

**UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND
IDENTITY IN INDIA THROUGH GENDER,
RELIGION AND CASTE**

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

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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***DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED
PARENTS...***

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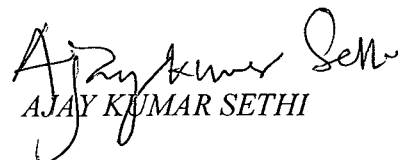
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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the interdisciplinary approach came into the study of social sciences, there have been conscious efforts on the part of social scientists to analyze diverse concepts in relation to their own particular disciplines. 'Power', 'authority', 'domination', 'violence', and many other concepts have found their places in the academic discussion in more than one discipline. Violence is one such concept, which has found a space in different disciplines and there have been attempts from all sides to analyze violence. The conscious efforts of political scientists did make it possible to study violence from political angle. The prefix 'political' is added to violence not simply because it suits the study of political science but it has been seen, that there is an inherent relationship between 'politics', 'power', and 'violence'. The concept 'political violence' therefore has become a core concept of political science. Given the complex nature of violence, the study of political violence has also become complex. Understanding violence involves taking into consideration physical and psychological aspects, hence, defining political violence necessarily involves both physical violence and psychological violence in its scheme of things. The major flaw till date in the study of political violence has been to look political violence only as a physical violence. This study tries to establish the relationship between physical and psychological violence, to show that both physical and psychological violence are political violence. The complexity of political violence shows that, sometimes it is

a direct expression for political ends and sometimes it is indirectly related to it. Most of the time people tend to think that only electoral violence are political violence. 'Violence in politics' and 'politics of violence' both constitutes the study of political violence. In this study, we are more concerned with the politics of violence, which has not been adequately so far.

Different theories dealing with political violence have dealt with violence from below, who are deprived of equality and power. They see violence of the deprived, who struggle for power. In the process, they overlook the other side of the story. The people at the top who enjoy power often in the pretext of maintaining power positions also engage in violence. This study focuses on the violence from the top, the dominant vis-à-vis the below, the subordinated as domination and subordination involves, those who enjoy power and the other who try to achieve that power but denied.

As the title suggests the relationship between identity and political violence in this process have surfaced in India. The growth of different identities suggests that they are striving for power in the society. Therefore in the process, they enter into competition among them and this competition is engaged many a times through violence as well. Identity formation of individuals and communities thus often takes place, against or in opposition to other community or individual identities. Rather than exploring the whole range of community identities that people embody, we focus on those identities that had become associated with political violence in recent past, especially, religion, caste and gender. Another

important consideration being taken in the study is to see violence against women as political violence. Though caste and communal violence have found their place in political violence, but the violence against women till date has primarily been seen as mere social violence, though there have been attempts from feminists to place women's questions in the realm of 'political'. Again it is not that the selection of these three identity markers are a random one. There is definitely a relationship between them, which have been established, in the whole study. Women cannot be studied in isolation, as being an identity itself, it embodies other identities of caste and religion. That is why it is been seen, in many castes and religious violence, women are the target of the frequent attack. Therefore, the study has considered three above identity markers to analyze political violence.

Communalism and sexism like imperialism and racism express the essence of a relationship of domination; in other words, it involves power relationships. In the global context, racism refers to white domination of blacks; imperialism refers to the domination of the west in general and the USA in particular (i.e., the industrially advanced countries) over newly industrializing (or Third World) countries. Like racism and imperialism, sexism refers to the economic, social, political and cultural domination of the female half of patriarchal society by its male opposites. Like wise communalism in Indian context expresses the relationship of domination and subordination between Hindu majority and various minorities (namely Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and others). Caste domination (i.e., the domination of mainly Dalits by the caste Hindus) constitutes

a sub- text of communalism. This domination of identity for power has been discussed in this study in caste, religion and gender. So, domination has been considered as a part of violence, which it really is.¹

The first chapter entitled, *Conceptualizing political violence* tries to establish the relationship between politics, power and violence and it discusses several theories of political violence. An effort has been made to establish a more useful understanding of political violence in Indian context, to challenge theorizations that violence always starts from below. This perception establishes that violence also flows from the top in the realm of domination to check social change and to maintain status quo.

The second chapter entitled, *Gender Identity and Political Violence* discusses the question of violence in private sphere and violence in public sphere against women. The control of sexuality of women, which is the primary feature of patriarchy, has also found a place in this discussion. In Indian context, Brahminical patriarchy with its different features and Multiple patriarchies have been analyzed. In Brahminical patriarchy, it has been seen that an Ideological Purdah has been created by prescribing 'Stridharma' and 'Pativratadharmā' by which women control her own sexuality. The whole discussion on violence against women of different kind has established the fact that one cannot dismiss violence against women as simple social violence but a political one in which power relationship between man and woman is inherent in it.

