence in the country: a little over half of all urban deaths (and 49 per cent of all deaths) in Hindu-Muslim violence.<sup>72</sup> As a group, however, these eight cities represent a mere 18 per cent of India's urban population (and about 5-6 per cent of the country's total population, both urban and rural). Eighty two per cent of urban population has not been "riot-prone". In other words, India's Hindu-Muslim violence is city-specific. State (and national) politics is best seen as providing the context within which the local mechanisms linked with violence get activated.<sup>73</sup>

For Varshney to understand communal violence, we must investigate these local mechanisms. Following this reasoning, his book selected six cities -- three riot-prone, and three peaceful -- and arranged them in three pairs. Thus, each pair had a city where

---

<sup>71</sup> Varshney, Ashutosh, "Civil Society and Ethno communal Conflict", Working Document Department of Political Science University of Michigan, This present document has been produced to assist working sessions at the III General Assembly of the Club of Madrid, p.4-5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.5.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p.5.

communal violence is endemic, and a city where it is rare, or entirely absent.<sup>74</sup> To justify his arguments regarding the role of civic engagement, Varshney has used a comparative method in his work. He compares the city of Aligarh with Calicut and raises the question that why Hindus and Muslims are capable of living peacefully in Calicut but not in Aligarh. In my thesis I will discuss one of his examples

Varshney mentions that Aligarh and Calicut almost comprise of the same number of Muslim population. The former being hub of the North Indian Muslims, latter consists mostly of the Kerala Muslims. But the difference in the two cities lies when one considers the kind of civic engagement that exists. According to Varshney a deep intercommunal civic engagement marks life in Calicut, the neighborhoods there are remarkably integrated, and so the city's business and professional life.<sup>75</sup>

Varshney presents two arguments in his comparative analysis of the two cities. First, point he makes is that the civic engagement between Hindus and Muslims marks Calicut, which makes it hard for politicians to play the politics of religious polarization. Some have tried, most do not, including politicians who would most benefit from such polarization. Ashutosh Varshney further raises a question as to why Hindus and Muslims live peacefully in Calicut but not in Aligarh. He further through an example tries to show how in Aligarh and Calicut similar provocations have different responses. Between 1984 and 1992, when the Hindu nationalist agitation to destroy the Babri mosque in Ayodhya led to much unprecedented violence in much of India, the two cities responded very differently.

His work suggests that if we go into the deeper analysis we will find that the state government and the police alone do not have capability to produce riots. There is something else also needed that helps actively in the spread of violence. This something according to Varshney is the absence of inter community alliance that leads to breaking

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.p.5.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Varshney (2002), p.121.

of riots or spread of rumor and communal tension easily in city or a town. The fundamental reason for riot lies elsewhere, it is the environment of a peaceful city that makes the police and the administration perform its law and order function better, irrespective of the biases or the level of professionalism. As far as riots are concerned Varshney says that a communally integrated place is simply better administrated and policed.<sup>76</sup>

The difference with which Varshney deals with the issue of communal violence is a new one. He in his work is trying to give a peaceful solution to the problem of violence. He moves our attention away from the role of state and political parties to the role of community. He tries giving a different solution to the problem of riots where he has dealt with the role of inter community relation and civic engagement.

While talking about the forms of civic engagement, Varshney discusses associational and everyday form of engagement. "The associational form of engagement means the formation of civic organization, political parties, unions, business associations, professional associations, clubs and festival organization where the Hindu Muslim is strongly integrated together. This association has the capacity to stand sparks of communal violence." Here Varshney points out the vital role that various civil society organization can play in maintaining peace. This idea of Varshney serves the purpose of peace research and various civic associations can be formed for establishing peace.

The other association according to Varshney is the everyday engagement that needs no organization or association .It is between the Hindu Muslims neighborhood, daily informal interaction between the two communities etc. But according to Varshney the associational engagement is more vital in putting a check on communal tensions from

---

<sup>76</sup> Steven, I Wilkinson , Religious Politics and Communal Violence, Chapter 7, Ashutosh Varshney, Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society ,India and Beyond, Paperback,2008

taking shape of riots.<sup>77</sup> Since century's people have relied on the state, political parties and leaders to end the menace of communalism, but as history is the witness not much change has been brought in. Today also riots break out; lives and property are loss at large scale. The trend has always been to fix responsibility and search the causes for such violence. But not much effort is made to give some solution to the problem and Varshney with his idea on civic associations has made a beginning.

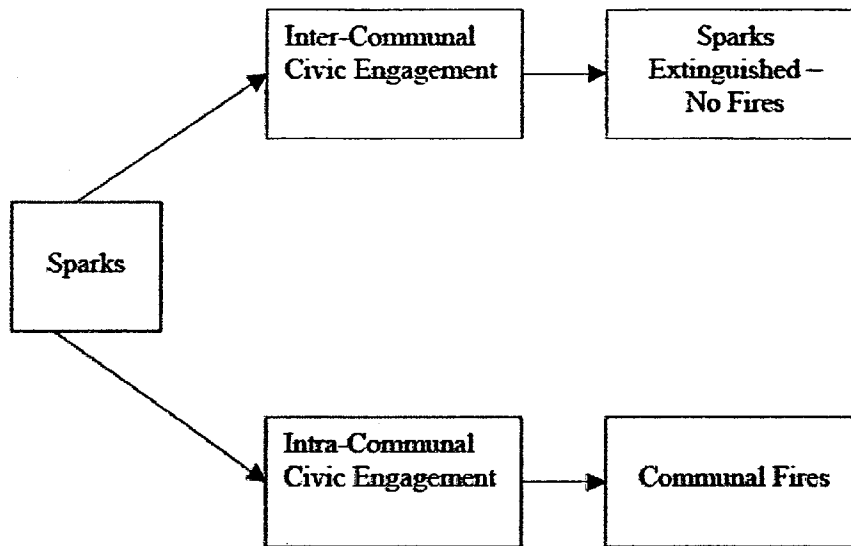
Now coming to the role, of the state, in instigating riot. Ashutosh Varshney says that obviously we cannot ignore the role of the state in terms of riot. But in his work he tries to give "state plus " argument , meaning that state enters the process as a spark .The ideology, action and behavior of the state might generate spark to which different societies respond differently depending on the type of inter ethnic engagement and association they share. The inter ethnic ties of a society helps in extinguishing those sparks and if the engagement in any way is loose it generates into a wild fire that takes form of communal violence.

This argument is diagrammatically presented in (Figure 1)<sup>78</sup> given below. Varshney builds upon the metaphor of 'sparks' (small clashes, tensions, rumors) and 'fires' (riots and pogroms) to make the point about the role of civil society. Intercommunal ties between Hindus and Muslims, not intracommunal ties among the Hindus or among the Muslims, were a strong bulwark of communal peace.

---

<sup>77</sup> Varshney, Ashutosh, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life Hindus and Muslims in India*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Varshney, Ashutosh, Working Group III "Territorially based ethnic, linguistic, religious threats to the democratic order" Civil Society and Ethno communal Conflict Working Document, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan.p.8



**Figure: 1 State, Civil Society and Ethno-communal Violence.**

If towns and cities were organized only along intra-Hindu or intra-Muslim lines, the odds of riots breaking out, given a spark (tensions, rumors, small clashes), were very high. In Indian cities, bonding social capital was highly correlated with Hindu-Muslim violence, but bridging ties could put out sparks very effectively, not allowing them to disrupt the local equilibrium of peace. The local organs of the state – the police and administration – simply worked better at riot-prevention in integrated cities.<sup>79</sup>

The civic engagement approach relies a lot on the role of the members of different communities and how well can they integrate themselves to curb violence from occurring. The work of Varshney relegates too much importance to civic engagement and I suppose that to bring harmony it is essential to look beyond the state. We as responsible and peace loving citizens should join hands and try defeating the act of any notorious person who benefits by spreading such violence. If there will be strongly integrated community then it can always help in checking the spread of rumors that might lead to disturbances. A well incorporated peace process can be established with the help of strong inter communal ties. The need is to take Varshney's advice seriously

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.p.9.

and try bringing the peace question rather than just discussing communal violence as a tragedy.

It would be pertinent to compare the ideas of Brass, Wilkinson and Varshney. In brief I will mention the idea of the three scholars; Wilkinson's focus is on the importance of politics at the state level as key to explaining the prevalence of communal riots. Paul Brass has focused on the importance of "Institutional Riot System" in producing large scale riots in towns in which they are endemic. And Varshney argues that the state and national level politics are less important than town level civic organizations and networks: where a town's civic organization is interethnic and associational, "...polarizing politicians either don't succeed or eventually sop trying to divide communities by provoking and fomenting violence."<sup>80</sup>

The idea of Brass and Wilkinson are compatible to an extent, because both are the exponents of institutional approach and do give importance to the role of electoral incentives and state capacity in the study of riot. Ashutosh Varshney through his work has given the idea of "Institutionalized Peace System", where civic organization become the ears and arms of administration and prevent rumors from spreading and taking form of communal killings. He suggests that peace can be institutionalized with the help of strong inter community and civic engagement. Varshney believes that the institutional approach is fundamentally inadequate, if not entirely useless. To support his idea he raised doubt on Wilkinson electoral explanation of violence. He says Wilkinson's argument is implausible. Why did so many riots take place under Nehru and Indira Gandhi's Congress party rule, despite their pro-Muslim political ideologies and their control over state governments, especially of Mrs Gandhi's?

---

<sup>80</sup> Steven, I Wilkinson, Communal Riots in India, Economic and Political Weekly, October 29.2005, p.4768.

But responding to Varshney's work Wilkinson says that the main problem we face in testing whether a social capital<sup>81</sup> or contact hypothesis theory of violence actually works is that there are few good statistics on "social capital" that tell us about town differences in social interaction, social distance and presence of town level mohalla committees. Moreover Wilkinson states that as a methodological issue it is very difficult to separate out the effects of inter ethnic contact and associational life from the influence of all the other socio economic and political factors likely to predispose a town to peace or violence.

Wilkinson finds problem in Varshney's work and says are successful inter ethnic associations really a cause of peace so much as effect. In absence of complete data on civic engagement, it is difficult to assess He further says that in at least some of the successes cited by proponents, the levels of civic engagement seem not, ultimately, to have been sufficient to prevent tensions and violence. For example some violence has occurred in Bhiwandi despite inter community engagement. In addition Wilkinson marks that it is unclear about exactly how much civic engagement is necessary to have desirable effect in terms of reducing violence.<sup>82</sup>

Both Wilkinson and Varshney seem to be making some valid points. When Wilkinson talks about the state capacity relation in controlling riots, he seems to be giving very common sensual understanding of the subject. No doubt the role of political parties has always remained vital relation to riots. But solely depending on the state and parties for controlling riots does not seem to be a good idea. Riots damages the common masses of both the communities, therefore I feel that something valid should be done by the members themselves to contain this kind of violence. Wilkinson's idea of electoral

---

<sup>81</sup> Social capital is a social science concept used in business, economics, organizational behavior, political science, public health and sociology that refers to connections within and between social networks. Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* According to Robert Putnam, social capital "refers to the collective value of all 'social networks' and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other". According to Putnam and his followers, social capital is a key component to building and maintaining democracy. Putnam says that social capital is declining in the United States. This is seen in lower levels of trust in government and lower levels of civic participation. e

<sup>82</sup> Steven, I Wilkinson, (2008) p.12.

incentive and party competition regarding communal violence, fails to give a long term answer to the question of peace in communal violence.

When Brass comes up with the idea of "Institutionalized Riot System", where he has discussed how riots are organized violent action that is executed with the help of organized group of people with "specific roles played by the following identifiable persons. scouts and informants who report incidents rumor mongers who magnify them or manufacture them propagandists who create messages to be conveyed to the press and the public vernacular journalists who publish these messages in the form of "news" poster plasterers recruiters who bring out crowds, often of students from local colleges, and criminals from the slums to kill, burn, and loot."<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Varshney has given the idea of Institutionalized Peace System, and discusses the role the member of different community can play together in preventing rumors from spreading, effectively monitor the role of the administration, so that it acts promptly, various peace committees can help the people in staying harmoniously together and prevent the tension from escalating, thus helping in preventing riot situation.

Varshney has argued, that Brass idea of Institutionalized Riot System is meant that the politicians and criminals protected by them, "especially the Hindu nationalists," are involved in riots and "keep the communal pot boiling." He characterizes Brass idea as one of "boiling pot theory" where he is giving reasons to fix responsibility on people responsible for riots.

Now approaching to the question of civic engagement Brass argues that, even where civic engagement do exist in society , they fail to withstand the power of political movements and forces that seek to create inter communal violence. The political mobilization of communal sentiment overpowered whatever civic engagement existed in

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.p.7.



Meerut as well. So the role of inter ethnic engagement in preventing riots holds little value in the writings of Paul R Brass.

Moreover Brass disagrees with Varshney's view that these riots arise from mass hatreds. The latest perpetration of this kind of myth again comes from Ashutosh Varshney, who has invented a new term for collective violence: "ethnic earthquakes." But these things are not earthquakes; nor do they start like sparks as used by Ashutosh Varshney.<sup>84</sup> Brass further alleges that Varshney through his theory is trying to free the RSS and the Sangh Parivar role in riots that according to Brass has remained so active for the last ten to fifteen years. But what I assume of Varshney idea is that fixing responsibility is another job, but the actual solution to the problem of communalism is by giving importance to community relation. It might appear to Brass that Varshney has not focused on the role played by the Right wing organization of India in relation to riots, who according to Brass are the main perpetrators of violence.

But it seems to me that Varshney through his work is trying to give an alternative solution of peace where civil society has a major role to play. It is true that at various places riots do break out despite the existence of inter community relations and organizations, but that does not mean that the whole idea of civic engagement is useless. May be some time is needed , but if its serious implementation is done and people judiciously take up the burden of forming civic associations to fight the virus of communalism , then there are chances that communal peace and harmony could be established with the help of community.

Under civic engagement approach I would now reflect on the work of Asghar Ali Engineer. To be more precise if we compare the work of Asghar Ali Engineer with Ashutosh Varshney, they seem to be different in many ways but to some extent have a

---

<sup>84</sup> Fwd: Paul Brass's Response to Ashutosh Varshney, ab2303 at columbia.edu, Thu Dec, 2003 .p.3.

common thread to share too. He also deals with the question of communal harmony and tries giving a peaceful solution to the problem of riot. I would start by discussing Engineer's view on communal violence.

This author takes up an analytical approach to the Hindu Muslim conflict in India. His work is said to be analytical because he focuses on both the micro and macro level factor, while discussing the issue of communal riot in India. Whereas macro level factors are mostly ideologically oriented, the micro level factors tend to be local issue oriented.<sup>85</sup>

At the macro level Engineer basically discusses the role played by economic and political factors in respect of riots. He believes that uneven economic development and cut throat competition are used largely as reason to create one group hostile against the other. He says that political parties for trivial electoral gains might play a negative role in spreading communal tension and violence. Here under the role of political parties Asghar has not only blamed communal parties but also raised doubt on the role of the secular parties, as they too at times are responsible in spreading communal vibes just for some electoral gains.<sup>86</sup>

Now coming over to the micro issue, Asghar states that micro level factors and local issues help spreading violence in particular towns. Under this Asghar discusses a number of issues that might spread violence. Some objectionable speeches, objectionable writings, disturbances in religious procession\functions, eve teasing, clashing of times of prayer of different communities, competition between rural traders or small manufacturers of the two communities, competition between two gangs of hoodlums dealing either in smuggling, illicit arms etc.

---

<sup>85</sup> Engineer, Asghar Ali, *Communal Riots After Independence: A Comprehensive Account*, Shipra , Mumbai, 2004

<sup>86</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar (1989), p.11.

After analyzing the micro macro level factors of Asghar, one might wonder why I have clubbed him under civic engagement approach. No doubt Asghar in his writings criticizes the role of parties, state and police in playing with the cards of communalism. But what I found that in his work he in bits and pieces has given a peaceful solution to this horrific violence.

At one place in his work Engineer has given the idea of social attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes. Under this broad topic he talks about the behavior of a community and says that “each community in our complex society entertains certain beliefs and attitudes towards the other.”<sup>87</sup> This attitude is important in shaping the behavior of one community against the other. The behavior of a community is an important aspect as it can lead to the outbreak of violent and communal eruptions. Here the point that Engineer wants to make is that a harmonious relation between the community member, where they hold a positive attitude towards each other helps in maintaining peace.

He talks of “societal bonds” and gives importance to high degree of social integration, shared values, necessary economic exchanges and societal structures which are patterns of relationship among social groups, societal processes, which are the mechanisms through which the bonds and structures are maintained and changed. The point that Engineer tries to bring over here is that, community bonds and inter relation can act effectively in combating communalism. If the people are united they can put the divisive force on the defensive.

Societal processes according to Engineer must act in responsive ways to maintain harmony among people .He suggests further that religious and secular leaders from theses communities should come together and form solidarity committees to fight communalism. For this it is necessary to do honest and rigorous criticism of what is bad in one’s community and acknowledge with generosity what is good in others

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.p.27.

community. <sup>88</sup>Such an approach according to Asghar can built bridges of understanding and mutual confidence.

The author also stresses on the need for secular education and also puts emphasis on role of healthy inter communal relation, by understanding and respecting each others religion, friendly amalgamation of culture, removal of socio economic backwardness with proper inter communal integration will definitely help in the lessening of communal threat and will help in establishing communal harmony in the society.

The author also tries to present an idea of Sufism to the question of communal harmony. He gives importance to the idea of inter- religious dialogue in combating the nuisance of communalism. According to Engineer there is a need to adopt a more tolerant and liberal attitude by both the communities, if they want to establish communal peace. “It is only proper awareness among people and active role of civil society actors which can help contain major mishaps. We need aware and vibrant civil society to contain outbreak of major communal violence.”<sup>89</sup>

Therefore we see that Asghar Ali Engineer’s work combined with Varshney’s does give a lot of new suggestion as to how to establish peace in society. Though they do hold the state responsible for spreading violence but the most important development in their writing is the suggestion for establishing inter ethnic harmony through inter communal interaction and civic association. The civic engagement approach besides blaming the role of the state actors, tries to present a peaceful solution to communal violence.

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.p.81.

<sup>89</sup> Engineer ,Asghar Ali, Communal Riots 2006, ,Indian Muslims, 2007

## **BHAGALPUR RIOT 1989: APPROACHES**

In last part of my chapter I would briefly analyze the academic discourses on the Bhagalpur riot of 1989. Here I will be reflecting on few articles on specific Bhagalpur riot that were published in various books and journals. My aim here is to find out, whether these articles discuss the question of peace and civic engagement or are they solely guided by the idea of fixing responsibility.

While analyzing there writings on Bhagalpur riot what I found was that they were basically focusing on similar aspect of the violence. Their paper started with what, how, when, where of the problem. Here I mean to say that in all these writings mainly the incidents were described, with more emphasis on cause of the outbreak of violence and later who was to be held responsible in the whole episode.

To start with I will first discuss the chapter written on this riot by Jitendra Narayan. The chapter opens up by discussing the cause of the riot. The writer starts of by claiming that the religious procession took out on October 24, 1989 sparked communal riot in the city. The next section of the chapter takes up the question of how the riot started and spread. Here Narayan has mentioned reasons for the outbreak of riot.

“...the trouble began on the morning of October 24(1989)in Nathnagar, a small town on the outskirts of Bhagalpur which has a large population of Muslim julahas . A procession of Hindu carrying Ramshilla Pujan bricks started from Nathnagar for Bhagalpur in the morning.....The procession shouting anti Muslim slogans , escorted by a set of policemen and swelling its rank on the way...The day before they had detailed discussions with Muslim leaders who had assured them that procession would be allowed to pass peacefully. The Muslims only condition was there be no slogan shouting...Suddenly we saw that the Muslims were not allowing the procession to go through ...Near the Muslim school , bombs started raining on the procession .....In no time entire city closed down

and Muslims started fleeing the area. By evening Hindu Muslims crowd started attacking each other...”

(Jitendra Narayan)<sup>90</sup>

Further Narayan tries to investigate the role of police and the political parties. The role of political parties and the police have remained central in the investigation of riot. He also gives an analysis of the part played by them during the outbreak of violence. Different political groups are playing the blame game and holding each other responsible for the outbreak of riot.

“....Bhagalpur riot proved disastrous for the Congress (I), for it lost its long maintained grip on the Muslims and consequently suffered heavy losses in the Lok Sabha elections held in 1989 eventually failing to form government in the centre. ....The political parties were successful in taking advantages of the situation arising out of the riot in their own way.....”

(Jitendra Narayan)<sup>91</sup>

The above details, deals with the way administration acted to control the riots. Narayan talks in detail how the administration and the police proved to be a great failure in bringing situation under control. The incapacity of the government has been dealt with. The administration is criticized on two grounds first it was not able to assure peaceful passage of the Ramshilla procession from Muslim locality that led to the eruption and after the riot broke out, the administration and police proved to be a total failure in controlling it. Police is accused of having nexus with the criminals, who have sided with the criminals.

---

<sup>90</sup>Narayan, Jitendra, Communal Riots In India: A Case Study of the Indian States, Ashish Publishing House, 1992,p.156.

<sup>91</sup>Narayan, Jitendra, Communal Riots In India: A Case Study of the Indian States, Ashish Publishing House, 1992,p.156.

“.....Some SP’s in Patna pointed out that the apathy of the state government had contributed to growing communalism in the state that eventually led to the riots at Bhagalpur.....a number of communal cases had lapsed because the police had never filed charge sheets.....”