¹ T. V. Sathyamurty, ed., 'Social Change and Political Discourse in India, Structure of Power and Movements of Resistance', vol. iii 'Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India,

The third chapter entitled, *Caste Identity and Political Violence* deals with the violence against dalits in India. For the proper understanding of the subject, three major cases of violence against dalits have been taken into consideration. Bihar caste carnage of recent years, caste violence in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu and Rambai killings in Mumbai have been analyzed in the process, to see the caste violence against dalits are meant to deny them 'power' in an era of competitive politics in which caste Hindus are enjoying the power positions.

The fourth chapter entitled, *Religious minority and political violence* discusses the violence of the so-called majority Hindu identity against several minority identities. Politics of assimilation and elimination as the two major tenets of Hindu communalism has been discussed in a proper length. The domination and creation of majoritarianism has been discussed to see how it functions in opposing to other minority identities. The aim of a 'Hindu Rashtra' of Hindu communalists is analyzed to establish that majoritarianism in India, instead of secular democracy, is to preserve the power of a Hindu society. Thus, in the process they engage in political violence.

The study concludes by saying that there is definitely a relationship between identity and political violence, because identities compete with each other for attaining different power positions in the society.

Technically speaking, the study is not purely based on an empirical investigation as such; but attempt has been made to understand the whole dynamics of power/ politics in the arena of gender, caste and religion through

certain real experiences that we face in contemporary Indian scenario. The researcher has tried to go through the relevant literatures available in this area and has attempted to make a sense of the question of violence in general especially with a critical understanding in regard to the question of women, caste and religion in particular.

Despite all these, the study has also certain limitations. To begin with, women, caste and religion are not the only spheres/ victims/ agents of violence, violence can also be located in other spheres like tribes, ethnicity, regionalism, linguism etc. Again, although a distinction has been made between 'politics of violence' and 'violence in politics' at a conceptual level, the former has largely been analyzed in a detailed manner than the later.

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUALISING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

CONCEPTUALISING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Political sociologists dealing with 'political violence' are yet to arrive at a consensual, rigorous conceptualization of the concept of 'political violence' and its kindred. A close look at the career of the concept would make one realize that, the twin concepts of 'politics' and 'violence' have been associated with each other without delineating the causal linkages between 'politics', 'power' and 'violence'. The task at hand for the present exercise is to make explicit this causal linkage and its far reaching ramifications for a comprehensive study of 'political violence'.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

'Violence' is a term that suffers from a surfeit of meanings¹ because it is often related to, 'force', 'coercion', 'aggression' etc., which are quite different and are purely physical concept. Oxford English Dictionary defines 'Violence' as, *the exercise of physical force to inflict injury on or damage to persons or property*. However, this certainly is a very narrow understanding of violence. Violent inflicting of damage is often intense, uncontrolled, excessive, furious, sudden or seemingly purposeless. Further more, violence may be collective or individual, active or reactive, intentional or unintentional apparently just or unjust. The concept of 'violence' also includes the act of inflicting psychological damage or infringing human rights. Kai Nielsen defines an act of 'violence' as *an act of considerable or destroying force either physical or*

¹ Rasheeduddin Khan, 'Violence and socio-economic Development', in J.M.Domenach et al, "Violence and its cause", UNESCO, 1981 p-167.

*psychological, inflicting injury or damage on persons or things that offends against a norm (typically but not universally a law).*² In his definition Nielsen has added the phrase 'against a norm', by which he means the act of violence is illegitimate. David Riches comes to the same point when he defines violence, which *strongly connotes behaviour that is in some sense illegitimate and unacceptable.*³

Although there is some grain of truth in their definitions, it does not appear to be convincing to the reader. Each act of violence is against norm. However, any act-offending norm is not necessarily violence. If we go by the aforesaid definitions of Nielsen and Riches, how can we explain ideas like, 'innovation', 'change', 'conflict' and for that matter 'revolution'? Forcing cent percent conformity does not appear always good, be it in family (by the authoritarian father to his children) or be it in classroom setting (by teacher to his/her students) by imposing this conformity they are also performing an act of violence because they are restricting the all-round development of one's personality. Even conflict is not always bad; very often, it leads to strengthening group solidarity, cohesion, and betterment of social situation.

In recent years, Mackenzie has made a systematic study on violence. He defines 'violence' as, *the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on or cause damage to persons or property; action or conduct characterize by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly be interfering with*

² Kai Nielsen 'Political Violence', Indian Political Science Review, vol-16 1982, p-212.

³ David Riches (ed.) "Anthropology of Violence", Basil Blackwell, 1986, p-1.

*personal freedom.*⁴ Again, this definition of Mackenzie is not all encompassing. Because he has considered violence as purely physical concept, his definition gives an impression that it is an “exercise” of physical force, while omitting the “threat” of applying force. Because taking of hostages or the hijacking of airplanes would come under the definition of violence. These acts are, though not meant to cause direct physical damage, are meant to fulfill their self desire by terrorize other people. Therefore, these acts of threat of use of force to terrorize people are the acts of violence. Again, he has overlooked the psychological aspect of violence because causing psychological damage is also an act of violence.

Interpretable speaking violence stands for both as a symbol and as a metaphor; as indicated in phrases like, ‘violent crime’ (physical assault or threat thereof), ‘violence in the street’ (provocation, demonstration, police violence, partition counter-violence, internal war), ‘external war’, ‘violence to oneself’ (suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction etc), ‘violence in the media’ (a syndrome; news or fiction of violence stimulating further violence), ‘non-violent violence’ (the paradox that personality may be destroyed by indirect methods as much as by physical brutality), ‘social violence’.⁵ Used either as a symbol or as metaphor violence is an indirect expression of social relationship in the form of an act involving physical force and intend of using that force to cause deliberate damage. This is amply demonstrated in the above said phrases.

⁴ W. J. M. Mackenzie, “Power Violence Decision” Aarmanbwarth, Penguin 1975 p-39, Quoted in Khan Op cit., p-167.

⁵ These discussions of violence as symbol and metaphor is influenced by the writings of Mackenzie. Discussed in Rasheeduddin Khan’s article Op cit., p-167.

There is a lot of discussion and inquiry about 'violence in groups', 'violence in mobs' and 'violence in sub-cultures' as part of the macro-study of 'violence in society' but in each case as Mackenzie argues "one looks uncertainly for an operational definition".⁶ Though there is no universal, agreed upon, one definition of violence but Pravash P. Singh has attempted to give a definition, which is perhaps, all-inclusive and useful for this study. That is violence could be defined as, *willful application or threat of application of such force in such a way that, it physically or psychologically injures or causes damage to person group or property against whom it is applied.*⁷

DEFINING POLITICS

The search for a meaningful definition of 'politics' is as much difficult as 'violence' because politics as a concept has been ascribed with varied connotation in varied context. When Aristotle adopted 'politics' as the title of his celebrated work, he used the term to indicate a distinct branch of study. The term is applied to a particular phenomenon as well as to a systematic study of that phenomenon.

The aim of discussing politics here is not that why and how it has changed its forms over the years but to find out an appropriate definition of politics which will be useful for this study. In fact, there is a lack of agreement on what constitutes the study of politics. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'politics' as *the science and art of government; the science dealing*

⁶ Ibid., p-167.

⁷ This definition is quoted from Pravash P. Singh in "Political Violence in India", Amar Prakashan, 1989, p. 9. But 'threat of application' and 'psychological' both are added to the above definition.

with the form, organization and administration of state, or part of one and with the regulation of its relations with other states.

Before twentieth century, the main thrust of politics was state and its institutions and at the same time the study of politics was largely dominated by 'History', 'Philosophy', and 'Law' but though the twentieth century discussion on politics does not totally undermines the role of state but it has certainly changed its focus from state to individual. Graham Wallas's "Human Nature in Politics" and Arthur Bentley's "The Process of Government" brought about a radical change in the study of politics. They laid greater emphasis on informal processes of politics and less on state political institutions. An inter disciplinary and scientific character developed from that time and they borrowed the ideas from, 'Sociology', 'Psychology' and 'Anthropology' to examine political concepts like, 'power', 'authority' and 'political elite'.

The emergence of contemporary political theorists further changed the understandings of politics. Dahl says that a political system is any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent of power, rule and authority. To Lasswell, political power is the key concept of politics. Further, he says that the study of politics is the study of influence and influential. In his celebrated work, *Politics: Who gets What, When, and How?* (1936) proved a landmark in the empirical approach to politics as the study and analysis of power. Again, if we analyze the definition of politics i.e., authoritative allocation of values, authoritative allocation may roughly be translated as policy making. Here authority has been defined as legitimate

power.

This power approach of politics has become popular because it can be applied to an analysis of domestic politics and international politics as well. However, not being all-inclusive this approach seeks to reduce all politics into a struggle for power and ignores other important purposes for which men have recourse to politics. It can be said against the approach that, 'politics is concerned only with a struggle for power to control public affairs, that is, to have access to positions of taking decisions for the allocation of public goods, services, opportunities and honours'.⁸ This criticism of politics is not well disguised. As one cannot always make watertight division between the public realm and the private realm. In some cases, the activities in private realm also influence the public realm. The violence against women in private sphere that is in their own household has played a substantial role in the violence against women in public sphere. Hence, here, politics of violence against women in longer process is the politics of control of public affairs but its immediate effect lies in the household effect. Therefore, power in society can be linked to public affairs as well as private affairs.