(Jitendra Narayan)<sup>92</sup>

In the last section Narayan sums up by saying that “the riot was engineered and escalated by criminals and communal elements, the role of different political parties and organizations added fuel to fire. Almost all political parties and their organizations tried to exploit the situation keeping in view the elections at hand.”<sup>93</sup>

Narayan in his writing on Bhagalpur has basically failed to reflect on the inter community relation and did not suggest anything on the civil society role. What was the condition of inter communal engagement and whether any suggestion for peace building measures is not given in his writing. Besides blaming the administration what role community can play in avoiding occurrence of violence, goes missing.

Moving now to the article of N.L.Gupta, we find that he starts by giving a data on the causalities, loss of property and injuries caused in the wake of this riot. He has given the details of the damage done due to the riot.

“The Ramjanambhoomi Babri Masjid controversy took a heavy toll of human life. More than 800 persons died in the rural areas numbering 200 were affected by riots, 3932 houses were burnt to ashes and 891 shops were looted or gutted. 876 Muslim and 50 Hindus were killed , 106 persons were missing 1100 Hindus and 900 Muslims were arrested.37 mosques, 7 madarsas and 8 tombs were destroyed Huge mobs attacked villages even in remote areas. Communal aggressiveness in the villages was not only a fall out of the events in the bigger city but had spread quiet widely in villages even before violence rocked the main city and Bhagalpur.”

(N.L.Gupta)<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.p.176.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.p.180.

<sup>94</sup> Gupta, N L, Communal Riots, Gyan Books, 2000,p.91.

N.L.Gupta has criticized the role of the police in connection to the Bhagalpur riot, he suggests that the police has acted in an irresponsible manner. They did nothing to bring the situation under control instead, the police aligned with rioters and led to the worsening of situation.

“The Ramshila Puja procession passed through the Tatarpur area because it was not a religious festival procession but a political procession .The processionist shouted provocative slogans:Hindi Hindu Hindustan, Muslim Jao Kabristan , Jai maakali, Karo Tatarpur Khali, Babar ki Santano Hindustan Chodo etc.Even Bihar military police and some other policemen joined slogan shouting....”and made provocative slogans which led to the flaring of riots in the town. Even the policemen joined in the slogan shouting”.

(NLGupta)<sup>95</sup>.

No suggestion is at all given relating to peace question. The writer fulfills the role of a fact finding body, where the incident is reported and data is provided giving an idea of the damage caused due the violence and responsibility is fixed on the role of the police mainly in N.L.Gupta writings where he alleged that whole thing happened in the presence of the police and such large scale massacre is not possible without police connivance.

Looking into the writing of Indu Bharti,<sup>96</sup> we find that she also has tried to focus on the reasons for the break up of violence. She writes that “ what happened on the morning of October 24 was, entirely different , as the Ram shila procession entered Tatarpur , provocative slogans denouncing Muslims, their religion and their ‘suspect patriotism –

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.p.92.

<sup>96</sup> Bharti, Indu, Bhagalpur Riots and the Bihar Government, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 24, No. 48, p.2643.



such as Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan , Mullah Bhago Pakistan ( India is for Hindi speaking Hindus , Muslims must go to Pakistan)- were renting the air. It was at this point that a bomb was hurled at the procession by some miscreants and this set off the violence.

Another bomb was hurled at the heavily armed police party and it went on a rampage, killing four in the indiscriminate firing, and looting and burning Muslim localities in the area. At places entire families of the minority communities were roasted alive in their houses which were set ablaze in the dead of the night. Nathnagar, Champanagar, Nayabazar, Sahebganj, Parbatti, Ishaqchak, Jogsar, Karia, Rehmanpur and Mansurganj localities have been devastated beyond recognition. The death toll in Bhagalpur and surrounding areas as per official figures has crossed 259.

Further throwing light on the role of the Government Indu Bharti writes that the any preventive action on the part of the State Government was totally lacking So casual had been the role of the state government that even after more than 60 persons had been killed it continued to maintain that there was no communal tension in the state. Moreover when violence erupted the police force encouraged it and even participated in it.”

In another article By Bharat Dogra also talks bout the Bhagalpur riot and he starts by discussing as to how the riots in Bhagalpur had spread to villages also and in the next section he started talking about the causes for the spread of violence. <sup>97</sup>The article points out to the failure of police in controlling the situation. It also criticizes the role of media for the playing irresponsible act. The point that again comes out over here is that the academic discourses are merely dealing with role of the state actor and inter-community question remain missing. Also Asghar Ali in most of his articles on Bhagalpur riot talks about the causes for the outbreak of riot or gives detail on the loss of life and property. <sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup>Dogra: Bharat, Bhagalpur: Communal Violence Spreads to Villages: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 25, No. 3, Jan. 20, 1990, p.145.

<sup>98</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar ,Lifting the Veil; Communal Violence and Communal Harmony in Contemporary India, Sangam Books, India Limited,1995,p.171.

Fixing responsibility and searching for culprits is the obvious job done by the various academicians while writing on riots. So on Bhagalpur also these writers mainly looked for the immediate cause, causality and the role of the state and government in relation to the aftermath of riot. But in between all this, they miss the point regarding role of inter ethnic engagement and civic association and what was the effect on it before and after the outbreak of violence.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thus through this chapter, I have tried to look into the various approaches of communal violence and what issues hold importance for the academic writers when they deal with the question of communal violence. Somewhere I think they miss on the point of inter communal alliance and role of the non governmental organizations in relation to riots, which also plays a vital role in establishing communal peace. No doubt the writings of Varshney has given due importance in suggesting on the importance of the idea of non institutional organization in establishing peace other writings hardly give importance to this aspect.

Communal violence is looked into as a hitch and most of the time the causes responsible for its occasion are discussed. The institutions are blamed, the parties and police body is criticized but what is not taken care of is the question for the establishment of peace. The role of civil society and peace committees are not given much validity. The major concern of discussion revolves round the state and its organization.

The institutional approach seems to be more dominant and prevalent than the civic engagement approach. Dialogues on communal violence in the academic writings largely focus on the role of the state actor and the role of the non state actor is not taken care of. The question of peace seems to remain missing. The academic talks are more engaged in looking for the reason of the problem. Not much suggestion is given on how to peacefully deal with the communal threat.

It appears to me that the question of establishing peace is essential and should be seriously dealt with. Rather than just looking into the factors leading to riots, one should try finding out peaceful solution to the problem. The inter community and civic engagement question if handled with sincerity, then there is possibility, that it might handle the problem in a much better and effective way. Now in my next chapter I would analyze the various Commission Reports on the Bhagalpur riot and see how they deal with the question of peace and civic engagement.

## *Chapter Two*

---

### **THE COMMISSION REPORTS: AN ANALYSIS**

The aim of this chapter is to study the Commission Inquiry Reports and look into the way they deal with the question of peace in their writings. What are the points that the commission stresses upon while making an inquiry? Does the report only deal with fixing responsibility and making an institutionalized survey of the riots or do they go beyond this in their research? Is the role of state, police and the government the basic area of study in relation to the occurrence of riots or do they explore something else? In the earlier chapter, we discussed that in the institutional approach, academic writings somewhere ignore the question of peace. While the state, political parties and the administration is their area of interest, the question of peace and the civic engagement approach remains missing.

In this chapter, by making a detailed study of the various commission reports, I will try to look into the role they play while discussing riots. My work will deal with the purpose with which inquiry commissions are set up: Are they like an institutionalized government set up to give a formal report on the mishappening or do they fulfill some larger goal? Does the report sufficiently throw light on the role of community relations existing in a riot-prone society? Do they deal with the immediate causes of the riot or give a more holistic approach covering the inter-ethnic ties between two communities? Do commissions of inquiry (COI) appointed by the government to examine issues ranging from communal riots, scandals and assassinations to inter-state disputes actually serve any purpose?

Since Independence, India has faced the challenge of containing communal violence in the society. As already mentioned in the introductory part of my thesis, India witnessed a

series of riots after Independence. As a result of the riots, there is a huge loss of life and property. Under the Commission of Inquiry Act 1952, commissions can be formed and their purpose is to meet the public demand for impartial and judicial inquiries. The victims are left with no option but to wait for the commission to submit their report so that justice is met. It is quite natural that a wounded community will pin immense hopes on the COIs to get justice. The 1952 Act says that one of the basic roles of these commissions is to restore public confidence<sup>99</sup>.

But the long history of these commissions suggests that they have failed to achieve their purpose. Over 40 commissions of inquiry that have been appointed to study major communal riots in the country since Independence and none of the recommendations have been implemented<sup>100</sup>. To name a few are the Justice Jagmohan Reddy COI that probed the Ahmedabad riots in 1969, the Justice Venugopal COI that investigated the Kanyakumari riots 1982, the Justice Joseph Vithayathal COI on the Tellicherry disturbances in 1971 and the Justice Madon COI formed to inquire into the communal disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad in May, 1970. Almost every commission that probed these riots, including the Bhagalpur riots of 1989 that left 1,000 dead and the 1961-Jabalpur riots recommended various measures to prevent communal violence, decommunalise the police, punish the guilty and ensure justice.

It is needless to mention here about what happened to these reports and how much money is spent on such exercises. Many persons, against whom charges were leveled, are dead and no prominent leader has ever been punished so far. Such are the frustrating results of these commissions and committees that jurists and lawmakers critical of them firmly believe that they are at best a diversionary tactics to hoodwink people as they take an inordinately long time to deliver reports and their recommendations, when submitted, are seldom implemented.

---

<sup>99</sup>D.Souza, Dilip, *Laughing All The Way to the Inquiry.*, PUCL Bulletin, July, 2000

<sup>100</sup> Krishnan, Murali, *Do Commissions of Inquiry Serve Any Purpose, Opinion.*, January 7, 2007

As far as the time and money involved is concerned, looking at the expenses of just a few of these commissions is enough to understand the quantum of impact - both in terms of the amount and time spent. The one that tops the chart is the Liberhan Commission. Set up under retired Justice M S Liberhan on December 16, 1992, to probe into the Babri mosque demolition, the commission has so far been given more than 41 extensions. Overall, the government has already spent Rupees ninety million on this single-man inquiry commission, which is yet to come out with its report. The above mentioned fact reflects the sad plight of these commissions.

In my first section of Chapter, I will reflect on the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1952. Then, I will make a detailed study of the Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission Reports that came out in 1995, and the last section of the chapter will talk about the Interim Report of the N.N. Singh Commission and the Muslim United Front Survey Report that came out in the year 2006. Through an examination of these reports, I will try finding answers to my above mentioned queries.

### **THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT, 1952**

In this section, I will discuss the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952 and will try to give a critique of it. This is an Act to provide for the appointment of Commissions of Inquiry and for vesting such commissions with certain powers. Before the enactment of Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952, the government ordered public inquiry either by executive notice under the Public Service Inquiries Act, 1850 or by making an ad hoc legislation. To meet the growing need for the ever-increasing demand for public inquiries by an independent and impartial authority, the procedure adopted by the government was found to be cumbersome and inadequate. Hence, a need for a suitable legislation was felt, resulting in the Commissions of Inquiry Bill, 1952 in the Parliament. The Commissions of Inquiry Bill, 1952 was passed by both the Houses of Parliament

and after getting assent from the President of India, became the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952.<sup>101</sup>

Commissions of inquiry can be instituted either by the central or state government to inquire into any definite matter of public importance. Such commissions are meant to conduct an impartial inquiry particularly when the normal investigational agencies are accused of communal biases. As such commissions are routinely appointed after communal riots, this points out to the routine collapse or even active collusion of the administration and police during riots. The act addresses precisely such systemic failures. While the government has the discretionary power to appoint a commission, it must necessarily appoint such a commission when the legislature passes a resolution.<sup>102</sup>

The provision in the Act reads where the appropriate Government is of opinion that having regard to the nature of the inquiry to be made and other circumstances of the case, the appropriate government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, direct that all or such of the said provisions as may be specified in the notification shall apply to that commission and on the issue of such a notification, the said provisions shall apply accordingly.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the Act states that the power to form or appoint members in the commission are totally in the hands of the government, thus the government enjoys sufficient control over these COIs. The judicial commissions and commissions of inquiry have been appointed to look into a wide variety of issues ranging from communal riots to assassinations and disputes involving states. However, the sources in the legal sections said they had hardly achieved anything and also feel that commissions of inquiry are appointed to avert people's attention from the issue.

---

<sup>101</sup>The Commissions Of Inquiry Act, 1952, [www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc](http://www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc)

<sup>102</sup> Recalling Bhagalpur: Aftermath of 1989 Riots, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 18 May 4, 1996, pp. 1055

<sup>103</sup> The Commissions Of Inquiry Act, 1952, [www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc](http://www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc)

Further, the Act reads that any proceeding before the Commission shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of Sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code. The argument that the criminal justice proceedings cannot be initiated till the commission of inquiry finishes its task is completely fallacious. A commission of inquiry is not a substitute to the functioning of the criminal justice system. For it is within the ambit of the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code that the criminals are prosecuted and justice is meted out in the courts. Thus, the commission is an aid and a corrective to the functioning of this normal system of criminal justice. For, it may, after recording the facts constituting the offence and the statement of the accused... forward the case to a magistrate having jurisdiction to try the same and the evidence gathered by a commission can be sufficient to enable the government to proceed against those indicted both administratively and under the criminal law of the country.<sup>104</sup>

Moreover, the Act says that the commission shall be deemed to be a civil court and when any offence as is described in Section 175, Section 178, Section 179, Section 180 or Section 228 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) is committed in the view or presence of the commission, the commission may, after recording the facts constituting the offence and the statement of the accused as provided for in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 (5 of 1898) forward the case to a magistrate having jurisdiction to try the same and the magistrate to whom any such case is forwarded shall proceed to hear the complaint against the accused as if the case had been forwarded to him under Section 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.<sup>105</sup> The very first section about the Inquiry Commission Act gives commissions “the power of a Civil Court”, in various respects. But if we actually study the powers of the commission closely, we will find that a commission is only fictionally a civil court there is no accuser and no specific charges for trial and the government is not required to pronounce on the findings of the

---

<sup>104</sup> Recalling Bhagalpur: Aftermath of 1989 Riots Source: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 31, No. 18 (May 4, 1996), pp. 1055

<sup>105</sup> The Commissions Of Inquiry Act, 1952,  
[www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc](http://www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc)



commission. The commission does not enjoy the status of an adjudicating body and its inquiry is neither judicial nor quasi-judicial in nature. It is a civil court by fiction of law, for only limited purpose enumerated under the relevant provision of this section.

This idea is also supported by Dilip D'Souza who says that the major drawback of the Act is that it gives the commissions only the power to make recommendations to the government whereas, it is in the hands of the government to either implement it or not. The inquiry commission cannot prescribe punishment, though they can recommend it and the government can ignore their findings. So what purpose does an inquiry serve anyway? The Act tells us that it is supposed to restore "public confidence."<sup>106</sup>

Two years ago, the former chief justice of India R.C. Lahoti, expressed reservations about the importance of COIs, calling them the shortcomings of the Commission of Inquiry Act, which should be corrected by an amendment. "Personally, I feel that no judge should accept the responsibility of heading commissions of inquiry unless it is guaranteed that their recommendations and findings will be implemented," he remarked. Lahoti said the appointment of COIs was a diplomatic way of diverting attention of the people and termed it a "waste of time" and in his reckoning the only way to make commissions more effective was to amend the law to make it binding on the government to implement their recommendations.

It seems that the major drawback of an inquiry commission is that it is a recommendation making body. In addition, it is voluntary on part of the government to either accept or reject the reports and thus, the government seems to have full control over these commissions. The Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, is framed in such a way that it makes the various commissions a puppet in the hands of the state authority. Their reports are rarely used to rectify the mistakes; their recommendations are hardly implemented. In fact, in the Parliament where reports of inquiry commission are tabled

---

<sup>106</sup> Dilip D.Souza Laughing All The Way To The Inquiry, ,PUCL Bulletin , July, 2000

along with Action Task Reports should also recommend action and ensure its implementation. At the end of the day, the government is not serious at all and reports of such commissions merely gather dust.<sup>107</sup>

Section 4 of the Act provides for powers and it is clear that the commission has no power to compel a person to adduce before it and give evidence. It cannot pass verdicts or judgments which could be enforceable. The helplessness is such that even if an offence has been committed in view of or in presence of the commission, it needs to forward the case to the magistrate for trial as provided in Criminal Procedure Code.

The power that are assigned to the COI under the reference of Commissions of Inquiry Act 1952, seem to empower it a legal command, like the one which says that any proceeding before the commission shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding, but the major drawback of the Act is that it provides the commission recommendation making power thus reducing the influence of the commission.

### **REPORTS OF THE BHAGALPUR RIOTS INQUIRY COMMISSION**

Communal clashes and riots had been going on for some time in the country but one of the worst Hindu-Muslim riots started on October 24, 1989 in Bhagalpur and continued intermittently up to December, 1989. They again broke out in March 1990, which also claimed some lives. Bhagalpur was prone to communal disturbances and had witnessed communal clashes in 1924, 1936, 1946 and 1967 but all the previous clashes were practically confined to Bhagalpur town and had continued for very short period. They pale into insignificance before the present communal disturbances in brutalities, extent, duration and magnitude.

---

<sup>107</sup> The Hindu, July 1, 2009

The present communal disturbance surpassed all the previous disturbances. This riot took hundreds of lives while a large number of people also received bodily injuries of serious nature. Thousands of houses including shops were burnt and demolished, affecting nearly 50,000 people. The riots spread in about 250 villages lying in 15 Blocks out of 21 Blocks of the District.

The Bihar government in the aftermath of the Bhagalpur massacre decided to appoint a Commission of Inquiry for the purpose of making an inquiry into the definite matter of public importance to wit, the communal disturbances that have occurred in and around Bhagalpur since October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1989. In exercise of the power conferred by Section 3 of the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952 the Governor of Bihar hereby appoints a single member Commission of Inquiry, appointing Shri. R Prasad, a retired justice of the Patna High Court as its sole member.<sup>108</sup>

Before dealing with other issues, it is necessary to mention, in brief, the constitution and reconstitution of the Commission which has had a chequered career. By notification the state government reconstituted the single member Commission of Inquiry into a three-member Commission of Inquiry by adding two more members Sri S. Patanker, IAS (retired) and Sri SQ Rizvi IPS (retired). The life of the commission was extended up to October 31, 1991. It was also made clear that the reconstituted commission would proceed from the stage of inquiry already part of the proceeding. So, Sri S Patankar and Sri S Q Rizvi joined as members on October 4 and October 6, 1991.<sup>109</sup>

But soon the validity of the reconstitution of the Commission of Inquiry was challenged by Ramshilla Pujan Samiti and Shri Ram Mahayagya Samiti in the Honorable Patna High Court. The said petition for special leave was finally disposed of by an order dated

---

<sup>108</sup> Report of Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission 1989 ,( Honorable Chairman's Report)

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.p.2.

September 20, 1993 with a direction to the state of Bihar to appoint two retired judges as members of the commission with Mr. R N Prasad as chairman within two weeks from September 20, 1993.

Thus, the Commission of Inquiry was reconstituted by appointing Justice R C P Sinha and Justice Shamsul Hasan, retired judges of the Patna High Court as members in place of Mr. S Patanker and Shri S Q Rizvi, retaining Honorable Justice R N Prasad as chairman of the commission. The time hereby was also extended up to December 1993. It was also clarified that the newly constituted Commission of Inquiry would work from the stage of inquiry already progressed and other documents would deem to be a part of the proceeding before the reconstituted commission.

The period of the Commission of Inquiry was extended from time to time and the present extended period of the Commission expires on February 15, 1995. On the basis of the above Commission, two reports came on the Bhagalpur riot of 1989, namely:

- a) Report of Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission, 1989 (Honorable Members Report)
- b) Report of the Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission 1989 (Honorable Chairman's Report)

#### **SCOPE OR PURPOSE OF INQUIRY**

According to the terms of reference mentioned in the notification containing the commission of inquiry, the purpose of the commission is to find out the following things:

- To inquire into the facts and circumstances leading to communal disturbances;

- To inquire whether these disturbances were pre-planned and, if so the elements responsible for the same;
- To inquire whether the measures taken by the district administration to prevent and deal with the said disturbances were timely and adequate and to fix responsibility for lapses;
- To recommend measures for preventing the recurrence of such disturbances;
- To consider such other matter relating to these communal disturbances and make recommendations as the Commission may think proper and necessary.<sup>110</sup>

As the terms of reference mentioned in the notification constituting the Commission of Inquiry, the Bhagalpur Riot Commission is to go into the question of causes of the communal disturbances in the district of Bhagalpur and adjacent areas which broke out on October 24, 1989. It also decided to inquire whether the disturbances were pre-planned and the elements responsible for them. The first two terms of references reflect the nature of inquiry that is expected to be done by the commission.

Looking into the facts and circumstances leading to the riot, suggests that the role of the commission is mainly to find out causes for the outbreak of violence. Its purpose it seems is to figure out the reasons for the outbreak of violence give a detail report on that basis to the government. This clause in a way limits the scope of the inquiry commission, it will try finding out the reasons and causes for the outbreak of riots and there is a possibility that in doing so they might not take into consideration the possibility of the peace process.

The third purpose fixed for the inquiry commission empowers it, with the task of looking into the role played by the administration and the government bodies in their failure to maintain law and order situation. A thorough inquiry is estimated to be made that will

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.p.1.

scrutinize the part played by the administration in bringing the situation under control and fix responsibility for lapses in this regard.

The term of reference clearly mentions that the task of the commission is to fix responsibility and investigate the part played by the police, administration in this regard. They fail to include another term of reference that might look into the role played by the civil society and various peace committees in relation to the riots. They do not inquire whether they had any role to play in relation to riots. Do they help in maintaining peace and harmony at the time when riots break out? The commissions do not inquire about the situation of inter ethnic engagement and inter community relations at the time of breaking of the violence.