The term politics has come into the present stage passing through a series of meaning given by various scholars and their schools from early period to date. To sum up we may say that, "politics is a concrete set of activities for seeking scarce power positions for decision making and distributing rewards in a political system or in those spheres of social life, which directly or indirectly

⁸ 'An introduction to political theory', O. P. Gauba, Macmillan India Limited, New Delhi, 1999, p- 30.

influence political power relationship or get influenced by them”.⁹ Politics as the study of power cannot be confined to ‘political power’. Economic and ideological forms of power should also be taken into account as they play an important role as the support basis of political power. Political power in this context used as the power to hold political offices like to become the Member of Parliament or Legislative Assembly by electoral politics. Economic power is the power emanated from the possession of means of production and distribution, and ideological power represents the manipulative power of the dominant community, which very often control the belief system and thinking process of whole people within the state. In India, politics of violence of majority community that is Hindus against other minorities are meant to control of all those power positions in society discussed above. Within this framework of politics, we will discuss how ‘politics’, ‘power’ and ‘violence’ have a causal linkage.

POLITICS, POWER AND VIOLENCE — UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP

The idea behind the establishment of this relationship is to demonstrate that politics and violence are interrelated and they are not anti- thetical to each other, because the general impression is that violence and politics are opposites. That is in some important sense politics ends where violence begins and vice versa. Politicians often being called upon to deplore violence and politicians themselves urge that the eruption of violence indicate that political processes have broken down.

⁹ Quoted in Pravash P Singh Op cit., p-9.

Based on above understandings, some scholars have discussed the opposite character of 'violence' and 'politics'. Hannah Arendt's essay 'On Violence' in this respect has a special value because it makes explicit the assumption that violence and politics are opposites in a clear-cut way. Violence and power subtract from each other: where the one rules absolutely the other is absent.¹⁰ Arendt substantiates the argument on violence as apolitical by saying that violence is distinguished by its instrumental character.¹¹ She means that, it both uses instruments-fists, machine guns, atom bombs and so on- and that it addresses others not as subjects but as objects, who (or which) can be manipulated through its use of threat. Thereby violence is opposite of communicative and interactive politics. Hence, it is the opposite of power. Even the Weberian and Habermasian positions seem to be supporting her argument to some extent. Max Weber in his classic essay on 'Politics as a Vocation' urges that violence is the very stuff and substance of politics- but only in the last resort and it's very task of politics to deal with violence in order to hold it at bay.¹² Habermas has seen violence as a sub-system in social life, which is instrumental in character. He urges in a similar fashions that there must needs to be instrumental sub-system of social life, but that is the task of politics to prevent these from getting out of control.¹³

Though, both Weber and Habermas agree on the point that it is the task of politics, to check all violent sub-systems, Habermas and Arendt, both have

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, "On Violence", Penguin Press, Allen Lane, 1970, p-56.

¹¹ Ibid., p-46, 79.

¹² Quoted in Richard Gunn 'Politics and Violence' in Richard Bellamy (ed.) "Theories and Concepts in Politics: An Introduction", Manchester United Press, 1993, p-268.

¹³ Ibid., p-269.

taken a partial view on the understanding of violence when they see violence only in its instrumental character. However, Weber is in some way different from both of them when he says that violence is the very stuff and substance of politics-but in the last resort. By that he means, politics has an external relation to violence.

While criticizing the consensus among political theorists to the effect that violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power, Arendt opines, as a corollary to Marx's estimate of the state as an instrument of oppression of the ruling class, many theorists have equated 'political power' with 'violence'.¹⁴ Discussing the relevance in Marx's writings, Arendt opines that to be sure Marx was aware of the role of violence in history but the role was to him secondary, not violence but the contradictions inherent in old society brought its end. Further she says, Marx regarded state as an instrument of violence in the command of the ruling class- but the actual power of the ruling class did not consists of or rely on violence.¹⁵

Arendt talks of ideal politics, which is attained by debate, discussion and dialogue. Having considered such a stand, she might have thought of the European social structure where democracy has become a way of life and politics many a time attained by peaceful manner. However, in Indian context, where the social set up is based on hierarchy and inequality, the politics hardly attained through debate, discussion and dialogical means. Therefore, the very

¹⁴ Op cit., p-36.

¹⁵ Ibid., p-11.

polity in many situations show that the goals of politics often reached by violent means, because the dominant individual, group or community tries to establish their power positions by using violent means. Arendt herself says that, politically speaking it is insufficient to say that violence and power are not the same.¹⁶ Therefore, Arendt is not against of relating power to violence but not always, as Marxist perspective would do. She has talked of non-violent politics but at the same time relates power to violence. Therefore, for her, violence has an external relation to power, that is also the position of Weber and Habermas. However, their position cannot be applied to all social set up. Even non-violent politics also turned into violent politics. Panchayati Raj institutions in India, which were established to make politics dialogical and non-violent, in reality, has become an oppressive and violent institutions at the hands of dominant strata of Indian society.¹⁷

Continuing the discussion along these lines, the interpretation of Hobbes by Richard Gunn shows that Hobbes has taken a mid-path in the relationship between politics and violence. Hobbes argues that violence is so immediately threatening and horrendous that any political order which can protect us against it is better than none. A tyrant would be preferable option to anarchist chaos. The raw edges of the above argument given by Gunn are that – violence may not be merely instrumental; political origins may indeed lie in violence.¹⁸

¹⁶ Op cit., p-56.