One might wonder, as to how, the issue of civic engagement can be of any relevance to the commission, in their inquiry of communal riot. What purpose will be served if one deals with the question of inter-community relations while making an inquiry report on the incident? But a person who is dealing with the question of peace may find this aspect relevant. The riots as we know not only lead to loss of life and property but cause serious damage to the social fabric of the community. Therefore, solely inquiring about the role played by the police and administration will not be sufficient enough for the understanding of communal violence.

To my understanding, it appears that the role of inquiry committees should be broadened where the scope of inquiry includes the question of peace. No doubt fixing responsibility and bringing the culprits to book is also essential but it seems to me that due space should also be given to the question of peace in the whole process of commission inquiry.

## WORKING OF THE COMMITTEE

Before discussing the details of the report, I would first reflect on the method adopted by the commissions for their inquiry of the case. The commission, being a fact finding body follows a very formal procedure to know the facts relating to the incident and then forms a report on that basis. It tries to access everybody personally involved or otherwise related or affected by the riot. It also takes a lot of help from various institutions like newspaper offices, police personnel, party members and non governmental organizations, among others with a view to collect as many facts as possible from the various sources and then try to establish the report on its basis.

The report says that public notices were issued through several newspapers calling upon individuals, group of persons, associations, institutions and organizations having knowledge directly or indirectly of the facts and circumstances relating to the communal disturbances that have occurred in and around Bhagalpur from October 24, 1989 and thereafter and having interest in the proceeding before the commission to submit their written statements on affidavit, relating to the terms of reference before commission, personally or through registered post. This notice was published in English, Hindi and Urdu newspapers. On publication of notice of the constitution of the commission of inquiry in several newspapers, calling for filing statement of facts regarding the disturbances at Bhagalpur and its surrounding areas, a large number of written statement i.e. 481 in number were received by the commission by May 21, 1990.<sup>111</sup>

Now, if we carefully analyze the list of witnesses we will find that most of them belong to either some part or organization and the government itself, so there is a lack of independent witnesses and although independent witnesses are also present, their number is comparatively less. Consequently, there are chances that the various witnesses might give a biased statement depending upon the contending party to which they belong.

---

<sup>111</sup> Report of Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission 1989, (Honorable Members Report), Secretariat Press, Bihar, Patna, 1995, p.4.

Therefore the authenticity of their statement can be questioned and cannot be easily relied upon.

Besides, if we look into the different statements made by the witnesses, we find that the question being asked to them is such which will try to locate the role of police, government body and other people in relation to the riot. The Inquiry Commission merely tries to fix responsibility and in its attempt to locate the real culprit behind the massacre, it misses on the question of peace. It does not ask the witness any peace related question, which means that these commissions do not question the witness if he or she helped any person of the other community when the violence was on. Some of the statements made by the witness I would mention here:

Amarkant Jha witness no. 1 ( Bhagwat Prasad Bhagat)

[“24-10-1989 ko jo Ramshila juloos nikla tha usme mai bhi sammilit tha. Is juloos mein adhiktar budhe bachche tatha mahilayaen thin aur kuch hi naujawn the. Juloos wale bhajan karte huye ja rahe the.vo log musalmano ke virudh koyee nara nahi laga rahe the.”]<sup>112</sup>.

In this statement Bhagwat Prasad Bhagat says that the Ramshilla procession that was taken out on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1989, was accompanied by him also. The procession constituted mostly of old people, children and women and there were very few youths in it. The processionists were reciting prayer while passing and there was no slogan shouting being made against the Muslims.

CPI witness no. 15( Kapildev Mandal)

[Para 1:“24-10-1989 ko Manaskamna mein jo julus nikla tha use dekhne ke liye humlog kuch vidyarthi T.N.B College ke gate ke paas chale gaye the, Julus wale nara laga rahe

---

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.p.46



the Jai Ma Kali Tatarpur Karo Khali, Apmaan ka badla lena hai Babar ki santan se, Jis Hindu ka khun na khule wah khun nahi hai.”] <sup>113</sup>

The witness Kapildev Mandal says that on October 24, 1989, he with some of the students went near the gate of T.N.B College to watch the procession that was passing from Manaskamna and the processionist were shouting slogans against Muslims calling “Jai Ma Kali empty Tatarpur locality, we will take revenge from the sons of Babar and the Hindu whose blood doesn’t boil is not the real blood.”

[Para 4:” Juloos ka sanyojak B.J.P, V.H.P aur Bajrangdal ke log tatha Vidhyarti Parishad ke sadsya hi the. We log juloos mein bhi شامل hue the.”] <sup>114</sup>

The witness in the above statement says that the perpetrators of the procession were the members of B.J.P, V.H.P and Bajrang Dal and they were involved in the procession.

The above statement made by various witnesses reflects upon the type of question that was being asked by the inquiry commission. They are asking about the nature of the Ramshilla procession, this would help them in finding out about the facts and on the basis of it they would fix responsibility.

[“24<sup>th</sup> October 1989 ko karib 2.00 baje din mein parwati ke musalmano ke gharon ko charo aur se ghera gaya. Mai us samay wohi par tha. Yun dangiyo me se utar walon ne sab se pehle mere ghar par hamla kiya. Dangayeen ne sab se pehle humlogo ke gharo ke saman ko bahar nikala aur uske baad gharo me aag laga di. Iske bad dangayeen log upper wale manzil per charne ka prayas karne lage tab humlog kisi tarah chat se kood kar purab

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid p. 46.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid p.47.

ki aur bhage us samay Sri Nihal Adhivakta bhi humlog ke saath the. Par bhagte hue we pakre gaye aur mare gaye.”] <sup>115</sup>

The above witness says that on the October 24, 1989 at 2.00 pm the house of Muslims in the Parwati locality was surrounded by four sides. I was present there at that time. Among those present, the people from the North were the first to attack my house. The rioters first tried throwing the belongings out of our house and after which they burnt our homes. After this, the rioters started climbing the upper floor of our house, by which time we managed to escape by jumping from the terrace and started running towards the east. Politician Nihal was also with us at that time but while running, he was caught and killed.

[Para 3: “Bhagte hue mai Barechak per pahuncha us samay karib 3.30 sarhe teen baje hoge. Wahan main ek police ki jeep mein police ko aatey hue dekha mujhe baad me maloom hua ki jeep per aarakshi nirakshak K.C.Dubey bhi tha. Jab maine unhe humlogo ke gharo pe ja ke suraksha dene ko kaha to unhone mujhe revolver dekhaya aur kaha “lootne dijiye, jalne dijiye aur marne dijiye”. Sri Dubey ke samne hi humlog ke gharo ke saman ko company bagh ki aur le jaya gaya tha tatha ghraon ko jalaya bhi jar raha tha. Unho ne unko rokne ka koi prabhand nai kiya.”] <sup>116</sup>

Here the witness states that while running I reached to Berchak around 3.30 pm. There was a police jeep coming and Mr. K.C. Dubey was sitting inside the jeep. When I asked him to provide security to our houses, he pointed a revolver towards me and said, “Let them destroy, burn and kill.” It was in front of Sri Dubey only that our stuff was being carried away to the company bagh and our houses were being burnt.

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.p.55.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.p.55.

The statement made by the different witnesses tells a lot about the role played by the police, parties and the rioters in spreading plunder and disorder during riots. This helped the commission in its investigations. But the commission failed to put forward any peace related questions, directing on the inter-community relation during riots. Though this question might not help the COI in their investigation about the culprits behind the riot, but the answer to this question can reflect on the type of inter-community bondage existing in the riot hit areas. If people of different communities have helped the other at time of riot, then it might help in building inter communal solidarity further and will also help in establishing trust and unity in the society which is important for communal harmony. The major focus of the commission is to ask the witness about what actually happened and what role was played by different people and organization, so that on the basis of their statement responsibility could be fixed and the wrong doer held.

Moreover, the inquiry commission also relies on the reports of various newspapers, which it seems is not free from biases. In addition, the witnesses give different details about the same incident. Like some witnesses and newspapers read that the Ramshilla procession was totally peaceful and unarmed, some witnesses state that the procession was making provocative slogan shouting. Hence, it becomes very difficult to fix responsibility and to find the truth of the incident. The risk factor always remains there. The misinformation and fabricated statements made by the witness might misguide the COI and justice may not be delivered in the true sense.

### **READING THE REPORT**

In this section, I will give a brief account of what are the areas where the reports emphasize while making its inquiry. My discussion will start by focusing on the fact that how the two reports give a different account of the same incident. After that I will mention the various points highlighted by the reports like the causes for the outbreak of violence, the immediate cause, the role of the police district administration, media and

finally I will end this section by pointing out the suggestions made by the commissions and my own analysis.

To start with the *difference in the two reports*, whereas the members report of the Bhagalpur Riots Inquiry Commission presented their conclusions in 128 pages with 423 pages of annexure. It gives a clear chronological account of the 1989-riots and this account is supported by independent witnesses and fact-findings of civil rights groups. The report traces the history of communalism in India, blaming both Hindu and Muslim fanatics for the hostile relations between the two communities. It also condemns the role of communal organizations and irresponsible sections of the media in spreading rumors. It indicts the district administration and the police for: (a) allowing the Ramshila procession to pass through the sensitive Tatarpur area even though it was not mentioned in the license issued for the procession (b) Indifference and incompetence in not anticipating the riots (c) Failure to scotch rumors that were provoking communal violence (d) Failure to maintain curfew and their own active violation of the curfew orders, to protest against the transfer of the SP on October 26, 1989. Apart from general censure of officials and government agencies on grounds of anti-Muslim bias, the members report names certain officials directly responsible for the happenings: (1) The superintendent of police, K S Dwivedi, is held wholly responsible for the riots that occurred. According to the report, the fact that VHP and BJP members along with the police protested against his transfer, exposes the communal links of key police officials. (2) Navin Kumar (deputy SP) and KCDubey (officer-in-charge, Kotwali PS), are both indicted for assisting the SP and being spectator to loot, arson in the Sujaganj and Parbatti areas of Bhagalpur town. (3) The IG police, G P Dohre, is held to be equally responsible along with the SP. The report notes that his communal bias was apparent ... during Muharram, when he said that he would make Bhagalpur another Karbala (where Husain, son of Ali and grandson of the Prophet, and his Muslim troops were slaughtered by the Caliphate's army near Baghdad). (4) Officers-in-charge of police stations Nathnagar and Mojalhidpur are indicted on counts of 'loot, arson, murder or abetting or deliberately failing to prevent it. ASI Ramachander Singh (PS Jagdishpur) is charged with personally directing the Logain massacre, along with several others mentioned by

name. District administration officials specifically accused in this report are the DM Arun Jha and the ADM in-charge (control room), executive magistrate, Bhagalpur, the block development officers of Nathnagar and others. The charges made against them are similar to those against the police in the report.<sup>117</sup>

The dissenting minority report of the chairman, Justice Prasad, is in sharp contrast to the majority members report. Originally the sole member of the commission, he had consistently disagreed with the other members. Thus he was opposed to the notices issued to the district and police officials by the then IAS officer members. Justice Prasad had not seen the need to inquire into the conduct of these officials, who had held responsible posts in Bhagalpur at the time of the riots and had failed to control the riots and had connived with the rioters. From the opening paragraph onwards, the chairman's report betrays the same communal perceptions which were cultivated and exploited during the riots. In the chapter on the 'background', the chairman instructs Indian Muslims to avoid contact with ISI agents if they want restoration of trust in them. He is of the opinion that the incidents at Fatehpur definitely had nothing to do with the riots, and officials could not be blamed for not taking precautions. About the Tatarpur incident which sparked off the riots in Bhagalpur town, it blames the Muslims for throwing bombs upon a peaceful Ramshila procession when it is by no means clear as to who threw the bombs. Despite the ample evidence presented to the commission, the chairman finds, neither the police nor the administration had a communal bias. They failed in controlling the riots for which they must be held accountable and if necessary punished. Significantly, the report omits all mention of the worst massacres at Logain, Chanderi, and Bhikanipur in which witnesses allege that the police were actively involved. No attempt is made to fix responsibility for the riots. In fact, A K Singh, ADM, Law and Order, Bhagalpur, responsible for uncovering the Logain massacre, has been criticized for publishing an article exposing the collusion of the district administration with rioters. As is more than apparent, the findings of the two reports are completely divergent.<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup>Recalling Bhagalpur: Aftermath of 1989 Riots, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 31, No. 18 (May 4, 1996), p.1055

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.p.1056.

The members' report was accepted by the legislature by virtue of it being a majority report. The appointing government is required to lay great stress on the composition of the commission to ensure that it is unbiased. When, as in the case of the Bhagalpur commission, a member is biased, the integrity of the commissions of inquiry and the ability of the state to prevent further communalization gets eroded. The fact that the composition of the commission could change so frequently and that two reports could be brought out with diametrically opposed conclusions indicated a deeper problem: the susceptibility of commissions of inquiry to the inclinations of the government in power and interventions by the judiciary.<sup>119</sup>

As already discussed under the Commission of Inquiry Act 1952, the Commissions formed are merely fact finding body and is only required to ascertain the people who were involved in the incident and the manner of involvement and to suggest the action that could be taken up by the Government. The Commission is just supposed to collect evidence and probe into the matter referred to it under the terms of reference.

Here, I will start with discussing the *causes* for the outbreak of communal riots in Bhagalpur as reported by the Commission. The members report discusses the Ramshilla Pooja affair under the Ramjanambhoomi case. It tells that the utterances of some of the leaders made publicly helped to generate the undesirable feeling of anger and dismay towards the Muslims. Rath yatras through the gangetic valley was organized which caused minor communal outbreaks en route resulting in violence. In one of the instances that the report has used mentions the statement made by L.K. Advani in Panchajaniya as copied by the Times of India, reads: RIOTS WILL STOP IF MUSLIM.....IDENTIFY WITH HINDUTVA: ADVANI<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.p.1056.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.p.15.

By the above statement, Advani meant that if the Muslims in the country identify themselves with the concept of Hindutva, there would not be any reason for riots to take place. In another statement, Advani said “India is a Hindu Rashtra (Nation) and those residing in the country are Hindus even though many of them believe in different religions.” He extended this contention to state that those following Islam were Mohammdi Hindus. Likewise, in his perception, Christians living in the country were Christian Hindus while Sikhs were termed as Sikh Hindus. The term Hindu Rashtra was never used during the Jan Sangh days, neither has it ever been mentioned in any manifestos of the BJP. But the term has gained currency in the wake of the Ayodhya movement. It is due to this that he wanted to make it clear that he had no hesitation what so ever in using the term. If ordinary Muslims do not accept the concept of Hindu Rashtra, he would like to tell the community that there was no difference in the three terms: Hindu Rashtra, Bhartiya Rashtra and Indian nation. If the attempt is to undermine the basic Hindu nature of the country by using the term Indian nation, Mr. Advani said such attempt was wrong. The basic ethos of the country can be described by the word Hindu, he claimed.<sup>121</sup>

The members’ report narrates how L.K Advani gave a nation-wide call to the devout Hindus to prepare shilas of brick wherever they might be in India In hamlets and villages and towns and after consecrating them to bring them to Ayodhya so that with those bricks a massive temple to the glory of Lord Rama could be constructed there although the dispute between the temple and mosque had yet to be resolved. The report further claims that BJP workers had spread out in villages and towns of India, propagating and educating and then seeking the co-operation of the masses in the execution of their plan. This religious and political environment effected Bhagalpur too, a city which later was engulfed in the atmosphere of religious, political and commercial criminalization.

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid .p.15.

Now, if we take up the Honorable Chairman's Report it states after analyzing various oral evidence that Ramshilla procession was leaving peacefully without passing any provocative slogans or making any harmful gestures. But near the Muslim High School, the procession was attacked by Muslims through brickbats and bombs after which the processionists were made to return towards Nathnagar that is towards west of Muslim High School after the curfew was imposed.

The Report also states that Muslim criminals had gathered in large number with the objective of obstructing the procession at any cost. In fact, they also used these weapons on the police party when they asked them to disperse after curfew was imposed, as a result of which at least twenty eight police personnel were injured. Thus, the report states that the first communal attack was made by Muslims, which further led to the outbreak of violence.

On the other hand, the report of the Honorable Members briefs on the fact that the Ramshilla procession was not a peaceful one, rather it was deliberately passing through the Muslim High School and Tatarpur while shouting provocative statements like, "Parbatti ki kali Tatarpur khali"<sup>122</sup>, which in other words meant long live mother Kali of Parbatti and the Muslim dominated Tatarpur should be freed from Muslim. So such provocative sloganing were the major cause of opening of violence.

Besides, the fact that the concern of the reports is revolving around finding reasons for the breakdown of the violence.<sup>123</sup> At several points, the detail presented by the two reports on the same matter is different. For instance, one report that is the Member's report states that the Ramshilla procession was a peaceful and totally devotional in their attitude and were dedicated to the religious task that they were performing but there was also persons who were armed and their were persons who shouted slogans. This provocative act of intolerance defiles the sanctity of a purely religious procession and

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.p.45.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.p.48-49.



also destroyed its purely religious character leading to devastating consequences. Thus, the report though giving two different evidences is just trying to investigate the causes for the breaking of violence. Whereas the Chairman's report narrates a different story altogether, saying that the procession was absolutely peaceful one and there was no incidence of provocative slogan shouting. This difference in the reports of the two commissions does reflect on the fact that biasness might come while writing a report.

The Commissions further discuss the "*immediate cause*" of the flare up of the communal riots. They have given few reasons which suddenly led to the breaking of violence. The chairman's report claims that one of the reasons for the riot, being the attack on the Ramshilla processionist from the Muslim High School. The report in detail describes as to how attack on the Ramshila procession led to the immediate breaking of violence. Throughout the investigation we see, that reasons are being searched for the breaking of the riot.

The chairman's report writes another cause of flare up, was attack on the SP<sup>124</sup> at Tatarpur chowk on 24<sup>th</sup> October. It is stated that on October 24, nearly 3 pm a mob of about 500 persons assembled at Tatarpur and they attacked the police force by throwing bomb, brick bats and using fire arms. As result thereof 28 police officers and constables sustained injuries. Repeated attacks were made on Sri K.S Dwivedi, Superintendent of Police Bhagalpur, who was besieged by the violent mobs of Muslims. The Superintendent of Police fired six rounds from his revolver in self defense.

The third cause in the chairman's report was the attack on the Hindu boys in lodges. Of course, only two Hindu boys died in the attack in the lodges but a rumor was spread that a large number of Hindu boys were killed in the Muslim lodges This coupled with the fact that a large number of boys who were living in the lodges, could not return to their villages home within reasonable time, gave strength to this rumor and as a result thereof

---

<sup>124</sup> Superintendent of Police

riots spread in villages also. Now we see here that the report tries to investigate the immediate cause which instantly led to the outbreak of violence. Whatever be the reason for the eruption of the violence, one thing that is very clear from the above reporting is that the commission tends to be merely fact finding bodies. There investigation of the whole incident is such that it just tries to discover the main culprit behind the occurrence of riot. Why so much stress is being given to know about the reason for the flare of violence, because through it the commission will be able to reach out to the real culprit of the attack.

Another chief section covered in the members report is the wide description of the various incidents at different places in Bhagalpur. Starting with incident at village Lugain, the report states that at this village there was 25 Muslim family having around 170 members in all. On October 27, 1989, at about 7.00 am, the village was attacked by about 4000 Hindus of the surrounding villages of Hemra, Amhara, Mirnagar, Bhabangama and eight others. Some Muslims escaped and hid in the nearby paddy fields. When darkness set in they fled to the nearby Babura village, where 180 persons were killed and their bodies were first thrown into the pond. Later they were dumped into two wells of the Muslim tola.<sup>125</sup>

Then the other village discussed is Chanderi which is a mix of Hindu- Muslim having nearly fifty houses of the Muslims. On 27<sup>th</sup> October 1989 when the rumor of the reported killing of the Hindus later found to be false, reached Chanderi the situation changed. Few Muslim houses in the village on the periphery of Chanderi were burnt and two persons killed. About 70-80 Muslims huddled together in one house. After their houses were burnt they had taken shelter in one another house. It appears that no step was taken to protect these people. The following day at around 8.30 am, they were brought out of the house on the assurance that they would be safely escorted to the Rajpur village where the Muslims are in majority. While they were going along side a pond in the middle of the village, on the way to Rajpur they were attacked from two sides sixty of them were

---

<sup>125</sup> Report of Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission (Honorable Members Report), Superintendent Secretariat Press, Bihar, Patna, 1995, p.95.

killed and their bodies thrown into the pond. Another village Bhatoria had a history of tension between the Yadav and the Muslims. On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1989, nearly 30 houses in Bhatoria were demolished by rampaging mobs. From a distance the Magistrate and the police force watched helplessly the loot, plunder, killings and the demolition of houses.<sup>126</sup>

The above and many more examples have been discussed in the report where they have shown as to how the member of one community has tried to attack the member of another community. There are elements in the report that even describe whole incident and ways in which people are massacred. Here I would site two examples from the reports,

The members report sites the example of Adani Nagar situated on the outskirts of the Nathnagar, the mob entered village, attacked and looted almost all the houses and set them on fire. The local mosque was also burnt. All the power looms and handlooms were also burnt. All men and women with children ran across the roads toward Champa Nagar. One old woman who was left named Zohra Bibi got killed, while two people Bashir and Kalim received bullet wounds, as they attempted to flee for safety. The other incident in Chanderi village where one Malika Begum was found crying for help from inside the pond, with her leg amputated with a sword.<sup>127</sup>

The point that I want to bring forward is that the reporting on the various incidents of massacre, help the commission to find out the actual figure of the people killed and by addressing the victim by names, they try inquiring as in which community had suffered more in the attack. All these details might help the commission in its own way but along with it a major damage is made to the unity and trust of the people of the different communities. A person of Muslim Or the Hindu community when read the report and come through the pages where the brutalities done to the other community is discussed in

---

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.p.96-97.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.p.96-99.

detail , then this might result in developing feeling of hatred and remorse in a person's mind belonging to the victim community. So these incidents as discussed in the reports may lead to the widening of gap between the communities. Here I don't want to say that the reporting of violence is not needed, rather the point that I want to make is that the commissions should try giving details about any incident where the members of the two communities cooperated each other.

Moreover, while discussing the incidents of attacks and killings the COI<sup>128</sup> fails to reflect upon the inter community solidarity. They do not bother to investigate the fact that whether during incidents of violence the members of the two communities were making any effort to help each other. One report states about "The Harna Bujrug village of Rajaon Anchal, in Bhagalpur, in which 27 villages belonging to the minority community were burnt. Many refugees thronged to the village. Even now some thousand refugees were being fed by the villagers. This is a composite village consisting of both the communities. This village like an oasis in a desert was sought to be attacked but the people of the village unitedly resisted."<sup>129</sup>

The commissions in their report do not mention any such incident of cooperation that took place between the two communities and thus totally ignore the relevance of inter ethnic engagement. While reading the report what I found was that the reports do not have any section where any reference was made about the inter-ethnic cooperation if made during the rioting. Infact the reports do not bother to look into such incidents of mutual aid whether took place in the course of rioting between the communities.

One reason for this is that the terms of reference do not ask the commission to look into such incidents of peace, joint work and help. But I feel that if these incidents, where member of one community is helping the person of another community and saving his or

---

<sup>128</sup> Commission of Inquiry.

<sup>129</sup> Rao ,C.Rajeshwar, General Secretary,CPI, Some Lessons From Bhagalpur Carnage, in Muslim India, 1990,p.111.

her life, is covered as one of the section of the commission report, it may have a good impact on the minds of readers who go through the reports. It might also reflect on the importance of inter ethnic engagement, and the role it can play in fighting communal violence.

Here I will discuss the most important section of the Commission's work that is analyzing the *role of police* and *district administration* regarding communal riots in Bhagalpur. By just seeing the length of work one can easily make out that the reports have put a lot of emphasis on this section of their investigation. Thus in relation of the above, the members report states that if we judge the effectiveness of the police force in Bhagalpur in containing the communal riots, we may come to the conclusion that they have failed in Bhagalpur in the same way as they have failed in other parts of Bihar in matters of crime control. The report says that there is enough evidence on the record to state that the police did not reach at the place of occurrence and failed to control the riots at many places.

The extent of the riot and the manner in which it started, developed and continued clearly indicate lack of adequate will and men and material to control the situation that developed and total absence of any machinery or if there was one its total incompetence to anticipate communal outbreak of this magnitude, particularly, when there was patent signs of its possibilities. The whole matter was further compounded by not only the inefficiency of those who were handling the situation out, the total undesirable and mental attitude of those who were expected to handle the situation in a manner that required them to be fair and unbiased totally devoted as to their employment devoid of personal feelings, religious belief and attitude.

The members report states that no effort was made whatsoever by the district authority to prevent the activities of the criminal elements in the town of Bhagalpur whether they were Hindus or Muslims. It claims that the police force was totally anti Muslim in their

attitude and had no desire or will to save the life of innocent Muslims who were killed in the communal holocaust. It further mentions that on evidence of the officials of the government it is absolutely clear that the condition in Bhagalpur was absolutely chaotic. The communal animosity that prevailed was handled with pure nonchalance. The situation was grave but the effort indifferent. Instead of making serious measures no real or adequate effort was made.

The State government in Patna being fully aware of the situation prevailing in Bhagalpur did not respond adequately to the seriousness of the situation. If the army would have been sent on the 24th itself by the Chief Secretary, who should have obtained the order of the government to that effect and if could have reached Bhagalpur before dawn on 25<sup>th</sup> and had taken charge of the whole of the town and district totally neutralizing the district administration and even making them innocuous with shoot at sight orders, matters had been brought under control.

In the prevailing situation even the higher rank police officers did not prove much efficient. The report says that the entire responsibility for not taking timely action and for preventing riot by the criminal elements falls squarely on the district administration, particularly, and the total incoherent and ineffective steps taken by the State Government from Patna and the officials of Bhagalpur. Instead of taking effective steps to avoid escalation of riots, allegations are being treated against each other and they even avoided appearing before the Commission as requested by it.

The above paragraphs suggest the fact that the COI consider the role of police and state most important in relation to the riots. They make a detailed analysis of the role played by the police and the administration in controlling riots. Somewhere it is believed by the various discourses that it is completely in the hands of the administration to either instigate or control riots. Therefore such close analysis is made of the part played by it at the time of violence. I think that there is no harm in making a detail scrutiny of the above

institutions, provided that equal effort is even made to find out the role of civil society and inter community relations play in maintaining peace.

Besides this Honorable Chairman's report has also thrown light on the *irresponsible act of the media*. Apart from the role of communal organizations and district officials, the role of the printing media the newspapers needs a careful scrutiny and consideration. In this regard the role of some newspaper reporting especially the reporting in the "Hindustan Times", like "*Hundreds of Hindus killed*",<sup>130</sup> appeared on the front page of the newspaper and gave the impression that thousands of Hindus were killed.

Further reports like "*Muslims had planned to molest Hindu women*" and the other report saying that the "*Principal of S M College cleared the hostel within four hours thus saving many girls from a fate worst than death*".<sup>131</sup> Moreover reports like "*Bodies recovered from the well behind the Sanskrit College could have been helpless students. The well was filled by bodies probably hundred.*"<sup>132</sup> "The foreign hand is behind the riot and large quantity of foreign arms and ammunitions recovered. However it was stated that this news was denied by the district administration"<sup>133</sup>

As a result the media including "Hindustan Times" of Patna gave wide publicity to these rumors which made the people to believe these rumors, ultimately resulting to the loss of the valuable life of hundreds of Muslims. The report thus in short also talks about the role played by the media in relation to the incident.

After taking note of the state, police and media the reports have furthermore analyzed the *role of political parties* in communal violence. Regarding the role of political parties the report has put some responsibility on the members of the Congress (I) for not handling

---

<sup>130</sup> Hindustan Times, Patna Edition, 14 November, 1989.

<sup>131</sup> Hindustan Times, Patna Edition, 14 November, 1989.

<sup>132</sup> Hindustan Times, Patna Edition, 14 November, 1989.

<sup>133</sup> Hindustan Times, Patna Edition, 1 November, 1989.

the situation properly, further resulting in widespread violence. Besides the report has also given some accusation to the VHP<sup>134</sup> for instigating communal tension and spreading communal feeling among the people but has given a clean chit to the Bhartiya Janta Party saying that none of its members were involved in trouble making. So we see that in brief the report also reflects on the parties activities in relation to the communal riots.

In the last section comes the *Commission's recommendation* and thus the report ends while trying to draw a holistic picture .In this part, the Report mainly gives various suggestions so that it will help in maintaining peace and harmony in the society. The first suggestion made by the Committee is that the *economic condition* of the lower strata of both the communities that indulges in riots should be improved.

Another germane point made here is the eradication of illiteracy, because an illiterate man is easily swayed by communal and other sorts of passion. So Government should take adequate steps to remove *illiteracy* as well as *poverty* for achieving communal harmony .The Commission suggests on the need for imparting *secular education* and criticizes the role played by Madarsa and Sanskrit schools in creating fundamentalist attitude and thus leading segregation of one community from the other. So a secular education system is considered to be imperative for the character building of the students and development of feeling of brotherhood amongst them. Besides this there is also need for common playground and cultural activities so that the spirit of oneness is developed.

Undisputedly, the Commission states that the role of the police is also very important in controlling general crime as well as crime committed during communal disturbances. Top priority is given to *streamline the police force* and the police administration. There should be unity of command in police force of every district. The recruitment of police

---

<sup>134</sup> Vishwa Hindu Parishad



should be on entirely merit basis. Also the political interference in the police activity should be avoided.

The men of intelligence wing should be given sufficient professional training for intelligence work and it should act as a professional wing. Besides a task force like Rapid Action Force should also be created in every state which should specialize in containing communal riot , terrorist activities etc. Moreover the police wing should be highly secular and above all partisan and communal feelings. Also the Army should be requisitioned very sparingly for controlling the communal riots.

So after analyzing both the Commission Report on Bhagalpur riot we can again make a conclusion that the Commission is a merely fact finding body. The reports merely look into the what, when, where of the incident. They try to figure out the person responsible and find out the reason for the flaring up of violence. They look into the facts and figures and depend a lot on the evidences including eyewitnesses and other personnel or organization related to the whole incident. They give the detail of the number of causality in both the communities and try to tell the fact as to which community was at doing more wrong.

No doubt the role of the police, district administration and state government is thoroughly looked into, thus bringing into light the communal lineage of any one of the above party. They also analyze as to where were they working responsibly and where did they went wrong and unchecked. Even the role of the army is scrutinized thoroughly. Besides the media is also not spared if at any point of time it has acted irresponsibly and led to the spread of the communal tension. The Commission also gives valuable suggestion which might help in bringing the guilty to book and in the end gives suggestions as to how to put a check on the violence and how to spread better efficiency among police officials, paramilitary forces and civil administration in tackling with communal violence.

Thus no doubt the Commission of Inquiry does play a vital role and fulfills its task successfully. But one point where they miss out is the negligence provided to the question of the inter community relationship and its role in maintaining communal peace. They do not throw much light on the role which can be played by common masses of the two communities in keeping the violence at bay. They look to the immediate causes of violence but do not research the condition of inter ethnic ties between the two communities. They try solving problems through suggestion given to the various institutions but do not put any emphasis on what role inter ethnic engagement can play in avoiding riots.

#### **FROM RESPONSIBILITY FIXING TO HEALING: N.N.SINGH COMMISSION AND MUSLIM UNITED SURVEY**

.The Nitish Government, being satisfied on the point that though a commission of inquiry was constituted earlier to review the Bhagalpur riot, did not deliberate on related issues regarding fixation of responsibility on erring persons and that despite recommendation of the commission final reports were submitted though there was prima facie evidence available in case diaries against accused persons and that adequate and sufficient rehabilitation was not provided to sufferers and their families and large number of riot victims have not yet been rehabilitated and have not been provided adequate relief.

In the circumstances, the present state government considered it expedient to constitute a new Judicial Inquiry Commission and in exercise of power conferred under section 3(1) of Commission Of Inquiry Act 1952 ( Act XI 1952) , the governor of Bihar was pleased to constitute a single member commission of judicial inquiry comprising Honorable Justice N.N. Singh (Retd) as its chairman in accordance with recommendations of Honorable Chief Justice of the Patna High Court vide Government of Bihar, notification

dated 26<sup>th</sup> February , 2006 named “The Bhagalpur Communal Riot Inquiry Commission”.<sup>135</sup>

The main *purpose* of this Inquiry Commission is as follows:

- To inquire into the conduct and performances of the investigating and the prosecuting agencies of cases arising out of Bhagalpur riot 1989 -1990 which either ended into submission of final report and acceptance thereof by competent court in the absence of concerned, coordinated and proper steps taken by prosecuting agencies.
- To analyze the nature, causes and circumstances under which the investigating police officers submitted final reports of the form stating mistake of fact, no clue ,insufficient evidence after detail analysis of records and fix responsibility for the negligence , connivance and laches in doing so on the police officers.
- To inquire and find whether distress sale of properties in riot affected areas have taken place. If so the circumstances under which this has happened including persons responsible.
- To consider and supervise the ways and scheme for rehabilitation and rendering relief to the victims in the Bhagalpur Riot and particularly for restoring their possession over the lands and houses from where they may have been uprooted forcibly and criminally
- To consider and apprise of the steps taken by the authorities concerned on the suggestions and recommendations given by the previous Bhagalpur Riot Commission for rehabilitation etc.

---

<sup>135</sup> Interim Report of Bhagalpur Communal Riot Inquiry Commission, Honorable Justice Retired N.N Singh,p.1-2.

- To consider and suggest any other remedial measures to prevent recurrence of communal riot and prevention of future connivance and abatement by the authorities responsible for maintaining law and order and rehabilitation of the victims.<sup>136</sup>

The Nitish Kumar government by the formation of this commission, after almost seventeen years of the Bhagalpur riots has once again turned the pages of some long forgotten chapter. Anyone can get curious and try to speculate the purpose behind the formation of this Commission. The terms of reference and the scope of inquiry as already mentioned above do tell the aim and objective to be fulfilled through this commission.

Other than the aims that are mentioned for the formation of this commission, the question that strikes in my mind, is that, is there any larger hidden goal behind the constitution of this commission. The purpose of the commission as it reads is to consider and apprise the steps taken by the authorities concerned on the suggestions and recommendations given by the previous Bhagalpur Riot Commission for rehabilitation.

It seems as if the purpose of the commission is to examine the role played by the earlier state government in Bihar, to implement the suggestion of the previous Inquiry Commission. It also aims at to inquire into the conduct and performances of the investigating and the prosecuting agencies of cases arising out of Bhagalpur riot 1989 - 1990 which either ended into submission of final report and acceptance thereof by competent court in the absence of concerned, coordinated and proper steps by prosecuting agencies.

It appears to me that some politics behind the formation of this commission might exist. The commission in the fulfillment of its task would further bring into light the failure on

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.p.4-5.

the part of the R.J.D <sup>137</sup>government to implement the suggestions made by the earlier commissions. Doing this would further spoil the name of the earlier government that would help the present government in winning the appreciation of the people, especially from the minority group. So there is a possibility that besides being actually concerned with troubles of the victims of the Bhagalpur riot, the Nitish Kumar government is trying to play a politics of appeasement to increase the support base of its party that is JD(U).<sup>138</sup>

The *Interim Report of the N.N.Singh Commission* tries to compare the Bhagalpur riot with that of the anti Sikh riot of 1984 regarding its extent, barbarism, devastation and loss of life and property. The report says “the duration of Bhagalpur Riot surpassed 1984 riot as it occurred from 24.10.1989 to December 1989 and also in March 1990, both the riots resulted in the form of enormous human tragedy.” While discussing Judicial Inquiry Commission Report, the Central Government after 22 years in 2006, announced a relief package for victims of 1984 riot. So the same should be done for the victims of the Bhagalpur riot. Therefore the Commission suggests that the state government of Bihar should take up the matter to the Central Government requesting to grant similar package for victims of Bhagalpur riot. This interim report is submitted to the State Government, so that the Central Government may be moved for announcing similar packages to the victims of 1989 Bhagalpur Communal Riot.

Referring to the terms of the compensation for the 1984 riot victims, the Interim report of the N.N. Singh Commission states that equal package of compensation should also be provided to the victims of the Bhagalpur riot. This report has been submitted to the State Government, so that the Central Government may be moved for announcing / allowing similar package to the victims of 1989-1990 Bhagalpur Communal Riots. The remaining part of the inquiry report would be submitted in due course.<sup>139</sup> The Interim Report of the N.N. Singh Commission has strongly advocated for providing compensation to the Bhagalpur victims of 1989.

---

<sup>137</sup> Rashtriya Janta Dal

<sup>138</sup> Janta Dal United

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.p.10-11.

Now, I will discuss another and try to show the point as to how this report takes up the case of the Bhagalpur riot, "The Survey Report of the Muslim United Front" that came in the year 2006, is addressed to, the Secretary, Commission of Inquiry, (Bhagalpur Communal Disturbances) 19- Hardinge Road, Patna, Bihar, as per notification PR 2504 (Home-07) 06-07. This report intends to give a complete survey data of those persons and families who have been victimized while Bhagalpur riots took place and have not been able to overcome from their misery as yet, due to not providing them proper and adequate compensation to their families.

The first section of the report provides in brief the detail about the history, economy and topography of Bhagalpur, which is not the concern of my study. In the next segment Report of Muslim United Front, states that the Bhagalpur riot of 1989 was one of the worst communal riot in the history of India. The scar after the 1989 Bhagalpur riot are so deep rooted that the affected persons have not been able to overcome from the same till date even after passage of about sixteen years that is more than half a decade.<sup>140</sup>

The report highlights certain facts about the Bhagalpur riot, where it starts by mentioning the immediate cause of the flare of violence. It reads that on those days Ramshila Pujan was being organized by an organization of a particular political party and in the said procession a bomb was thrown by anti social elements on the Superintendent of police of Bhagalpur who was on patrolling duty. The said occurrence spread in the township as well as in the whole district. Organizers of the Ramshila Pujan Samiti gave it a different color, which functioned as catalysts in eruption of the aforesaid communal riot.

The report then makes a detailed analysis of the role of politicians in relation to the handling of the situation. It says that the various leaders did visit Bhagalpur at the time

---

<sup>140</sup> The Survey Report on Bhagalpur Communal Riot 1989, of Muslim United Front, Abu Fakruddin Plaza, Langertoli Chowraha, Bari Path, Patna, 800004.

of violence and made proclamations with regard to providing compensation and rehabilitation of the riot victims. But it is painful to note here that despite passage of such a long time those proclamations could not be given shape of implementation in its proper prospective resulting in leaving those riot victims running from pillar to post for some help, so that they may overcome from their miseries. The Inquiry Commission that gave its report 1995, suggested different measures to be taken for rehabilitation and restoration of communal harmony amongst people of Bhagalpur district. In addition to the above fact, the survey report states that the Government machinery failed in the quick restoration of peace, law and order and rehabilitation of the riot victims.<sup>141</sup> The details above tell the same story that is narrated in most of the COI, where they discuss the role of the political party, administration and the mention the immediate cause for the breaking of the violence. The question of inter community engagement have been out rightly ignored by both the reports.

The survey report of the Muslim United Front mentions that there are so many victims from both the community who have not been given any benefit of the so called welfare scheme launched by the state of Bihar and Union of India or if they have got then the same is improper and inadequate to what has been given to the riot victims of anti Sikh riot of the year 1984 taken place after assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The report on the basis of its survey made and data collected reflect on the inadequacy on the part of the government in providing full compensation to the victims. The details of the report are given here as under:

During the course of survey this fact come to the light that there are so many riot victims families, which had more than one person either inferred losses of life or sustained such type of injuries making them permanent disable. Another type of loss which they had to suffer is in form of loss of property in which either their home /shops/ business establishments were demolished or burnt or they were completely dispossessed from their landing cultivable property. On the basis of available data of the survey report the

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.p.8-10.

1989 riot victims can be categorized in the following categories for the purposes of examining the fact as to what extent the Government has shown its intention and ability to take steps for rehabilitating the needy persons.

The data shows that there are so many families in which different multiple losses had occurred but the authorities thought it proper to award a minor /compensation taking a highly technical view which was never the intention of the State government, while the welfare scheme for rehabilitation /compensation was launched. The mount mentioned in the data is sufficient enough o show that the compensation awarded to such families where multiple type of loss occurred is much less in comparison to their losses , which can not be justified in view of the fact that they had to again struggle for their existence in the society being resource less.

The data also tells that there are so many victims families of 1989 Bhagalpur riot, who suffered substantial loss either in the form of life or permanent disability or loss to their properties or any two or all the three at a time but it is very painful to note here that in their cases also the bureaucracy adopted such a view, which resultant in rejection of their forms for getting compensation for the purpose of rehabilitation which has forced those families to die of either hunger or lead life of miserable person.

In the present survey the surveyor had to come across from so many families, who during the course of disturbance had taken shelter on safe places by leaving their houses, but on their return it was surprising enough for them to see that some other people had taken possession on their houses, business establishment as well as on the agricultural cultivable lands. Those families ventilated their grievances in written form to the competent authorities with all sustentative documents, but the competent government authorities for restoration of possession have taken no positive action whatsoever to those families on their properties , which they had inherited from their forefather or had acquired by their hard earned money. The reluctance on the part pf the government



authorities have compelled those families to reside in the house of their relative on their mercy.<sup>142</sup>

The recommendations of the above two reports put a clear cut stress on necessity of providing compensation to the riot victims of Bhagalpur. According to the reports after so many years have passed but still the plight of the victims is in a deplorable condition. So according to these reports if proper economic and monetary help is provided by the government then it will definitely help in bringing relief.

But what these commissions fail to realize is that the communal riots make deep wounds in the heart and minds of the victims. They generate a sense of fear, hatred and despair in the minds. People loose their family, a son looses his father, a husband might loose his wife, the children loose their parents and many more such intimate relatives and relations are lost in the course of riots. One looses his near and dear ones for no reason or fault. Innocent people are killed by people of the other community and religion. The neighbors with whom one has shared the space in a locality for such a long time all of a sudden becomes enemy and in the rage of anger one is even ready to kill his friend with whom till yesterday he used to spend time.

In the riots the concept of *the other* is strongly projected. One community becomes the enemy of the other. Hate, enmity, revenge develops between the communities and that results to widespread violence and killings. A long gap develops between the communities and there is a need to bridge the differences. The survivors of the riots are generally left with a sense of remorse, hopelessness and fear. So it is important to heal their wounds. The various Commission reports give an economic solution to their problem. Providing compensation to the victims is a monetary resolution to the problem. But the real wounds cannot be healed with money. A mother who has lost his son, a

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.p.11-13.

child who has lost his parents cannot be satisfied and relieved with this compensation. They are just short term relief which might help in the reduction of some material wants.