¹⁷ Panchayati Raj Institutions in India in reality have been able to create a political elite, who was earlier economic elite or member of dominant castes. Therefore, the oppressive social relations who were present in rural India between the dominant and dominated still present there. Therefore, though Panchayati Raj was meant to make politics dialogical, it is still oppressive in reality, because the dominant always uses violence to remain in power. In the process, the Panchayati Raj institutions have become violent and oppressive institutions.

¹⁸ Op cit., p-274.

Though Machiavelli was one of the forerunners among political theorists to prescribe the systematic use of violence to consolidate power in political structure, other scholars have supported the view that violence in some sense is the manifestation of politics. Charles Tilly opines the same when he says that, "*violence flows from politics and more precisely from political change*".¹⁹ However, at the same time violence also flows for maintaining status quo i.e., to prevent social and political change.

Violence is not a solo performance, but an interaction. It is an interaction that political authorities every where seek to monopolize or at least contain. There are other scholars who have seen violence in communitarian way. Frantz Fanon in his book, "The Wretched of the Earth" asserted that, individuals and peoples could become whole again by participating in violent politics.²⁰ The colonized man, he declares, finds his freedom in and through violence.²¹ Sorel comes to the same point of violence when he proclaimed that, *a class can be resurrected through violence*.²² Fanon remains one of the most outspoken proponents of violence as a mechanism for enslaved people. He has discussed violence from the oppressed point of view to show why enslaved people do take violence as a means of liberation? They use violence in the form of reaction to the prolonged oppression of the colonial people. They use counter violence to oppose that oppression. In contemporary Indian situation where the oppressors are dominant castes, religious majoritarianism who use

¹⁹ Charles Tilly, 'Collective Violence in European Perspective' in Ted Gurr and Graham Hugh Davis (eds.) "Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives", Bantam Books, New York, 1969 p-41.

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, "The Wretched of the Earth", London, 1965, p-33.

²¹ Ibid., p-73.

violent means to prevent social changes in the life of lower castes and religious minorities, the oppressed too sometimes use violent methods to prevent those oppressions. Fanon in this respect opines, "Since violence was used in the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed rhythm for the destruction of the native social forms, therefore when the times, violence would be used by the natives 'to wreck the colonial world'.²³ This communicative violence shows that through violence a relationship can be established. Rape of a woman is not instrumental violence but a communicative one, where the victimizer very often commits the rape not to teach that particular woman a lesson but through his act, he terrorizes whole women folk. This communicative violence is often carried on for political ends and it establishes a power relationship between dominant and dominated. So the violence which are communicative very often political as well.

Politics cannot get going, if it thinks itself as having a merely external relation to violence, as in case of Arendt, Habermas and Weber. "Politics can broaden its circle only in so far as it takes the issue of its potentially violent origin on board, and it can do this, only in so far as it thinks of itself as internally related to violence". Agreeing with this position Richard Gunn opines that, "politics can maintain it's self only by acknowledging that politics and violence are internally related. Each is the other of its other".²⁴ C. Wright Mills opines the same when he propounds, *all politics is struggle for power, the*

²² Quoted in Rasheeduddin Khan Op cit., p-176.

²³ Op cit., p-67.

²⁴ Ibid., p-287-88.

*ultimate kind of power is violence.*²⁵

So it is quite clear from the above discussion that there is a causal linkage between 'politics', 'political power' and 'violence', and again it is quite understandable that some acts of violence are political in nature. David O' Friedrichs comes to the same point when he says that, *not all violence is political but every systematic attempt to understand and interpret violence has an implicit or explicit political character.*²⁶

DEFINING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Political violence, as discussed above is violence that is political in nature. 'Politics of violence' and 'violence in politics' may appear same but they are quite different. For this study, we are interested in politics of violence leaving aside the violence in politics (Electoral violence, conflict between political parties, centre-state conflict etc). The first pre-condition of this type of violence is that it should be a collective act. The nature and coherence of political violence is not same in every social set up. Each social set up throws different kinds of collective violence. Charles Tilly is rightly saying that, *the nature of violence and the nature of society are intimately related.*²⁷

Many studies on political violence have been done since the early 1960s when the subject became popular among American social scientists. Zimmerman's magisterial review of literature (1980) lists about 2,400 items²⁸

²⁵ C. Wright Mills, "The Power Elite", New York, 1956, p-171.

²⁶ David O' Friedrichs, 'Violence and Politics of Crime', Social Research, vol-48 p-145.

²⁷ Op.cit., p-5.