But the damage that has been done to the unity and trust and sense of security can be redeveloped only with the help of inter community arrangements. The lost trust and faith can be re-established only with the help of the civic engagement. Giving compensation will not bridge the inter community gap. The reports generate the idea that giving compensation may lead to the solution of the riot victim. But actually after the compensation game starts, there is a danger that the work for developing peace and community solidarity might stop. This might hamper the peace process.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, after closely analyzing the fresh survey report of 2006 on the Bhagalpur riot and the earlier reports of Retd Honorable judge of the Patna High Court, we come to the conclusion that the missing link in the writings related to the communal violence remains here too. The report of the Muslim United Front is also making grievances against the role of the government, but fails to throw any light on the inter-ethnic fabric. After sixteen years, what relation do the two communities share in Bhagalpur? No reflection is given on such an important aspect and the reader is clueless about the whole question of inter-ethnic engagement and its importance in maintaining peace in the society.

While analysing the various reports, one can notice a shift in the approach of the commission findings. The earlier report that came in the year 1995 was more concerned with fixing responsibility and bringing the culprits to book. But the present commission formed in the 2006, fulfills the job of assessing the role of different institutions in their failure to implement the recommendations of the 1995 report. Besides, it also calls for providing adequate compensation to the riot victims. The survey report of the Muslim

United Front in detail comes with the same suggestion, providing speedy rehabilitation of the riot victims and giving them proper compensation

The different reports are only focusing on the causes for the outbreak of violence and trying to find the culprits behind the crime and making an in-depth analysis of the role of the government, the police and the different political parties in relation to the riots. The commissions give a short-term solution to the problem of riots. By not sufficiently dealing with question of inter-community peace, it somewhere fails to give the long term solution to the problem of communal violence. In the next chapter, I will analyze the newspaper reports and see how they have dealt with the issue of communalism in their writings.

---

## **THE MEDIA REPORTING OF COMMUNAL RIOTS: AN ANALYSIS**

This chapter is an analysis of the print media related to the Bhagalpur riot of 1989. In the previous chapters we have already found that the academic writings as well as the Commission reports do not give much importance to the inter ethnic engagement while dealing with communal riots. In these writings the question of immediate cause, role of the state and the government as well as the police has been mainly focused. Somewhere missing is the point of inter ethnic relationship and the role played by it in preventing riots. These discourses do not focus much on the question of peace in relation to riots. Here in this chapter I will survey the newspaper reports and check as to how far be they going in dealing with the question of inter ethnic engagement in their writings regarding communal violence.

The relationship between the press and socio-political developments has been analyzed and debated all over the world and has been a recurrent theme in media effects studies. Even though the term "press" is now somewhat outdated and has largely been replaced by the more common "news media" to refer to both print and electronic journalism, its role has been no less controversial or fascinating than it was near the end of the 18th century when the English statesman Edmund Burke deprecatingly coined the term "the Fourth Estate", Since then the news media have never been far from controversy.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> The Role of Media In Communal Conflict: A Situational Analysis of Socio-Religious Crisis in India, by Abdur Rahim Head Dept .of Communication & Journalism, Osmania University, Paper presented at the Regional Seminar on " The Role of the Media in a National Crisis", organized by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center, Singapore and the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association, held at Colombo ,Sri Lanka, from May 15-17, 1991,p.1.

The public attention has always turned to the crucial role of the media in reporting communal conflicts. This Bhagalpur riot period witnessed, in a short span, an unprecedented national crisis that threatened to envelop the entire country. More people were killed in this communal carnage considered to be the worst in the recent history.

While the role of mass media in a conflict situation is well documented, there is need to understand their role in specific national crisis like what India encountered in the last quarter of 1990.<sup>144</sup> Did the news media's response stand up to the expectations of at least their audience, if not the masses at large? Did they provide necessary information vital for comprehending the issues facing them? Did media reporting help in creating more consciousness about the problem of caste and communalism, or did they help in inflaming the passions of different groups? How intent was their coverage? These and many other questions immediately come to the fore.

The general belief is that information media, such as newspapers, radio and TV, have accountability and they should offer the needed knowledge and information. The act of informing is a value-laden process. The emphasis given to specific developments, the tone and content of the coverage of an issue or an event, by the news media, reflects a certain implicit ordering of social priorities. A certain kind of coverage of events may reflect no more than a set of assumptions by media professionals, about the range of interests of their readership or listener ship.<sup>145</sup>

### **STUDY OF THE WRITINGS AND REPORTS**

In my analysis of the various newspapers, I will first give detailed review of how the different print media has dealt with the problem of communalism in its writings. My

---

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.p.2.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.p.1.

work will focus broadly on four different newspaper reports that are The Hindustan Times, The Hindu, The Times of India and Aryavarta<sup>146</sup>. The aim of my analysis is to see as to how the print media takes up the question of peace in its writings. I will try to find out whether the media reports deal with the question of civic engagement and inter communal harmony while covering on riots. As we all know that the newspapers have a wider set of audience from all classes of the community, therefore it is supposed to play a responsible role while dealing with any question of national interest.

Media is known for moulding the ideas of the person. It is through the reading of its reports that any kind of opinion is formed. Therefore it is essential for the media to give a responsible writing on the subject of communal riots. There is a general trend to be found in the reporting of the various newspapers while dealing with the issue of riots. They seem to be more interested in areas such as the immediate cause for the breaking of violence, the response of the administration, political parties and the police in handling the situation.

While reading the reports of the above newspaper on Bhagalpur, a similar trend was reflected. What the newspapers seemed to miss out was the role of civic engagement and inter ethnic ties in riot hit area. The reports were more engrossed with responsibility fixing job and the question of peace seemed to be missing throughout. The three vital areas where these newspapers have focused are the role of the political parties, state administration and the police. The chapter will highlight there coverage on all the above issues one by one and in the last section it will discuss the inter community question and how it goes missing in the various newspapers.

---

<sup>146</sup> My analysis would have been more effective if I would have covered one urdu newspaper also. Because is generally felt that they give a very different account of the incident on communal violence. For this I contacted the urdu newspaper office of "Nayi Duniya" in New Delhi, but due to non-availability of proper archives they just failed to provide with materials on this riot.

## **POLITICAL PARTIES AND COMMUNALISM: MEDIA REPORTING**

There is a general belief among every class of the society that political parties are the producers and controllers of violent situation. When a riot breaks out just before elections then the suspect, falls on the political parties. This idea of relating the communal violence with election eve and the political party reminds, of the famous scholar Steven Wilkinson who in his writings tries to say that “the most important cause of riots is the intensity of electoral competition”<sup>147</sup>. In the reports that I read, a lot of stress was being given to the question of general election and its relation to the communal breakdown in Bhagalpur.

With reference to the question of communalism and state power Bipan Chandra observed that the basic proposition was not to let communal parties or groups come near state power since it not only controls resources but also exercises political control.<sup>148</sup> Therefore the role of political parties seems to be vital in relation to riots. Now coming to the various newspaper writings, I would focus as to how they have given value to the question of political parties while dealing with riots.

To start with I will give details about the reports covered in The Hindustan Times, the English daily. Before commenting anything on the role of the newspapers it is vital to know about the nature of the newspaper and the kind of audiences it touches in its reporting. The Hindustan Times, established in the year 1924 is one of the oldest newspapers of India. Its English edition seems to be reaching to the urban middle class people. Here I will quote few reports from the paper on the Bhagalpur riot of 1989, and try to reflect on their area of interest.

---

<sup>147</sup> Wilkinson, Steven I, Communal Riots in India, Economic and Political Weekly, October 29, 2005, p.1.

<sup>148</sup> Srimanjari, Seminar on Communalism in India A Report, Social Scientist, Vol. 18, No. 6/7, Jun. - Jul., 1990 .p. 49-72.

The communal violence that broke out in Bhagalpur on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1989 was no doubt a blot on the secular culture of our nation. The different newspapers have started covering the day to day reports related to the riot and the first editorial that came in the "The Hindustan Times" was titled "Election Eve Riots"<sup>149</sup>. The article read, that "the sudden eruption of communal violence, that has rocked Gaya, Sitamarhi, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur districts in Bihar since Sunday, demonstrates once again how easy it is for agent provocateurs to trigger a holocaust.. It could not have been a coincidence that violence broke in all these four places almost simultaneously. Obviously there is a method in the madness. With elections round the corner, the timing of the flare up cannot go unnoticed." Before moving further I would like to drive the attention of the readers to the point that the editor is trying to make in the first few lines of the article itself. If one just focuses on the title of the editorial, "Election Eve Riots" one can make out that the writer has tried to look into the question of riot in the light of election. It seems that the breaking of riot in the various districts of Bihar has to do something with the election event that is round the corner. The article focuses on the cause for the breaking of violence and tries to make a link between the election timing and the riots.

Moving on to the next editorial "Polls without Strife"<sup>150</sup> which reads, "elections or no elections, the need to check riots is imperative, but it will be disastrous for the country if elections are held in a highly communally tense situation." This explains Election Commission's decisions to hold elections in Bihar in two days. The clashes in Bhagalpur and elsewhere are communal in nature. Now that the poll battle lines have been drawn, all political parties should be reminded of their responsibilities. It is not enough if they swear by secularism as they are expected to do under the law. What is important is their inherent approach to the communal question. It is essentially for the political parties to ensure that communalism is not a major factor in the elections. Otherwise our democracy will peril." The article pins hope on the political parties and relies on them to control communal disturbance. It seems that the parties alone are the law lords and can easily bring the situation under control. No comment is made in the article on the civil society

---

<sup>149</sup> "Election Eve Riots", The Hindustan Times, 26 October, 1989.

<sup>150</sup> "Polls Without Strife", The Hindustan Times, 2 November, 1989.



and the part it can play in controlling the situation. The editorial tries to say that the party groups hold the responsibility to save the secular fabric of the nation. But these editorials do not provide any such message that directly addresses the people and asks them to establish communal harmony.

“Message from Bhagalpur”<sup>151</sup> reads “Political parties are bent upon exploiting the communal issue for gaining votes. That is why no party has fought the communal diehards. Apart from the failure of the law and order machinery it is too evident in Bhagalpur the political leadership has also failed to meet the challenge. Neither the Congress-I nor the Opposition has come forward boldly to fight the communal forces”. Here also stress is given to the role of political parties in relation to communal violence and no mention is made about the role of public and inter-ethnic community in restoring communal harmony. There is constant reporting on the role that the political parties can play to bring the situation under control.

The opening line of the next article named “Communalism: The Key Issue”, The Hindustan Times,<sup>152</sup> reads “while communalism has been rising, little has been done by politicians and political parties to contain the situation. Even the Congress which has a glorious anti communal tradition is found wanting on this score. Today apart from passing resolution little is done to spread the message of communal harmony. In the absence of a firm commitment on the communal question from most political parties there are dangerous portents”. It is quite obvious from the above statement that Bhattacharya tries to focus on the electoral scenario and the effect of communalism on it. The articles above also suggest about the reporter’s idea to give institutional approach to the problem of communalism where he reflects on the importance of political parties in relation to communal violence. The paper shows trust and tries to bring out the point that it is totally in the hands of the political groups to maintain the secular credentials of the nation and avoid the riots from breaking.

---

<sup>151</sup> “Message from Bhagalpur”, The Hindustan Times, 14 November, 1989.

<sup>152</sup> Bhattacharya, Shubhabrata, “Communalism: The Key Issue”, 5 November, 1989

Moving on to the next newspaper is “The Hindu”, the oldest surviving newspaper. The paper seems to have a communist approach, so questions of communalism and violence are taken up seriously. Its circulation is mostly among the upper middle class and because of the good standard of its language the educated elite prefer reading it. This newspaper has also covered the Bhagalpur riot case of 1989; some examples are cited below.

The editorial in The Hindu newspaper “The Communal Virus”<sup>153</sup> on the Bhagalpur riots, says that “viewing the situation in Bihar, all sections of the politicians are to be blamed for the failure to heal the festering communal sore; secular principles have certainly been marginalized since they are perceived as a threat to electoral gains.” The political parties are directly blamed over here. They are held responsible for the outburst of riots. It seems that simply the blame game is being done. No mention is being made of the peace process.

The article titled “Threat to Nation’s Integrity”<sup>154</sup> states, “The ruling party which is riven by factions has failed miserably to evoke enthusiasm among the people; in such an atmosphere it is least surprising that communal and criminal elements are having a field day. Opposition leaders have alleged that the communal violence is a result of the plot set by the political party for minor electoral gains.” In its broader analysis this paper also doubts on the communal card that could have been played by the various political parties for their narrow electoral benefit. It is simply blaming the parties and holding them responsible for the outbreak of riots in Bhagalpur. There is no mention of the role that can be played by civil society and non-state organizations in controlling riots. It seems that there is an accepted theory of blaming the party organizations for riots. But is blaming the way enough to establish peace. Healing of wounds could be done only if the question of peace is taken into consideration and mostly this aspect is found missing.

---

<sup>153</sup> “The Communal Virus”, The Hindu, 25 October, 1989

<sup>154</sup> “Threat to Nation’s Integrity”, The Hindu, 27 October, 1989

Shifting to the next paper that is, the Times of India, it is self declared as a liberal newspaper.<sup>155</sup> It is read generally among the urban middle class. One of its article that came on this riot “Political Commentary: Communal Monster Tastes Blood”<sup>156</sup>, states that “in view of the high level of communal tension that was allowed to be built up over the Ram Janambhoomi Babri Masjid issue during the last two years, it was no surprise that the flashpoint was reached as the election drew near. More sadly, it was after the announcement of the election dates that some of the carnage took in place, especially in the benighted town of Bhagalpur. In order to win the elections, the political parties would capitulate to communalism of any kinds in the hope that once the election has been won the communal genie can be put back in the bottle”. Again here the focus of the writer is to highlight the communal game played by the parties. No mention is made of the part to be played by the people in the community for bringing peace. The problem is put forward, but no peaceful solution is given. Just blaming the parties is not a condition enough to bring in harmony. There seems to be the need to think beyond parties and that aspect is missing.

In yet another article of Times of India the paper reads “Army out as Bhagalpur toll touches 17”<sup>157</sup>, “the Lok Sabha polls as it is likely to make dents in the traditional vote bank of different political parties. Political observers said large scale clashes having a communal overtone which has claimed more than 50 lives this year so far were bound to result in polarization of votes of particular communities”. The Times of India is not giving any different comment, like the above two papers it also stresses on the role of the political parties for spreading the communal virus for its electoral gains.

---

<sup>155</sup><<http://www.timesofindia.com>>

<sup>156</sup> Malhotra, Inder, “Political Commentary, Communal Monsters Tastes Blood”, The Times of India, 15 November, 1989

<sup>157</sup> “Army out as Bhagalpur toll touches 17”, The Times of India, 25 October, 1989.

The Hindi newspaper Aryavarta, established in the year 1911, is supposed to have a pro upper caste reader list. The riot of Bhagalpur was covered in detail by this newspaper and as it was in vernacular language I have converted it in English for the convenience of the reader. The editorial that came on November 6, 1989 in Aryavarta opens saying "Rajya sarkar ki chauksi nahi isliye danga phaila"<sup>158</sup> here the main concern of the editor is to blame the various political parties and bring into picture their inefficiency in maintaining peace and harmony in the society. The parties are only interested in electoral gains and making false promises to the people. So if the situation has to improve than the political groups will have to honestly work in to fulfill the promises they make at the time of election and curb the anti social elements with iron hands. Again Aryavarta also is repeating the same argument that it is the party's responsibility to maintain communal harmony.

"Bhagalpur Ka Danga"<sup>159</sup> Aryavarta., this editorial mainly makes the point that for petty electoral gains some political parties are creating communal atmosphere. The article is basically linking the riots of Bhagalpur with the coming elections. It says that the political groups are banking upon this riot to gather electoral benefits. Again the relation of votes and communal violence is established, "Bhagalpur Chunav Sataghit Nahi Hoga"<sup>160</sup> Aryavarta, despite gruesome killing and murder of the innocents, the elections in Bihar will not be postponed. The paper is busy reporting political news. The parties also seem to be concerned with the election that is approaching. This tells a sad story.

"Bhagalpur Dango ki jaanch Hetu Nayayik Aayog Ka Sanghatan"<sup>161</sup>,Aryavarta. As a routine pattern soon after the riots an announcement is made for Judicial inquiry of the riots. But are these inquiry commissions the real route to the establishment of peace. The

---

<sup>158</sup> "Afwaho Se Khatra",Aryavarta, 6 November, 1989.

<sup>159</sup> "Bhagalpur Ka Danga",Aryavarta,31 October, 1989

<sup>160</sup> "Bhagalpur Chunav Sataghit Nahi Hoga",Aryavarta,13 November, 1989

<sup>161</sup> "Bhagalpur Dango ki jaanch Hetu Nayayik Aayog Ka Sanghatan" ,Aryavarta,6 November,1989

approach to communal harmony seems to be above these state actors. Passing the question of riot free society on the shoulders of the administration is not the sufficient way to bring in peace. But the newspaper discourses do not seem to focus on this aspect.

The important point that I would try to make here is that ,that the print media focuses a lot on the role of the political party and election game while dealing with the question of riot. The organization Human Rights Watch even concluded, on the basis of a worldwide survey of ethnic violence in the 1990's that ethnic riots and pogroms are usually caused by political elites who play on existing communal tensions to entrench their own power or advance a political agenda.<sup>162</sup> The ideas drawn from the above example replicate on the point that the electoral and party competition has a vital role to play in terms of ethnic conflict. After analysing the reports of the various newspapers it seems that the print media influenced by the institutional approach of riots. This approach in the academic writings reflects largely on role of state actors in situation of riots. For example Wilkinson holds the idea that the rioters are not heroes and it is very much in the hands of the political parties to control the outbreak of violence when they want so. One central question raised by him is that when will a party try to stop communal riots. Over here he comes up with his argument of electoral competition. He mentions that the parties will defend a minority community only when it is in their government's electoral interest to do so.

Specifically ,Wilkinson tells that politicians in government will increase the supply of protection to minorities when either of two condition supply: when minorities are an important part of party's current support base , or the support base of one of their coalition partners in a coalition government; or when the overall electoral system in a state is so competitive in terms of the effective number of parties that there is therefore a high probability of the governing party will have to negotiate or form coalitions with minority supported parties in the future despite its own preferences. On the other hand ,

---

<sup>162</sup> Human Rights Watch , *Slaughter Among Neighbors: The Political Origins Of Communal Violence*, New Haven : Yale University Press , 1995, p.282

politicians in government will restrict the supply of security to minorities if they have no minority support and the overall levels of party competition in a state are so low that the likelihood of having to seek the support minority supported parties in the future is very low<sup>163</sup>.

Wilkinson further tries to make the point that if there is high level party competition in a state then the outbreak of communal riots will be under control in that place. For example in state like Bihar, where there is more than one party competing for election there the role of the parties will be towards winning the support of the minorities and thus keeping a check on communal violence. Drawing from the theory presented by Wilkinson one can easily understand the logic as to why the press news also give so much importance to the role of the political party in containing communal violence.

Here the point I want to make is not negating or reducing the role of electoral competition and political parties in terms of riots. Even I agree with the argument made by Wilkinson and others that the political groups can play vital role in putting a check on ethnic conflict. The point made in the various newspapers is vital, when they reflect on the role of political groups. But my problem with the argument is that are the political parties capable enough to put a check on the menace of riots? Do these party leaders and the party single handedly establish long term peace in the ethnically divided society? Why does the various newspapers do not make any reference of peace while writing on communal violence. The reply to these questions will be made in the later part of the chapter. Now I will move on to the next observation made by the print media in their coverage of communal riots that is role of state.

---

<sup>163</sup> Wilkinson, I Steven , *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India* , Cambridge University Press, New York,2006,p.6-7.

## STATE ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNAL RIOTS: MEDIA EXPECTATIONS

This section will reflect on the fact that the newspapers are generally busy talking about the part being played by the administration in riots. Here I would quote from one of the magazines that writes “we regret to say that the administration has miserably failed to save the lives and property of the innocent people, a fact which has been admitted by the Union Home Minister. The partisan attitude of the police and administration in the present riots and their total inability to control the situation till now, we would suggest that all the twelve sensitive districts identified by the Union Home Minister, be given over into the control of the Army, to save further loss of life and property and to bring peace in the state.”<sup>164</sup> This view reflects on the fact that a lot is expected out of the state. Any sort of disturbance, fuels the rage of the people against the state and administration.

The state as a body plays a central role in maintaining law and order in the society. It is the duty of the administration to maintain peace and amity. As A.G.Noorani puts that, “curiously, while governments intrude into spheres that do not belong to them, they do not perform their duties in the spheres where they are expected to perform. A government's duty to prevent riots from occurring at all was authoritatively described in the report on the Ahmedabad riots of 1969 by the three member commission of inquiry, appointed by the government of India and headed by a very distinguished judge of the Supreme Court, Justice P. Jaganmohan Reddy. It is not possible for government to anticipate the immediate cause of the eruption of violence but it should be possible for a reasonably vigilant government to be aware of a situation conducive to such an outbreak. The commission said (para 6.59, page 67 of the Report).”<sup>165</sup> The above argument hints on the crucial role that can be played by the government for controlling riots. The report

---

<sup>164</sup> Statement of Bihar Muslim Leaders On Bihar Riots, 11 November ,1989, Muslim India 84, December, 1989

<sup>165</sup> A. G, Noorani, Riots and State Responsibility ,Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 31, No. 21, May 25, 1996, p. 1237-1238

on the Ahmedabad riots also narrates the important to be played by the government in controlling communal violence.