²⁸ Mentioned in Harry Eckstein, 'Theoretical Approaches to Explaining Collective Political Violence' in Ted Gurr (ed.) "Handbook of Political Conflict, Theory and Research", New York, Free Press, 1980, p-135.

most of them published since 1960. So it is quite natural that one cannot go through all the items. This study will take up some selected definitions and theories, which have not only enriched the subject but are quite useful to this research work. In this respect, Ted Gurr's work on 'Political Violence' has special value. To Ted Gurr, the study of political violence refers to, "*All collective attacks within a political community against the regime, its actors, including competing political groups, as well as incumbents or its policies*".²⁹

The concept subsumes revolution ordinarily defined as fundamental socio-political change accomplished through violence. It also includes coup d'état, rebellion and riots.³⁰

But quite differently, Ted Honderich in his book 'Three Essays On Political Violence' defines political violence, *as a considerable destroying force against persons or things, a use of force prohibited by law, directed to a change in this policies, personnel or system of government, and hence also directed to changes in the existence of individuals in the society and perhaps other societies.*³¹ To him, political violence is not violence at the level of civil war or the war between nations, which does not fall under the definition of political violence.³² However, both have dealt political violence in relation to governance, which upsets individuals and societal situations. So therefore, political violence in the civil society to prevent changes in individuals and societies are not noted.

²⁹ Ted Robert Gurr "Why Men Rebel?" Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1970, p-1-2.

³⁰ Ibid., p-2.

³¹ Ted Honderich, "Three Essays On Political Violence", Basil Blackwell, 1976, p-9.

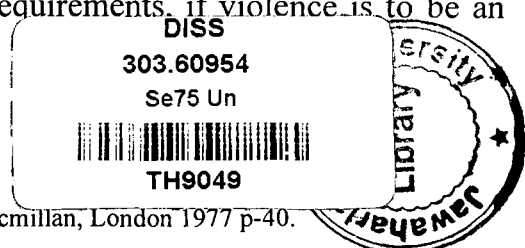
³² Ibid., p-10.

Writing within the framework of liberal democracy, Honderich termed political violence as democratic violence, which is somewhat infectious. Political violence in its broader perspective can take the form of civil war or war between nations. The most controversial feature of the definition offered by Honderich is that it is an illegal act. By doing that he is undermining the positive aspect of collective violence and is quite understandably deviates from the position taken by Ted Gurr. Ted Gurr (1970) maintained that as part of the 'self-adjusting-conflict' situation, it contributes to the eventual maintenance of societal equilibrium.

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Ted Honderich is not the only one who has not allowed political violence to broaden its circle in liberal democracy. There are other theorists as well. Wilkinson opines, except some extreme and rare cases, political violence in liberal democratic states must be regarded as intolerable.³³ He further maintains that, if violence becomes the accepted or normal means for groups to gain political objectives within a state, one can say goodbye to liberal democracy.³⁴

David Miller has also defended the liberal conception of violence but his views are quite different from the standard liberal position on violence which is- the use of violence for political ends is never justified in liberal democracies. He has given two practical requirements, if violence is to be an effective form of politics.³⁵



³³ Paul Wilkinson, "Terrorism and the Liberal State" Macmillan, London 1977 p-40.

³⁴ Ibid p-40.

³⁵ David Miller's article on "The Use and Abuse of political violence" in political studies vol. xxxii, 1984 p-417.

- 1) Its users must form part of a broader political movement and be able to remain part of it, notwithstanding their involvement in violence.
- 2) The act of violence must be used to convey a relatively straightforward message that it is not obliterated by the act itself.

The problem with liberal democracy is that the liberal democratic state can solve all the problems of its actor namely- individuals and their groups. The liberal position on violence appears theoretically indefensible. The liberal seeing only the destructiveness and coerciveness of violence, fails to recognize that it is a source of power readily available to the otherwise indefensible.³⁶

A discussion on violence would be insufficient if that does not take Marxist conception into account. So this paper would also seeks to analyze the Marxist conception of violence. Marx made the classic formulation linking change with conflict and conflict with violence. Re-stating the Marxian theory that the state is an instrument of oppression and force used by the ruling class to keep the exploited classes in subjugation, Lenin writes in his classic, 'The State and Revolution',³⁷

According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another, it is the creation of order, which legalizes and perpetuates this operation by moderating the conflict between the classes... it is obvious that the liberation of the

³⁶ Ibid., p-417.

³⁷ Quoted in Rasheeduddin Khan Op cit., p-178.

oppressed class is impossible not only without violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of the state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this alienation.

In Marxist conception, violence and political revolution are intertwined and that political revolution by itself does not create change but only expresses the transition from one economic system to another. It is in this premise that leads to Mao's contention that 'the central task and highest form of revolution is to seize political power by armed forces and decide issue by war.'³⁸ However, this revolutionary violence is definitely a part of political violence but there are some perceptions which differentiate political violence from revolutionary violence. Kai Nielsen has given a definition to point out that not all-political violence are 'terrorism' or 'revolutionary violence'. To him, *Political violence is a considerable or destructive employment of force, forbidden by law and thus in violation of legal norms and used in an attempt to bring about either, on the one hand, a change in the policies or the personnel of a particular government or the downfall of that government or on the other hand the overthrow of the state apparatus and the establishment of a new social order with a different social system.*³⁹ He maintained that revolutionary violence concerns itself with the latter.