Further stressing on the responsibility of the state Noorani writes, “what could be expected from law-enforcing and governmental agencies is a proper appreciation of the communal atmosphere prevailing in a state, in a town or in any particular place or locality, to anticipate trouble and to take steps to nip it in the bud or to deal with it firmly when such a situation does arise.”<sup>166</sup> The above lines surely define the importance of the role played by the state in checking communal disturbances. Noorani reflects on the fact that it is moral responsibility of the administration to provide security to its people at times of violence. He further shows trust on the capacity of the government to bring a riot situation under control. Drawing largely from this idea, the various newspapers have also reflected on the role of the state in relation to riots and largely blamed it for the prevailing disturbance in Bhagalpur at that time.

Starting with the various reporting in *The Hindu*, one of its article titled “Threat to Nation’s Integrity”<sup>167</sup> claims that, “Bihar has been passing through a very difficult period marked by communal tensions of the worst order in the last two months. In Bhagalpur, rampaging mobs were joined by hardened criminals and little wonder a senior Minister of Satyanendra Narayan Sinha Government after a visit to the violence torn areas confessed that there was a total failure on the part of the administration. The immediate cause of the conflagration seems to be the holding of the Ramshila puja which has provoked the minority community, as it did elsewhere too, to retaliate with some vehemence if the fanatics of one community were bent upon pursuing their objective knowing full well the dangerous repercussions, it was for the authorities to have taken the necessary precautionary measures to ensure that there was no serious threat to peace. The failure of the Government to deal firmly with the chauvinist organizations has been the chief cause of the cauldron in which Bihar finds itself today.” Again here also light is

---

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.p.1237.

<sup>167</sup> “Threat to Nation’s Integrity”, *The Hindu*, 27October, 1989



thrown on the part played by Government in controlling riots. Going deeper in the article we find that not only the Government but the Chief Minister and other members of the Ministry have failed to show any kind of ability that is required to deal with the highly tense situation. While reflecting on the failure of the government no mention is made of the role of the civil society.

One might wonder as to why I'm bringing in civil society over here. My purpose is to find peace process. For formation of communal harmony the need is to go beyond the blaming. It is not sufficient if we only report about the institution responsible for violence. Rather we should try finding out a peaceful solution to the issue of communalism. The community has a bigger role to play in establishing peace and so the various discourses on riots should try to divert the attention. Besides focusing on the role of the government there is a need to discuss the part played by the community members.

The next editorial in The Hindu newspaper "The Communal Virus"<sup>168</sup>, reads "of the plot set by the political party for minor electoral gains; the Government has tended to go slow in tackling a problem related to communal violence. Secular principles have certainly been marginalized since they are perceived as threat to electoral gains" The lines suggest that, the government needs to be solely blamed for its inefficiency in handling riots. The government is looked into as an institution that is supposed to maintain law and order situation. But the Hindus –Muslims together are also capable of playing vital role in maintaining peace. While discussing the role of the state actors the part that can be played by the civic engagement is not taken care of.

'More forces for Bhagalpur'<sup>169</sup>, The Hindu, writes that "the union Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh, talking to reporters, criticized the Bihar government for laxity in dealing with the situation He also hinted at a major reshuffle in the State administration. He said that the centre had informed the State government about the possibility of communal

---

<sup>168</sup> "The Communal Virus", The Hindu, 25 October, 1989

<sup>169</sup> "More Forces in Bhagalpur", The Hindu, 27 October, 1989.

violence in Bhagalpur but it had failed to take any action.” This article supports the point that not only the various discourses but also the leaders are busy fixing responsibility in riot situation. No comment is made by the leaders on the peace question. The problem of riots is viewed largely as a state problem, so everywhere the comments and suggestion made are in lieu with role of the administration.

Next report, in *The Hindu*, “Bhagalpur Riot Toll Rises to 152”,<sup>170</sup> says that “the state government has also affected an administrative reshuffle in Bhagalpur district, replacing the Deputy Inspector General of police, Mr. J.B Mahapatra with Mr. Naseem Ahmad who was holding the same post in Saran. The animal husbandry minister, Mr. Ramanujan has been posted as the special commissioner of Bhagalpur division and Mr.Ajit Dutt assigned the post of Superintendent of Police. He was promoted temporarily as Deputy Inspector General of police He will be in charge of the newly created rural zone.” This news tells a lot about the advance made by the state government for bringing situation in control. The riots and violence are solely supposed to be a law and order problem; therefore the police and administrators are being reshuffled. It is believed that it might help in bringing peace. No discussion is made of the role that can be played by the community members in bringing communal concord.

The other article in *The Hindu*, “Bhagalpur Days of terror”<sup>171</sup>, says that “it was no communal clash but much worse in Bhagalpur and adjoining areas in the countryside of Bihar, the unofficial counts being in hundred. The majority of the victims belonged to the minority community, mainly women, children, the old and the disabled. In these circumstances here was total failure on the part of the district administration to deal with the situation. The killing and plunder was unchecked at many places.” At this juncture the article is not just holding the state responsible for the riots; rather it is also giving the detail about the death toll. Reporting on the plight of the minority community may have

---

<sup>170</sup> “Bhagalpur riot toll rises to 152”, *The Hindu*, 31 October, 1989.

<sup>171</sup> “Bhagalpur’s Days of Terror”, *The Hindu*, 1 November, 1989.

another effect also. The members of that community might get a feeling of revenge, against the people of majority community. So by such reporting though the truth is reported But it might also lead to widening of gap between the members of the two communities. While coverage, the newspapers hardly, take care of such situations.

The next editorial in The Hindu newspaper “The Communal Virus”<sup>172</sup>, writes that “viewing the situation in Bihar , all section of the politicians are to be blamed for the failure to heal the festering communal sore but the prime responsibility for containing the canker is with the ruling party. The Government has tended to go slow in tackling a problem related to communal violence. Secular principles have certainly been marginalized since they are perceived as threat to electoral gains”. Repeatedly in every article there is the same trend being followed. The state administration is being held solely responsible for the failure to control riot situation in Bhagalpur. The responsibility fixing part is being taken well care of. But not much suggestion is being given to make a peaceful solution to this hitch No effort is being taken to project the importance of inter community relation. The reports fail to present a peaceful approach to the quandary of communalism.

“Bhagalpur DIG transferred”, <sup>173</sup>The Hindustan Times, reports Mr. Naseem Ahmad, DIG, Saran. Mr. Ahmad would be taken as the DIG, East. Mr. Ajit Dutt who has been sent by the State government, has been temporarily promoted as the DIG and would be in charge of the newly created rural zone.” The newspaper is usually making coverage on the administrative move taken after the riot. It is more or less making a political coverage of the incidents happening. There writing does not make any engagements with the question of communal harmony. They fail to cover on the part that can be played by the inter community ties to maintain peace.

---

<sup>172</sup> “The Communal Virus”, The Hindu, 25 October, 1989

<sup>173</sup> “Bhagalpur DIG transferred”, The Hindustan Times, 30 October, 1989.

Next editorial, in Hindustan Times, says "Polls without Strife"<sup>174</sup> writes, "the clashes in Bhagalpur and elsewhere are communal in nature. Unless the law and order machinery measures up to its tasks, the situation could worsen. It is not enough if they swear by secularism as they are expected to do under the law. What is important is their inherent approach to the communal question. If the nation is divided along communal lines, its integrity and survival will be in jeopardy." Certainly the point made here is vital as it suggests the importance of secular culture. It reminds the politician and the parties of their duty to maintain peace and harmony, but same kind of appeal is needed to be done to the common masses. They should also realize the importance of peaceful secular culture. And must play some role in maintaining inter community peace.

The heading of the report in The Hindustan Times comprehend, 'Fresh Violence in Bhagalpur; toll 90', the news reads, "The death toll escalated in this curfew bound town today shot up to 90 with fresh reports of casualties during the last 48 hours pouring in from different localities. Over 100 others are injured and many of them are serious. The worst affected localities are: Nath Nagar, Murgiyachak, Tanti Tola, Champanagar, Tartarpur, Patvarti and Mujahirpur. Bomb blasts and gun shots continued to send waves of panic through the town. In Patna, Bihar Congress- I president Jaganath Mishra today expressed his anguish at the violence and loss of life and property of innocents in the communal flare up. The Centre has sent 39 companies of additional forces to Bihar and the bulk of these forces have already been deployed in disturbed areas in the State. The Bihar Government has prepared a detailed plan of action in consultation with the Centre to contain communal elements and maintain law and order in 12 sensitive districts. The Home Minister said that both the Centre and the State Government had been warned by intelligence agencies about possible mayhem in Bhagalpur."<sup>175</sup>The reports in Hindustan times also replicate on the inefficiency of the administration in dealing with circumstances and therefore leading to the worsening of situation. The report here even covers the relief measures taken up by the administration for the victims of the riot. The report informs one about the number of people died. But it makes no reference of the

---

<sup>174</sup> "Polls without Strife", The Hindustan Times, 2 November, 1989.

<sup>175</sup>"Fresh Violence in Bhagalpur; toll 90", The Hindustan Times, October 27, 1989

damage done to the inter community bondage. The riots do result in large scale loss of life and property. But the bigger damage they do to the inter-communal harmony. The trust is gone, people hate each other. The newspapers do not mention about these damages while making a report.

Further the reports from the Times of India, "Army out as Bhagalpur Toll Touches 17", tells, that "the Janta Dal President Mr. V.P Singh today accused the Congress of drawing up a diabolical plot to fan communal violence in a bid to either postpone next month's general election or use it to its advantage."<sup>176</sup> This report is more or less playing the blame game. The politicians of the opposition parties also blame the ruling government, for its failure to control the situation. It kind of gives the party leaders an opportunity to charge against each other and look for electoral gains. No statement for peaceful resolution of the problem by these leaders is made.

"PM for Bihar Procession Ban," in The Times of India, reads, "Mr. Gandhi was gheraoed at the Tilka Manjhi crossings by the irate people. They were demanding the retention of the transferred superintendent of police, Mr. K.S. Diwedi. The toll in the riot has gone up to 63. So the Bhartiya Janta Party today demanded the immediate dismissal of the Bihar state government for the spate of communal violence in the state."<sup>177</sup> Same thing is to be noticed in this report where again the figures are given. The Bhartiya Janta Party is asking for dismissal of the state government. This shows that there is mainly political coverage made of the incident. Nothing different is reflected in the reporting of The Times of India too, as there is mere address to the role of the administration in riots.

"The Union Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh, said 12 districts of Bihar had been marked 'communally sensitive', where a comprehensive action plan was being implemented to check the current spate of communal violence. Meanwhile the toll in riot torn Bhagalpur today rose to 119 with 56 more people succumbing to their injuries. The home minister

---

<sup>176</sup> "Army Out As Bhagalpur Toll Touches 17", The Times Of India, 25 October, 1989

<sup>177</sup> "PM for Bihar Procession Ban", The Times Of India, 26 October, 1989

said that the laxity on part of the administration had let the situation deteriorate in Bhagalpur,”<sup>178</sup> The Times of India. The editorial that came on November 6, 1989 in Aryavarta opens saying “Rajya sarkar ki chauksi nahi isliye danga phaila”<sup>179</sup>. Here the main concern of the editor is to blame the various state government and bring into picture their inefficiency to maintain peace and harmony in the society. The parties are only interested in electoral gains and making false promises to the people. So if the situation has to improve than the state government will have to honestly work in to fulfill the promises they make at the time of election and curb the anti social elements with iron hands. Both the report draw a similar conclusion. They criticize the government for the worsening state of affairs.

‘Aryavarta’ in its other report titled “Sena aur Ardhsainik Bal Ke Aur Jawan Bhagalpur Rawana” also makes the same reporting where it tells about the deployment of troops in Bhagalpur and makes a brief coverage of the statement made by the home minister where he has held the state government responsible for the failure of law and order in Bhagalpur.<sup>180</sup> The Hindi daily Aryavarta also reports about the increase in the toll of deaths and the number rising to 152. It further states that the administration is taking all steps to bring the situation under control. The curfew has been tightened in the town to avoid any more unfortunate incidents of violence.<sup>181</sup> Here also the report comments on the role of the administration and blames it in its failure to control riots from breaking. It also suggests that if the state would have acted on time things would have remained under control. No mention is made about the non state actors. No suggestion is made for civic engagement and its capacity to control violence.

“Dango Mein Hatahato Ke liye Pachaas Lakh ka Anudaan”.<sup>182</sup> Aryavarta, the paper provides with the detail of the compensation announced by the state administration for

---

<sup>178</sup> “Battalions Rush to Bhagalpur”, The Times of India, 27 October, 1989.

<sup>179</sup> “Afwaho Se Khatra”, Aryavarta, 6 November, 1989

<sup>180</sup> “Sena aur Ardhsainik Bal Ke Aur Jawan Bhagalpur Rawana”, Aryavarta, 27 October, 1989

<sup>181</sup> “Sabour Mein Curfew, Bhagalpur Mein Tanaw Kayam”, Aryavarta, 31 October, 1989

<sup>182</sup> “Dango Mein Hatahato Ke liye Pachaas Lakh ka Anudaan”, Aryavarta, 30 October, 1989.

the victims of the riot. The politics of compensation might help the victims in the short term, but in the long run it gives no answer. Rather than reporting on compensation, the papers ignore such news that might help in healing the wounds of the victims in the long run. Like the Hindu Muslim helping each other at times of riots. Next article says, "Danga Rokne Mein Prasashan Ki Dhilaai Se, Congress (I) Chubdh"<sup>183</sup> Aryavarta, the administration is being criticized for its inability to control riots. The image of the government is being destroyed because the worsening riot situation, the report says. Thus again the report is being made on the role of administration. The government seems to be the central focus of these media discourse while covering on violence.

"Bhagalpur Mein Curfew Mein Dheel"<sup>184</sup> Aryavarta, the news informs about the improving condition of the riot hit city. Another report reads, "Bhagalpur Kisi Apreeye Ghatna Ki suchna Nahi; 29 Aur Shav Bramad"<sup>185</sup> Aryavarta. These different articles are basically reporting on the improving situation in Bhagalpur. But still somewhere the tension exists, as dead bodies are yet being fished out. The curfew is being relaxed for few hours that give some relief to the people. "Bhagalpur Dango Mein 13 Ghante Ki Dheel aur 22 Shav Miley"<sup>186</sup> Aryavarta. Again a routine reporting of the day to day situation is being made. The condition of curfew is being mentioned and the figure of deaths being reported. But there is no report about any incident of peace and co-operation between the two communities.

After reading various articles of the newspaper one thing that can be concluded is that they follow an institutional approach when dealing with riots. The idea where one blames the administration for the outbreak of the menace of violence undoubtedly reflects on the idea of Institutionalized Riot System as used by Brass Also Prof. Romilla

---

<sup>183</sup> "Danga Rokne Mein Prasashan Ki Dhilaai Se, Congress (I) Chubdh", Aryavarta, 1 November, 1989

<sup>184</sup> "Bhagalpur Mein Curfew Mein Dheel, Aryavarta, 1 November, 1989

<sup>185</sup> "Bhagalpur Kisi Apreeye Ghatna Ki suchna Nahi; 29 Aur Shav Bramad", Aryavarta, 2 November, 1989

<sup>186</sup> "Bhagalpur Dango Mein 13 Ghante Ki Dheel aur 22 Shav Miley", Aryavarta, 5 November, 1989

Thapar of Jawaharlal Nehru University writes that riots are no more spontaneous but engineered, and Prof. Mohanty of the University of Delhi said political instigators are instrumental to violence.<sup>187</sup> It seems that large score of discourses when talking about communal violence, generally starts by focusing on the role of the administration.

Brass says that the activation or enactment of a large-scale riot takes place under context of intense political mobilization or electoral competition in which riots are precipitated as a device to consolidate the support of ethnic, religious, or other culturally marked groups by emphasizing the need for solidarity in face of the rival communal group. When successful, as it most often is, the principal beneficiaries of this process of blame displacement are the government and its political leaders, under whose watch such violence occurs.<sup>188</sup>

I do agree to the point made by Brass and others that the role of administration is vital in relation to communal riots. The print media also thoroughly reflects on the administration and the part it plays in the course of riots. If the administration is responsible for causing or containing riots then why the problem has yet not been solved. Why do communal violence keep occurring in the society? Does the idea of Ashutosh Varshney who talks about the Institutionalized Peace System have any relevance in bringing communal peace? The reply to this question I will give in the later section.

### **ROLE OF POLICE AND THE POLITICS OF PROCESSION**

This section will give a detailed analysis as to how the print media has focused on the role played by the police. It has largely reported on the inefficiency on the part of the police force in controlling riots. The police as we know are the oppressive tool of the state. The discourses on riots have always given a critical analysis of it.

---

<sup>187</sup> "Parties Whipping Up Communal Tension, PTI Report, November 5, 1989, p.32.

<sup>188</sup> Brass, R Paul., "The Production of Hindu Muslim Violence In Contemporary India, Paperback, 2003



*“Khanjar pe koi daagh, na daman pe koi cheent/Tum Quatl Karo Ho ya qarqamt karo ho”* (there is no blot on the dagger nor a stain on your apparel / you indulge in a murder or show a miracle) <sup>189</sup>These lines were written by the great Urdu poet Iqbal, keeping in mind the atrocities and excesses committed by the police in times of riots. The Bhagalpur riot of 1989 has exposed the biased move of the police force. Many writings on this riot have declared the role of the police as unfair against the minorities. But before getting into the question of the role played by the police it is essential to understand what is expected out of them.

The role of the police in communal riots has, at all times, been a highly controversial issue. Riot victims generally complain that: The police did not come to their rescue; police forces were themselves instrumental in the killing; they led the mob in looting and burning; arrested innocent persons and tortured them inside the lock-up and put false charges against the arrested persons, and encouraged the culprits to do whatever they liked by preventing the members of one community to come out during the curfew and allowing members of another community to do so with impunity. <sup>190</sup> As Engineer puts it that the, most damned is the police as it comes in direct contact with the victims and hence it is the police which is condemned most by the people <sup>191</sup>

Engineer further states, that there is a general accord on the idea that the police as such have strong minority bias right from the dawn of freedom. Our freedom came at the fee of partition and partition further increased Hindu-Muslim divide and the police could not remain impervious by communalization of society. Though communalism and communal violence has changing graph in India it reached its upsurge during Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy and during the decade of eighties communal dialogue became almost mainstream discourse The police was also communalized in the same way as political rhetoric. Even when the Congress appealing

---

<sup>189</sup> Aslam, Ahmad Ejaz, Bhagalpur riots Guilty Brought to Justice, Radiance Viewsweekly, Vol. XLIV, No. 49, 10-16 June, 2007, p. 12.

<sup>190</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar, Communal Violence and Role of Police, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 29, No. 15 Apr. 9, 1994, pp. 835-840

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. p. 835.

to minorities to support it in return for its secular credentials and also tried to assure minorities of protection and security, it never tried seriously to inject secularism into the minds of security agencies. The police record, as various inquiry commission reports into various major communal riots show, has been extremely poor and tainted.<sup>192</sup>

The role of the police in relation to the Bhagalpur riots had remained very much in news. Different papers and magazines have tried to reflect upon the role of the police in relation to the increase in violence. The incapacity of the police in putting a check on the casualties and killings has been severely criticized by the various news sources.

That the police were to a large extent perpetrator of the Hindu Muslim riots that rocked Bhagalpur in October – November last year is well established fact. There is an arrest warrant out for Ram Chandra Singh, an assistant sub inspector. He is accused of covering up the Logain massacre, in which, according to the official figure, 116 Muslims were killed. The police say Ram Chandra Singh is absconding: the people say he is moving about freely.<sup>193</sup>

The Hindu in one of its article, "Bhagalpur's Days of Terror"<sup>194</sup> says that "it was no communal clash but much worse in Bhagalpur and adjoining areas in the countryside of Bihar, the unofficial counts being in hundred. The majority of the victims belonged to the minority community, mainly women, children, the old and the disabled. The initial violence which broke out on October 24, seems to have been planned and the brutal killings, rape, arson and looting were executed with the connivance if not active collaboration of the Bihar Police. As the violence raged, the district administration was frozen into inaction. It was accused of extending full protection to a local police cadre that not only failed in the discharge of their elementary duty of protecting the lives and

---

<sup>192</sup>Engineer, Ali Asghar, Terrorism, Police and Minorities (Director, CSSS) Secular Perspective, October 01-15, 2008, p.1.

<sup>193</sup>Sengupta, Uttam, Criminal Cover Up, India Today, March 15, 1990, p.63.

<sup>194</sup>"Bhagalpur's Days of Terror", The Hindu, 1 November, 1989.

property of people but in some cases allegedly abetted the heinous crimes committed in Bhagalpur. The killings, arson and looting continued throughout the day and night of October 25. But the police did not lift a finger to prevent the orgy of violence. The minority community was the main target of the attack and bore the brunt of violence. According to one source the figure of the dead has gone up to 200.”

This report seems to be a strong critic of the role played by the police. The newspaper has highlighted in detail as to how the police officials were not the protectors rather were the perpetrators of violence. The report blatantly blames the police of its irresponsible and biased action. It mentions as to how the police are brutally treating the minority community. Such reports further deepen the scar. They do not bring into light any incident where the Hindus and the Muslims have co-operated each other.

In another article Hindu writes, according to the official sources the death toll in Bhagalpur rose to 19 today with three killed in police firing and over 24 injured in incidents of violence yesterday. Patrolling by the paramilitary forces and the police has been intensified and shoot- at-sight orders issued.<sup>195</sup>In the next article The Hindu reads, “Communal violence and police firing in four districts of Bihar since Sunday have claimed 96 lives with riot –torn Bhagalpur alone accounting for 70 deaths, reports said here today The number of injured was put to 109. Bhagalpur looks a ghost town under siege. With gun totting troops taking over the administration and an indefinite curfew continuing for the fourth day, the atmosphere is surcharged with tension.<sup>196</sup>The report again tells about the killings that was a result of the police personnel. It gives the rising figure of the death toll.

Other English dailies remaining silent on October 29, 1989 The Hindu states that the troops and paramilitary forces continued flag marches in Bhagalpur for the third day today as toll in communal violence in the town and outskirts rose to 96. With this, the

---

<sup>195</sup> “Army Called Out In Riot Hit Bhagalpur”, The Hindu, 25 October, 1989

<sup>196</sup> “More Forces For Bhagalpur”, The Hindu .27 October, 1989.

casualties in the violence and police firing in four adjoining districts of Bihar since last Sunday have risen to 122. More than 300 people have been arrested on charges of rioting and arson.<sup>197</sup>

The next article in *The Hindustan Times*, "Message from Bhagalpur"<sup>198</sup> reads that "every day the toll in Bhagalpur and the neighboring areas is increasing. On Tuesday six persons were killed in Karimganj village, about 17 km from Bhagalpur. Not only is the town tense but incidents of arson and looting are reported from different areas in Bhagalpur district". The potent question raised in the article asks as to why be it that communal clashes continue to take place in the area? Political parties, the authorities the police particularly, are failing to check the growing menace. "At least 13 persons were killed in the curfew bound Bhagalpur town today in police firing and group clashes, raising the toll to 17 since yesterday. Shoot-at-sight orders have been issued and army called out. Curfew has been extended indefinitely. Four vehicles were damaged. Seven persons were killed including, three in police firing, at Nathnagar and Mojahidpur Mohalla of Bhagalpur today. About 100 persons were rounded up by the police."<sup>199</sup> The reports are directing towards the part played by the police. People are dying in police firing. This kind of coverage further aggravates tension and fear in the minds of the people.

Another report reflecting on the role of police in the Bhagalpur riot writes, "Policemen have been guilty of partisan conduct during riots. Policemen not only brutally hit with rifle butts people under mob attack running to them for help but colluded, through deliberate inaction, in the butchery of those left under their protection."<sup>200</sup> Policemen have often been blamed of communal lineages and the media always covers a lot about them in times of violence. As is quiet relevant from the above given reports.

---

<sup>197</sup> "Bhagalpur toll rises to 96, Flag Marches Continue", *The Hindu*, 29 Oct 1989

<sup>198</sup> "Message from Bhagalpur", *The Hindustan Times*, 14 November, 1989.

<sup>199</sup> "Army Called Out In Bhagalpur", *The Hindustan Times*, 25 October, 1989

<sup>200</sup> "Can Anything Be done?", *The Indian Express*, 7 November, 1989

“One Dies in Bihar Firing; Riot Toll 145”.<sup>201</sup> The Hindustan Times, gives the detail of the number of casualties and reflecting on the actions of the police it reports that a person died in police firing. In another reporting the Hindustan Times writes “19 Killed in Bihar Violence”<sup>202</sup>, it also mentions the death toll including number of people who died in police firing as well. Every report we find is giving the figures of the dead and about the part being played by the police. “Firing Kills 6 in Bhagalpur”<sup>203</sup> in The Hindustan Times, this report ponders on the point that the newspapers are daily covering data of the people killed in police firing, so in a manner there is constant watch on the part played by the police. This idea of keeping a close look on the action of the police forces is not wrong. But the problem is that no coverage is made of the behavior of the community in times of riot. “Bhagalpur Violence Spreads, Toll 152”<sup>204</sup> The Hindustan Times, the reports seem to be vigilant while covering the violent outbreaks during riots. They miss out to report on any story of peace. No coverage is given to any account of co-operation between the two communities. They fail to reflect on the role of the community members in times of violence.

Moving on to the cover stories of The Times of India. “Arson Spree in Bhagalpur: 6 Killed in Firing”<sup>205</sup>, this report further gives the figure of dead in police firing reaching to 256. This shows the severity of the police action. It also reflects on their brutal ways of handling the situation. The faith and trust of the people, especially the minority is constantly being shaken with such report of police violence. Next report, “Four Killed in Bihar Firing”<sup>206</sup> in The Times of India, reads that the situation keeps on worsening as curfew is being extended. And there are daily reports of people being killed in police

---

<sup>201</sup> “One Dies in Bihar Firing; Riot Toll 145”, The Hindustan Times, 30 October, 1989.

<sup>202</sup> “19 Killed in Bihar Violence”, The Hindustan Times, 25 October, 1989.

<sup>203</sup> “Firing Kills 6 in Bhagalpur”, The Hindustan Times, 14 November, 1989.

<sup>204</sup> “Bhagalpur Violence Spreads”, The Hindustan Times, 31 October, 1989.

<sup>205</sup> “Arson Spree in Bhagalpur: 6 Killed in Firing”, The Times of India, 14 Nov, 1989.

<sup>206</sup> “Four Killed in Bihar Firing”, The Times of India, 15 November, 1989.

firing. There is constant reporting in every newspaper about the role of the police. Too much centrality is given to the role of the police.

“Bhagalpur Ki Stithi Mein Sudhaar:Grameen Chetro Mein Jharpe”.<sup>207</sup> Aryavarta, the Hindi newspaper not commenting much on the negative part played by the police, in this article, reports about the deteriorating condition of the rural areas. It says that a person was burnt alive into fire; people are being shifted to safer places away from the villages. Such news of violence further aggravates the condition of fear and hatred in the minds of the people. Next story comes in Aryavarta, “Bhagalpur Mein Punah Beneyadi Curfew”<sup>208</sup>, and the paper reports that there is increase in toll of deaths and it also reports an incident where a person is stabbed to death. Further it tells about the reshufflings in the administrative and police department. Reporting about the death tolls is routine task followed by all the papers. They fairly miss on the point of making peace reporting of the incident. Somehow the paper is making more or less a political treatment of the incident.

Bhagalpur Ke Gavao Mein Hinsa Ki Ghatnaye:Sena Ki Gashat Tej 5 Vayakti Mare Gaye”<sup>209</sup>,Aryavarta, the report mentions the deteriorating conditions in the villages and as a precautionary measure the Army has been deployed. Some incidents of gruesome killing are also reported. But what keeps missing is the reporting on the role of the civil society and peace committees if any.Ram Puniyani in an article writes that “the worst complicity of the police in communal violence was seen in Bhagalpur riots 1989. Here the police was a mute witness to the murder of 116 Muslims who were buried in a field and cauliflower was grown on it to cover up the episode. Bhagalpur police

---

<sup>207</sup> “Bhagalpur Ki Stithi Mein Sudhaar:Grameen Chetro Mein Jharpe”, Aryavarta, 28October, 1989

<sup>208</sup> “Bhagalpur Mein Punah Beneyadi Curfew”, Aryavarta,30 October, 1989

<sup>209</sup> Bhagalpur Ke Gavao Mein Hinsa Ki Ghatnaye:Sena Ki Gashat Tej 5 Vayakti Mare Gaye”,Aryavarta,11 November, 1989

administration keep denying this till other police party led by a DIG dug out some of these dead bodies”<sup>210</sup>

The role of police in the communal riots has always remained a matter of discussion. The loss of life and huge casualty and breaking of law and order are various factors and its responsibility is put on the heads of the police. Police bias and the communal character are generally highlighted during riots. The newspaper and the magazines have reflected a lot on the bias role played by the police in 1989 Bhagalpur riots. Undoubtedly this is an important factor and various scholars like Asghar Ali Engineer and Ram Puniyani have talked extensively on the role of the police in riots and given various solutions for the secularization and decommunalisation of the police force

As Puniyani puts it because of the heavy communalization of police force, it believes that communal riots are due to Muslims and this is what guides their conduct. Their communalised consciousness is supplemented by brutal savagery, which gets further compounded by their non professional approach in dealing with these situations. Many Muslim pre-dominant areas are termed as ‘mini Pakistan’ and police forces while entering these areas enter with the preparation and spirit as if they are entering the enemy territory.

Asghar Ali Engineer<sup>211</sup> also, under the light of the Sri Krishna Commission reports tries to focus on the biased and unjust behavior of police during riots. The report on the Mumbai riot, focused on the role of the police in particular during riots, the report reads “police officers, particularly at the junior level, appeared to have an in –built bias against the Muslims which was evident in their treatment of the Muslims and Muslim victims of

---

<sup>210</sup>Puniyani, Ram, Khaki Prejudice, PUCL Bulletin, August, 2000,p.1.

<sup>211</sup> Engineer, Ali Asghar ,Communal Violence and Role of Police, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 29, No. 15 Apr. 9, 1994, p.835-840

the riots. The treatment given was harsh and brutal and, on occasions, bordering on inhuman, hardly doing any credit to the police. The bias of policemen was seen in active connivance of police constables with the rioting Hindu mobs on occasions, with their adopting the role of passive onlookers on other occasions and finally in their lack of enthusiasm in registering offences against Hindus even when the accused were clearly identified.

Engineer says that the role of police in democratic society is very different from that of police in colonial society. However, it is 61 years now that India became independent and there is no change in the role of police a wee bit. Today our police have become even more colonial in its attitude. Our police too is terrorizing innocent people fighting for their rights. Though human rights are really very central to functioning of democracy, and, human dignity even more important for functioning of any secular democratic set up, irrespective of caste, creed or color. Yet our police are highly caste conscious and communal in attitude with few honorable exceptions. Over and above all this corruption has deeply seeped into the force. The partisan behavior of police in communal riots is a well-known phenomenon. The government has never taken serious steps to remedy the situation<sup>212</sup>

There are various suggestions being also given for bringing a change in the role of the police during riots. One of the major suggestions given is that the police should be given training and lessons on secular nature of their duty. The menace of communal feeling and biasness should be washed off from their minds. Also conscious efforts must be made to improve the percentage of Muslims in the police force. So a need is felt to make the police body more representatives in nature, so that pest of the police force in times of riots can be avoided. Thus we find that a lot is being said to improve the role of police force and secularize them. Also the print media has focused extensively on police actions

---

<sup>212</sup> Engineer, Asghar Ali, *Terrorism , Communal Violence and Police, Secular Perspectives* , September, 2008



during riots. But my question is that just by improving the police body will the nuisance of communalism be totally washed away from the country?

Further here I will press on the role of religious procession and how the newspapers have tried portraying on it in their writings on the Bhagalpur riots. An editorial titled in Aryavarta “Dharmik Juloos Pe Rok”<sup>213</sup>, chiefly tries bringing into light the reasons for the outbreak of riot. It says that the immediate fact for violence in Bhagalpur was the attack on the religious procession. Further it comments that the decision of the Bihar government to put a ban on these processions was a wise one so that no such other unforeseen condition appears in any other district of Bihar. The editor also writes that the anti social elements take advantage of these religious processions to spread communal discord, so it must be banned. The Hindi daily ‘Aryavarta’<sup>214</sup> “Sampradayik juloos per rok”, it talks about the present situation in Bhagalpur and the communal riots that broke down there. In wake of the communal violence the order has been made for the ban of the religious procession in Bihar and the death toll has increased to 47. So to stop the situation from further deteriorating the ban on procession is made.

The Hindustan Times reports that, “The trouble in both Bhagalpur and Sitamarhi <sup>215</sup>was sparked by a dispute over the route of religious procession. Since the dispute had been in existence for long the administration should not have allowed the procession in the first place. Having permitted the procession to pass through the controversial routes, the administration should have taken extra precaution to ward off violence. But unfortunately nothing of that sort happened, leaving 18 persons dead in Sitamarhi and 25 in Bhagalpur by the latest count that saw the overall toll mounting to 50. One lesson that can be drawn from the latest disturbances is that the district administrations had not followed the guidelines regarding religious processions. In the light of what has happened it would be advisable to enforce a moratorium, if not a ban, on religious

---

<sup>213</sup>“ Dharmik Juloos Pe Rok”, Aryavarta,5 Nov,1989

<sup>214</sup> “Sampradayik juloos per rok”, Aryavarta, 26 October,1989

<sup>215</sup> “Election Eve Riots”, The Hindustan Times,26 October,1989.

processions. After all, communal amity and unity of the country are far more important than the sense of victory that a procession might give a community or a sect.”

In its next story, it covers the news that the, “The Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, today directed the Bihar government to ban religious processions through sensitive areas and later left for the riot torn city of Bhagalpur. The Prime Minister expressed serious concern over the current situation in the state. He was informed that nearly 200 people had so far been arrested at curfew bound Bhagalpur. Mr Gandhi was gheraoed at the Tilka Manjhi crossings by the irate people. They were demanding the retention of the transferred superintendent of police, Mr. K.S. Diwedi. The toll in the riot has gone up to 63. So the Bhartiya Janta Party today demanded the immediate dismissal of the Bihar state government for the spate of communal violence in the state.”<sup>216</sup>

The Hindu article released at the time of the Bhagalpur mishappening of 1989, titled “Threat to Nation’s Integrity”<sup>217</sup> writes, the immediate cause of the conflagration seems to be the holding of the Ramshila puja which has provoked the minority community, as it did elsewhere too, to retaliate with some vehemence if the fanatics of one community were bent upon pursuing their objective knowing full well the dangerous repercussions, it was for the authorities to have taken the necessary precautionary measures to ensure that there was no serious threat to peace.

The immediate cause in the breakdown of the Bhagalpur riot has been the tension that built up due to Ram Shila procession. So most of the writings and news related to the riots discusses religious procession as a “problem”. But is it that these processions are the real cause of breaking of violence in India. These procession since long has been discovered as the immediate provocation for communal disturbances in the country. This section clearly highlighted the fact as to how the newspapers give full attention to the role of the police in dealing with riots. It seems that a general analysis is being done of

---

<sup>216</sup> “PM for Bihar Procession Ban”, The Times Of India, 26 Oct, 1989.

<sup>217</sup> “Threat to Nation’s Integrity”, The Hindu, 27 October, 1989.

the part played by the police and other state actors but no attention is being paid to highlight the role of the non state actors. The missing link in all the above section is the inter community question. The next section will focus on it.

### **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: THE MISSING LINK**

The above analysis does clearly reflect on the fact that the print media has a typical way of looking at the whole incident of communal violence. They no doubt play a major part in shaping the view of a large number of people. So the role becomes very important when they reflect on such a burning issue like Communalism. The general focus in their writings as we have already seen is on the role of the state, political parties and the police. They try to make the point that if these institutions work properly than the menace of communalism can easily be done away with.

“Despite new houses, we are mortally frightened of staying where our neighbours had turned killers”Ghulam Rasool<sup>218</sup> , Chanderi village Bhagalpur.This statement narrates about the damage that is done to the inter community trust during riots. The print media has in its writings reflected on the role of the state, police and parties but what fundamentally is absent is the question of inter ethnic engagement and its role in maintaining peace and accord in the society.

Under what conditions are preexisting intercommunal civic ties destroyed? Under what conditions are such ties built and what is the importance of it in containing the hazard of communalism. These are the various questions to which the answers are not found in the print media reporting. The newspaper in their day to day reporting of the news just present the toll of deaths, the statement of some political leader on the issue. But they in their reports fail to focus on the idea or experience of the victim.

---

<sup>218</sup>Farzad Ahmad and Parveen Chopra, A Touch of Healing, India Today, March 15, 1992,p.77.

Here I would quote what Ashutosh Varshney has said on the importance of intercommunal ties for building peace. Much of the conventional theoretical wisdom in the field, as well as some more recent work, emphasizes how peaceful interaction between ethnic groups is, paradoxically, founded on the possibility of intense in-group interaction and institutions. A principal message is that the greater the possibility of in-group cultural life and interaction, the greater the possibility of inter-group accommodation and peace. The research on communal violence in India showed that intercommunal ties between Hindus and Muslims, not intracommunal ties among the Hindus or among the Muslims, were a strong bulwark of communal peace. If towns and cities were organized only along inter-Hindu or intra-Muslim lines, the odds of riots (fires) breaking out, given a spark (tensions, rumors, small clashes), were very high. In Indian cities, bonding social capital was highly correlated with Hindu-Muslim violence, but bridging ties could put out sparks very effectively, not allowing them to disrupt the local equilibria of peace<sup>219</sup>.

Why does ethnic violence take place? Under what conditions might ethnic peace obtain? In his book *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* Varshney answered these questions by comparing Hindu-Muslim relations in six cities of India. Substantively, his main conclusion was that the presence or absence of inter-ethnic, or inter-communal, civic organizations, business associations, professional organizations, labor unions, political parties, reading clubs, sports clubs, film clubs, cadre-based NGOs - was critical to explaining why some cities had chronic ethnic violence, while others, despite huge provocations, remained always, or nearly always, peaceful. Vigorous associational life allows strong ties to be formed across communities, acting as a serious constraint over the polarizing strategies of political elites.

Therefore by quoting Varshney the point I am trying to make is that though state, police and political parties do have a major role to play in relation to riots the role of the

---

<sup>219</sup> Varshney, Ashutosh, *Sparks And Fires: Reassessing The Role Of The State In Communal Riots*, May 8, 2007.

community is also very vital in putting a check on the spread of communal hatred. The writings from the media largely miss on this point.

“Our houses have been completely looted by them. A Hindu family kept us alive by quietly sneaking food and water across”.<sup>220</sup> Like the above there are many instances where the minority community saved majority community and vice versa. The Harna Bujrug village of Rajaon Anchal, was sought to be attacked but the people of the village unitedly resisted it<sup>221</sup>. Subsequently through these examples a common point that comes out is the importance of inter ethnic engagement in containing riots. If there is strong inter community unity in the society then the menace of communalism can be easily defeated by the people itself.

Moreover the point which most of the newspapers politicians make is holding the religious procession responsible for the outbreak of communal violence. And banning the processions was said to be the plausible solution to the whole problem. But as S.K.Ghosh suggests that the imposition of a blanket ban on all religious processions is neither needed nor practicable because such a measure would only aggravate communal tensions. Instead of banning religious processions one should encourage all communities to take part in it because they are the best laboratories for social and cultural integration. Social and communal barriers give way quietly in areas where religious processions are taken out jointly by Hindu, Muslim and other communities. The Muslims should therefore whole heartedly participate in Hindu religious processions and other social functions and vice versa.<sup>222</sup> Moreover banning the route of religious procession is no solution to the problem, the integrated community effort can only bring changes at the grassroots level.

---

<sup>220</sup> Mukherjee's Anirudha, Report on Bhagalpur Massacre, The India Week, November 3-9. 1989, in Muslim India.p.559

<sup>221</sup> Rao, Rjeshwar C, Some Lessons of The Bhagalpur Carnage, Muslim India, March 1990,p.111.

<sup>222</sup> Ghosh, S.K, Communal Riots In India, Ashish Publishing House, 1987

After 20 years of almost continuous communal violence, the basic principles of reportage facts are sacred, comment free; get both sides of the story; check your facts before writing them are not enough in reporting communal riots. The guiding rules for reporters should be look for the background; don't perpetuate the stereotype; find residents who deal with both communities; corroborate victims' accounts as well as police accounts; ascertain the role of the police, the politicians and the media; highlight stories where communities have helped each other.<sup>223</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter we found that the print media is stressing and doing a serious work while diagnosis of the riot is concerned where they try to blame the police and the state for riots .But in this process the role of the community is badly ignored. The real solution lies not with a section of police and politicians, rather if communal harmony and peace has to be established then the role of the people and community becomes very important. The task of fixing responsibility is seriously taken up by the media house. The different newspapers depicted the same fact about the incident. They in their writing started with the reporting of the toll of deaths. It seems that they act as a fact reporting body.

A newspaper has a responsible role to play, as there reports mould the thought of a community. The first responsibility of them while reporting should be to decide how to present the facts. Presentation of any incident seems to be a very vital aspect. They should hold some accountability while writing a report. While analysing the different newspapers I found that at certain places the two newspapers were giving different figures of the death toll. Hence the facts must be checked before reporting.

A communal riot is a sensitive issue that includes the members of two opposite community. Any reporting related to this incident will have an effect on the minds of the

---

<sup>223</sup> Punwani, Jyoti ,Reporting Communal Conflict, , Info Change News And Features, February, 2009

people. There is a need of making unbiased reporting. Another factor that was largely missing in the papers was the absence of peace report. By this I mean that while covering on the Bhagalpur, riot the above four papers, failed to cover any incident of co-operation. There was no highlight of stories where communities helped each other.

Covering stories of co-operation might help in strengthening of inter-community relation. The newspaper were mainly focusing on the role of the state actors and trying to assess their role. They mainly try to figure out the reason for the outbreak of violence. It covers a lot on what the different political leaders have to say in relation to riots. But the above papers failed to voice the view of the community members. While quoting speeches of any leader they overlook the victims view. None of them reported the interview of the common masses of riot hit city. Somewhere they wholly ignore the inter community question and fail to provide any peaceful solution to this problem.

## CONCLUSION

---

This dissertation examined the status of peace process in the discourses on communal violence. The thesis tried putting stress on the role of civil society and inter-community engagement for establishing peace and communal harmony. Gandhi says, 'There's no way to peace, peace is the way'. This statement of the Mahatma sums the core idea of my work in one line. Peace building and its establishment is the central design of this work. The design that I want to put forward is that non-state actors have a limited but important contribution to make in the transformation of internal conflict situations.

Communalism crops up from communal consciousness and it is not just a question of belonging to a community. Rather in a communalised situation intensity of communal consciousness is related with one's perception about 'others'. Communal riots seem to be doing two major types of dent. One is the external damage made to the life and property which is visible to all. But the more serious injury is done to the inter community relation. The victim of riots and its survivors develop sense of detestation, loathing, abhorrence against the member of another community

The various discourses to an extent fail to reflect on the damage done to the social fabric, due to these riots. They probably provide an institutional approach to the communal riots issue. Where they put more stress on the role of state, political party and the police. They are busy looking into the causes and fixing responsibility on the various state actors. Not much attention is paid to the part non-state organization and civic engagement can play in combating communal disturbance. The peace building question is not taken care of in a proper way.