Marxists have argued in a different way to justify their class struggle. J.Harris argues that death caused by indifference and neglect of society or its rulers must be seen as being as much a part of human violence as the violent

³⁸ Ibid., p-179.

³⁹ Op cit., p-214.

act of revolutionary.⁴⁰ Harris's above argument is the extension of that classical Marxists position of state as an institution of oppression. Nielsen rightly remarked that all revolutionary violence is political violence but not all political violence is revolutionary in nature.

As the views of Gurr, Honderich, Nielsen has seen political violence from a broader perspective but there are others who have tried to limit the definition of political violence. Eric J Hobsbawn opines, "*Any analysis of political violence faces the fundamental problem of how to delimit it*".⁴¹ He criticized Franklin Ford who has taken 'political murder' as the subject matter of political violence. Again, writers like Vivien Jabri (1996) take political violence solely as international violence that means war between nations.

The problem in defining political violence gets more complicated because violence used for some political ends, or may be used under political flag for essentially personal ends that is sometimes violence is not political in nature but it has got political rhetoric. But after looking at the several discussions, it appears that violence become political which is related to the activities for seeking power positions, for decision-making in a political system or which directly or indirectly influence political power relationship or get influenced by them. In other words, violence, which takes place in gaining political end, is political violence and when any social violence comes into this

⁴⁰ J.Harris, 'The Marxist conception of Violence' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol-iii no-2 winter 1974, p-192.

⁴¹ Eric J Hobsbawn, "Political Violence and Political Murder" comments on Franklin Ford in W J Mommsen and G Hirschfeld (eds.) "Social Protest Violence and Terror in 19th and 20th century Europe", Macmillan Press, London, 1982, p-13.

area becomes political.

CLASSIFICATION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Typology like definition of political violence also has variety. One can make different typology of political violence based on its sources, magnitudes and forms. Because of above three conditions scholars generally make their typologies. Ted Gurr (1970) has discussed three types of political violence.

TURMOIL: - Relatively spontaneous, unorganized political violence with substantial popular participation including violent political strikes, riots, political clashes and localized rebellion.

CONSPIRACY: - Highly organized political violence with limited participation including organized political assassinations, small scale guerilla wars, coup d' e`tat and mutinies.

INTERNAL WAR: - Highly organized political violence with wide spread popular participation, design to overthrow the regime or dissolve the state and accompanied by the extensive violence, including large scale terrorism and guerilla wars, civil wars and revolutions.⁴²

Charles Tilly's typology of collective violence in the Western experience distinguishes between three broad categories – 'Primitive', 'Reactionary' and 'Modern'. Primitive varieties of collective violence include the feud, the brawl etc and share a number of common features: small scale, local scope participation by members of communal groups and inexplicit

apolitical objectives. Reactionary violence was also usually small in scale but pitted either communal groups or loosely organized members of general population against representatives of those who hold political power and tended to include a critique of the way power was wielded. Modern collective violence involves specialize associations with relatively well-defined objectives, organized for political or economic action. The demonstration, the strike, the coup and the most forms of guerilla action are example. ⁴³

Mehden describes five basic types of political violence.

- 1) Primordial (racial and religious)—acts of violence related to cultural conflicts but ultimate impact is political in nature.
- 2) Separatists' secessionists – based on ethnic or religious identity leads to political secession or separation.
- 3) Revolutionary or counter revolutionary - violent effort to over throw a regime and establish socio-economically distinct model and an attempt to save the assisting regime.
- 4) Coup- oriented- violence used by organized groups to overthrow regimes in power but not to establish distinct socio-eco-political system.
- 5) Political issue or personality oriented violence- the cases of violence, which are oriented towards particular issue(s), individual(s), and group(s).

Mehden also added another broad aspect of political violence, which he

⁴² Op cit., p-11.

⁴³ Op cit., p-41.

calls, 'establishment violence'. This type of violence used by the state and its agents (police, military, bureaucracy etc) are – includes attack upon power contenders, efforts to instill unity and maintain order, quelling non-violent and non-threatening oppositions and elimination of persons or groups considered desirable.⁴⁴

After seeing the above typologies we can say safely that by leaving aside Jabri's conceptions of political violence (War among Nations), broadly there are two types of political violence. Though this typology does not include all three aspects of typology (source, magnitude, forms) stated earlier, the two types are --

- 1). violence against the state
- 2). state sponsored violence

However, the most systematic and multi-dimensional typology of violence is given by Galtung but this certainly is not the typology of political violence as such but violence as a whole.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Fred von der Mahden, "Comparative Political Violence" Eaglewood Chiffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall 1973 p-8-16.