The civil-society concept, deriving from political theory, is used to describe the fact that people meet, communicate, and organize in ways that are not established or controlled



by the state, nor by kinship and family ties, and with purposes that are driven neither by the power logics of the state nor by market interests. In the civil- society arena, people voluntarily organize to defend common interests or work for social and political change. Through my work I have made a small attempt to highlight the importance of civil society and inter-civic ties. They together can be vital ingredients for establishment of communal peace. But the trend has been always to rely on the state actors for maintaining peace and harmony in the society. The part community can play in bringing in harmony is not much researched by the various discourses.

The first chapter attempted to bring out the point that the institutional approach gives central importance to the role of the state actors. The idea of Paul R.Brass completely revolves round the role played by the political parties, state and police when discussing about riot. He uses the term “production of riots” means that riots are formally prepared act of violent behavior and it is not a spontaneous eruption of violence. Brass explicitly explains that riots are not just sudden eruption of violence rather it is well planned process which is executed at the time when required. He states that riots are the results of the institutions that do get favorable results from them. Similarly Steven I Wilkinson also emphasizes on the relation between votes and violence He talks about the State Capacity, Party Competition and the Electoral Incentives as the three basic areas related to communal riots in India. His thesis projects the fact that there is co-relation between riots and electoral games. He shows full trust in the state capacity to control riot. The role of political leaders also form a core of his idea in discussion about riot. Both Brass and Wilkinson have given an institutional analysis of communal riots. For them the question of civic engagement seems to be of secondary importance. While Ashutosh Varshney gives a full fledged theory regarding civic engagement and communal violence. He besides blaming the role of the state actors also gives a peaceful solution to the problem of communal riots. His work pins hopes on the community and the part it can play against communal threat. Similarly Asghar Ali Engineer even gives various suggestions for establishment of communal harmony. He gives the idea of inter religious dialogue, societal bonds and inter community interaction and cultural exchange for establishing communal peace in the society. But the writings that I analyzed on Bhagalpur riot hardly

take up the question of peace while discussing on riot. Therefore this chapter proves the fact that the academic writing largely miss out the civic engagement point while dealing with riots.

The second chapter that deals with the various commission reports also bring into light, the limited responsibility fixing job that is being assigned to them. Time-bound commissions of inquiry are appointed to perform two tasks: to identify the guilty officials so that they can be charged and that the administration can be reorganized to prevent the guilty persons from hampering the process of justice; and to suggest measures to prevent such occurrences in the future. That the commission of inquiry is properly constituted, allowed functioning, and justice done according to its recommendations depends on the political will of the government. The commissions being a recommendation making body lack much power. The commissions make a formal inquiry of the incident and try to bring the guilty to the book. They are not bothered about the peace process. Rather the terms and condition in the Commission Inquiry Act of 1952, already mention the job that has to be performed by the commissions. Therefore they do not go beyond this in their inquiry. No question focus on the inter community ties. Hardly any effort is made to establish the peace building measure. The core idea is to fix responsibility and suggest monetary compensation. The inter community and civil society role are not taken into consideration while making the investigation.

The third chapter, where I have done the newspaper analysis again does the job of fact finding. It reports the daily toll of deaths and damage made to the property. It broadly makes a political coverage of the whole incident. The statements of the politicians are reported. But not much attention is given to voice the experience of the victim. Evidence show that they follow an institutional approach. The role of police, political parties and politicians are central and needs a constant coverage while reporting on violence. The findings of damage and loss are broadly covered but not much care is taken of the inter community peace role. The newspaper on the Bhagalpur riot failed to give any news on

the co-operation if any made by the people of the Hindu Muslim community. The reporting gives much importance to looking into the causes and finding out people responsible. Then it highlights on the part played by the administration. The damage done to the property is religiously reported but no care is taken of the inter- community relation. Not much is suggested on the ways to establish peace and harmony through civic associations. Reports where the Hindu-Muslims had co-operated each other during riots, is hardly covered in their writings.

Riots destroy property and lives but more than that, it tears the fabric of human relations. The polarization becomes complete. Hindus and Muslims start suspecting each other. They tend to live in separate areas. It leads to ghettoisation of communities as well as ghettoisation of minds. A peace researcher would try looking into the problem of riots as a inter community problem. Generally the various discourses consider it as a law and order problem. Hence focusing on the role of state actors. But the role inter community engagement can play is not taking care of properly.

This work has been a small initiation in opening up the issue of peace process in various discourses. The inter community and civic engagement answer to the problem of communal violence, seems to promise a realistic solution. Relying on the state actors for establishing communal harmony is not a sufficient answer. It seems that the canker of communalism desires a non-state solution. There is continuity in the debate.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Books and Journals**

Ahmad, Farzad and Chopra, Parveen (1992), A Touch of Healing, *India Today*, March 15.

Aslam,Ahmad Ejaz (2007), Bhagalpur 1989 Delayed Justice Denies Justice to Victims, *Radiance Viewswweekly*, Vol.XLIV,No. 49,1-7 July, p.8-12

Ahuja,Ram (2007), *Research Methods*, Paperback , **Rawat Books** .

Banerjee, S Partha (1990), They Are Not My Children , *Muslim India*,Feb,p.77-78.

Bhelari ,Kanhaiah (1999),Festering Wounds :Bhagalpur Ten Years After Communal Killings, The Victims Families Are Yet To Overcome their Misery, *The Week*,Oct 31, p.1-3.

Bharti, Indu (1989), Bhagalpur Riots and the Bihar Government, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24. No. 48, p.2643-2644.

Bharat, Dogra (1990), Bhagalpur: Communal Violence Spreads to Villages, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 25, No. 3, p. 145.

Bhagalpur Riots: The Hindu View, The Organizer, 31 Dec, 1989, in *Muslim India*, Feb 1990.

Brass R, Paul (1968),Coalition Politics in North India, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 62, No. 4 Dec, p. 1174-1191.

----- (1997), *The Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

----- (2003), *The Production of Hindu Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, University of Washington Press, Seattle.

----- (2004), Development of an Institutionalized Riot System in Meerut City, 1961 to 1982, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 30, p.4839-4848.

----- (2006), *Forms of Collective Violence , Riots, Pogroms and Genocide in Modern India*, Three Essays Collective, New Delhi.

Camilla, Orjuela (2003), Building Peace in Sri Lanka: A Role for Civil Society? *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 40, No. 2, p.195-212.

Chandra, Bipan (1984), *Communalism in Modern India*, Vikas Publishing House, India.

Chatterjee, Roma and Mehta, Deepak (2007), *Living With Violence: Anthropology of Events and Everyday Life*, Routledge, New Delhi.

Engineer, Ali Asghar (ed.) (1984.), *Communal Riots in Post Independence India*, Orient Longman, Bombay.

----- (1989), *Communalism and Communal Violence in India: An Analytical Approach to Hindu Muslim Conflict*, Ajanta Publications, New Delhi, India.

----- (1990), Grim Tragedy of Bhagalpur Riots, Role of Police Criminal Nexus, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Feb10, p.305-307

----- (1992), Benaras Rocked by Communal Violence *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 10/11 Mar. 7-14, , p. 509-511

----- (1994), Communal Violence and Role of Police: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No.15 Apr.9, p. 835-840.

----- (1995), Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission Report, *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 15, p.1729-1731

----- (1995), *Lifting the Veil; Communal Violence and Communal Harmony in Contemporary India*, Sangam Books, India Limited.

----- (1995), *Communalism in India: A Historical and Empirical Study*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi.

----- (2004), *Communal Riots after Independence; A Comprehensive Account*, Shipra Publication, New Delhi.

----- (2007), *Communalism in Secular India: A Minority Perspective*, Hope India Publication, Gurgaon, Haryana.

----- (2008), Terrorism, Police and Minorities , *Secular Perspective*, October 01-15.

Flyvbjerg, Bent (1998), Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society? *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, No 2, Jun., p. 210-233.

Ghosh, S.K (1987), *Communal Riots in India*, Ashish Publishing House, Delhi.

Hasan Khaliq, Zoya (1982), Communalism and Communal Violence in India, *Social Scientist*, February, Vol.10, p.25-39.

Heywood, Andrew (2007), *Political Ideologies An Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Juergensmeyer, Mark (2000), *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, University of California Press, Berkley/Los Angles/London.

Karin ,Kapadia (2002), Review: Understanding Communal Violence: Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India by Ashutosh Varshney, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 38 Sep. 21-27, p. 3921-3922

Krishnan, Murali (2007), Do Commissions of Inquiry Serve Any Purpose, *Opinion*, January 7

Mukherjee, Anirudha (1989), Report on Bhagalpur Massacre, *The India Week*, November 3-9, in *Muslim India*, December, 1989.

Nandy, Ashish (2007), *Exiled at Home, Creating a Nationality*, Oxford University Press.

Narayan, Jitendra (1992), *Communal Riots in India: A Case Study of the Indian States*, Ashish Publishing House, India.

N L, Gupta (2000), *Communal Riots*, Gyan Books, India.

Noorani., A. G (1996), Riots and State Responsibility, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 21 May 25, p. 1237-1238

Oberschall, Anthony (2007), *Conflict and Peace Building in Divided Societies, Response to Ethnic Conflict*, Routledge, London and New York.

Puniyani, Ram (2000), Khaki Prejudice, *PUCL Bulletin*, Aug.

Punwani, Jyoti. (2009), Reporting Communal Conflict, *Info Change News and Features*,

Pandey, Gyanendra (1991), In Defence of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 11/12, p. 559-572

Recalling Bhagalpur: Aftermath of 1989 Riots, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 18, May 4, 1996, p.1055-1059

Rao, C Rajeshwar (1990), Some Lessons of the Bhagalpur Carnage, *Muslim India*, March.

Sengupta, Uttam (1989), Bhagalpur A Haunted City, *India Today*, December 15, p.167-177

- Sengupta, Uttam (1989), Bhagalpur Grave Omen, *India Today*, November 30.
- Sengupta, Uttam (1990), Criminal Cover Up, *India Today*, March 15.
- Singh, D.N. (2009), *Kandhamal Crisis: Hatred through the Cracks In Harmony*.zeenews.com
- Shahabuddin, Syed (1990), The Bhagalpur Massacre: A Case of Genocide, *Muslim India*, p.3-5
- Sharma, M.L (1988), *Communal Problem in India a Symposium*, (ed)
- Souza, D Dilip (2000), *Laughing All The Way to the Inquiry*, PUCL Bulletin, July.
- Srimanjari.(1990), Seminar on 'Communalism in India': A Report ,*Social Scientist*, Vol. 18, No. 6/7 ,Jun.- Jul., p. 49-72.
- Statement of Bihar Muslim Leaders on Bihar Riots, 11 November, 1989, *Muslim India* 84, December, 1989
- Wilkinson, I Steven (2000), India , Consociational Theory and Ethnic Violence, *Asian Survey* , Vol.XL,No.5, September-October, p767-791
- (2004),*Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India* ,Cambridge University Press, New York.
- (2005),Communal Riots in India , *Economic and Political Weekly* , October 29, p 4768-4770
- (2008),*Religious Politics and Communal Violence*, Oxford University Press, USA.
- Varshney, Ashutosh (1997), Postmodernism, Civic Engagement and Ethnic Conflict: A Passage to India, *Comparative Politics*, p.1-17.



.....(1997), Classes, like Ethnic Groups, Are Imagined Communities: A Response to Rao, *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 12, p.1737-1741.

----- (2002), *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

.....(2005), *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life Hindus and Muslims in India*, Oxford University Press.

### **THESIS, LECTURES AND UNPUBLISHED WORKS**

- Abdur Rahim, "The Role of Media In Communal Conflict: A Situational Analysis of Socio-Religious Crisis in India," by Abdur Rahim *Head Dept .of Communication & Journalism*, Osmania University, Paper presented at the Regional Seminar on " The Role of the Media in a National Crisis" ,organized by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center, Singapore and the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association, held at Colombo ,Sri Lanka, from May 15-17, 1991.
- An Occasional Publication of the Ethics and Public Policy Center April 2004 Number 28 Muslims in Hindu Nationalist India A Conversation with Asghar Ali Engineer and Paul R. Brass
- Brass R, Paul, "Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Contemporary India: From Partition to the Present" (Prepared for the Hiroshima Peace Institute Conference on Comparative Research into Genocide and Mass Violence, Hiroshima, Japan, March 22-26, 2004),
- Shahjahan, S.K. "Communal Expressions and Secular Engagements in Municipal Corporations of Greater Mumbai and Thane", PhD Thesis. Department of Social Work., University of Delhi, 2008.
- Varshney, Ashutosh, "Civil Society and Ethno communal Conflict", Working Document, Ashutosh Varshney, Department of Political Science University of Michigan, This present document has been produced to assist working sessions at the III General Assembly of the Club of Madrid.
- Varshney Ashutosh April 2007 "Sparks and Fires: Reassessing the Role of the State in Communal Riots", Ashutosh Varshney, Professor Department of Political Science, University of Michigan 5700 Haven hall 505 South State Street Ann Arbor, Mi 48109 varshney@umich.edu To be presented at the World Bank, May 8, 2007.

- Varshney, Ashutosh and Wilkinson, I Steven. (1996).Hindu Muslim Riots 1960-1993: New Findings Possible Remedies, *Special Papers Series* (Delhi Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies)
- Wilkinson, “Weak State and Low Violence? Explaining State Variation on Hindu Muslim Violence”: Paper presented at the August 2001 meeting of the American Political Science Association ([http:// pro. Harvard.edu/papers/012/012007](http://pro.harvard.edu/papers/012/012007))

### **COMMISSION REPORTS:**

- Report of Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission 1989 ( Honorable Chairman’s Report), Secretariat Press Bihar, Patna, 1995.
- Report of Bhagalpur Riot Inquiry Commission 1989. (Honorable Members Report),Secretariat Press , Bihar, Patna, 1995.
- Interim Report of Bhagalpur Communal Riot Inquiry Commission, Honorable Justice Retired N.N Singh.
- The Survey Report on Bhagalpur Communal Riot 1989, of Muslim United Front, Abu Fakruddin Plaza . Langertoli Chowraha, Bari Path , Patna, 800004.

### **WEBSITES:**

- <[www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc](http://www.indianrailways.gov.in/RPF/files/law/bareacts/inquiryact.doc)> The Commissions Of Inquiry Act, 1952.
- <[www.columbia.edu](http://www.columbia.edu)> [Reader-list] Fwd: Paul Brass's Response to Ashutosh Varshney ab2303 at Thu Dec, 2003.
- <[www.erces.com](http://www.erces.com)>K.Jaishankar Debrati Halder, Religious Identity of the Perpetrators and Victims of Communal Violence In Post Independence India, ERCES Online Quarterly Review.

- <[www.cexranchizone.bih.nic.in](http://www.cexranchizone.bih.nic.in)>, the Bihar Map.
- <<http://www.timesofindia.com>>

## **NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**

### **The Hindustan Times:**

- “Riots in Bhagalpur, 3 Dead”, The Hindustan Times, 24 October 1989.
- “Army Called Out In Bhagalpur”, The Hindustan Times ,25 October 1989
- “19 Killed in Bihar Violence”, The Hindustan Times, 25 October 1989.
- “Election Eve Riots”, The Hindustan Times, 26 October 1989.
- “No Ban In Ramshilla Rallies: PM”,The Hindustan Times,26 October 1989.
- “Fresh Violence in Bhagalpur; toll 90”, The Hindustan Times, October 27, 1989.
- “Curfew Relaxed for in Bhagalpur”, The Hindustan Times,28 October 1989.
- “One Dies in Bihar Firing; Riot Toll 145”, The Hindustan Times,30 October 1989.
- “Bhagalpur DIG transferred”, The Hindustan Times, 30 October 1989.
- “Bhagalpur Violence Spreads”,The Hindustan Times,31 October 1989.
- “Bhagalpur toll 165”, The Hindustan Times, 1 November 1989.
- “Polls Without Strife”, The Hindustan Times, 2 November 1989.
- “Poll Chances Dim in Bhagalpur Areas”, The Hindustan Times,2 November1989.
- “Bhagalpur Returning To Normal”, The Hindustan Times,5 November 1989.

- Bhattacharya Shubhabrata, “Communalism: The Key Issue”,The Hindustan Times,5 November 1989
- “Sixteen More Killed in Fresh Violence in Bihar”. The Hindustan Times.11 November 1989.
- “Message from Bhagalpur”, The Hindustan Times, 14 November 1989.
- “Firing Kills 6 in Bhagalpur”, The Hindustan Times,14 November 1989.
- “Bhagalpur to be put under Army Control: says PM”, The Hindustan Times,18 November 1989.

**The Hindu:**

- “11 Killed in Bihar Rioting”, The Hindu,23 October 1989.
- “The Communal Virus”, The Hindu,25 October 1989
- “Army Called Out In Riot- Hit Bhagalpur”, The Hindu, 25 October 1989
- “Threat to Nation’s Integrity” ,The Hindu,27 October 1989
- “More Forces in Bhagalpur”, The Hindu, 27 October 1989.
- “Bhagalpur toll rises to 96, Flag Marches Continue”, The Hindu, 29 October 1989
- “Bhagalpur riot toll rises to 152”, The Hindu, 31 October 1989.
- “Bhagalpur’s Days of Terror”, The Hindu, 1 November 1989
- “Curfew Relaxed for two hours in Bhagalpur”,The Hindu,1 November 1989
- “Religious Rallies Banned in Bihar”, The Hindu, 3 November 1989

### **The Times of India:**

- “Army out as Bhagalpur toll touches 17”, The Times of India.,25 October 1989.
- “PM for Bihar Procession Ban”, The Times of India,26 October 1989.
- “PM for Bihar Procession Ban” ,The Times Of India ,26 October,1989
- “Death Stalks Bhagalpur”,The Times of India,27 October 1989.
- “Battalions Rush To Bhagalpur”,The Times Of India,27 October 1989.
- “Bihar Bans Religious Morchas”, The Times of India,3 November 1989.
- “Fresh Riots in Bihar claim six”, The Times of India,11 November 1989.
- “Arson Spree in Bhagapur:6 Killed in Firing”, The Times of India,14 November1989.
- “Four Killed in Bihar Firing”, The Times of India,15 November 1989.
- Malhotra Inder, “Political Commentary, Communal Monsters Tastes Blood”, The Times of India, 15 November 1989

### **Aryavarta:**

- “Afwaho Se Khatra”, Aryavarta, 6 November 1989
- “Sena aur Ardhhsainik Bal Ke Aur Jawan Bhagalpur Rawana”,Aryavarta, 27 October 1989.
- ““Bihar Ki Afsarshahi Mein Pher Badal Ka Sanket”,Aryavarta,27 October 1989
- Dango Ki Stithi Mein Dharmik Juloos Par Rok Lag Sakti Hai”,Aryavarta,27 October 1989

- “Dango Ki Zimmadari” ,Aryavarta,27 October 1989“Bhagalpur Ki Stithi Mein Sudhaar:Grameen Chetro Mein Jharpe”, Aryavarta,28 October 1989
- “Danga Virodhi Yojna”, Aryavarta, 29 October, 1989
- “Dango Mein Hatahat Ke Liye pachaas lakh ka Anudaan;Mukhyamantri”,Aryavarta,30 October 1989
- “Bhagalpur Mein Punah Beneyadi Curfew” ,Aryavarta,30 October 1989
- “Bhagalpur Ka Danga” ,Aryavarta,31 October 1989
- “Sabour Mein Curfew, Bhagalpur Mein Tanaw Kayam” ,Aryavarta,31 October 1989
- “Danga Rokne Mein Prasashan Ki Dhilaai Se, Congress (I) Chubdh”, Aryavarta., 1 November 1989
- “Bhagalpur Mein Curfew Mein Dheel” ,Aryavarta, 1 November 1989
- “Sadbhvna Aur Shanti Banne Mein Sahyog Kare:Mukhya mantri”, Aryavarta, 1 November 1989
- “Bhagalpur Kisi Apreeye Ghatna Ki suchna Nahi; 29 Aur Shav Bramad” ,Aryavarta, 2 November 1989
- “Bhagalpur Ki Stithi Mein Tezi Se Sudhaar Ho Raha Hai: Mukhya Mantri”, Aryavart, 2 November, 1989.
- “Sampradayik Tatvo Ke Virudh Front Abhiyaan Chalayega Gope”, Aryavarta, 2 November 1989
- “Parties Whipping Up Communal Tension”, PTI Report, November 5, 1989 “Bhagalpur Dango Mein 13 Ghante Ki Dheel aur 22 Shav Miley”, Aryavarta., 5 November 1989

- “Bhagalpur Mein Koi Apreeye GhatnaNahi”, Aryavarta, 6 November 1989
- “Bhagalpur Dango ki jaanch Hetu Nayayik Aayog Ka Sanghatan”, Aryavarta, 6 November 1989
- “Bhagapur Se Sena Ki Wapasi”, Aryavarta, 9 November 1989
- “Bhaglpur Ke Gavao Mein Hinsa Ki Ghatnaye:Sena Ki Gashat Tej 5 Vayakti Mare Gaye”, Aryavarta,11 November 1989
- “Bhaglpur Ke Kayi Gawon Mein Chapemari Mein 144 Banduk, Bam. Pistol Bramad”, Aryavarta, 12 November 1989
- “Bhagalpur Chunav Sataghit Nahi Hoga”, Aryavarta, 13 November 1989