⁴⁵ Discussed in Khan Op cit., p-169.

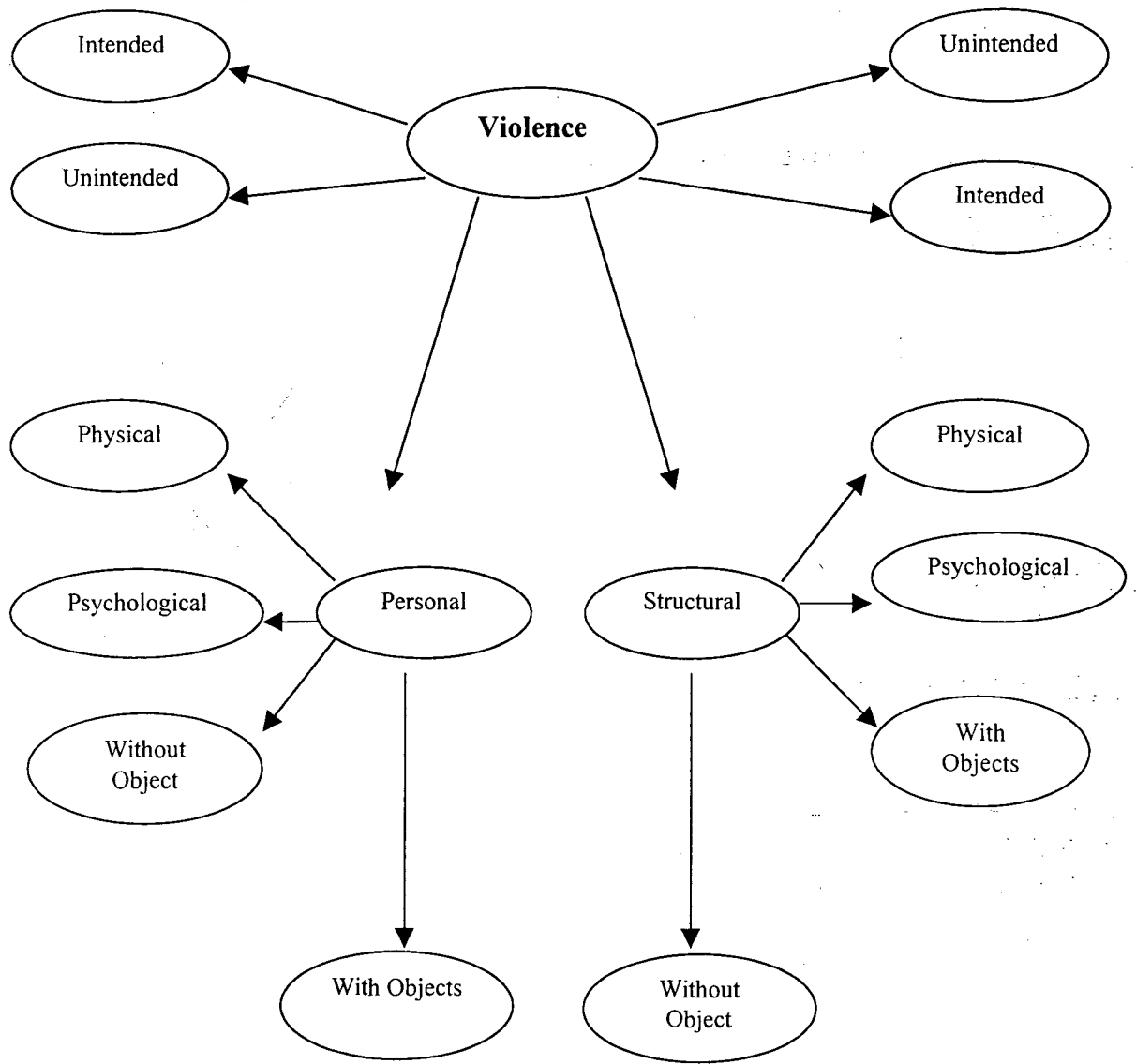


Fig 1. Galtung's Systematic Typology

THEORIES OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Though there are several theories available to analyze political violence, only five will be undertaken for their conceptual significance of political violence. These theories are some way or other related to the further study of these papers.

- 1) The frustration – anger – aggression theory⁴⁶ -- this theory maintains that the primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration- aggression mechanism. The anger induced by frustration is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression.
- 2) Relative deprivation (RD) theory – Relative deprivation is defined by Gurr as, ‘a perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations and their value capabilities’.⁴⁷ Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining, given the social means available to them. Deprivation – induced discontent in a general spur to action. The primary causal sequence in political violence is first, the development of discontent, second, the politicization of that discontent and finally, its expression in violent action against political object and actors.

The frustration- aggression theory and the concept of Relative

⁴⁶ ‘Frustration Aggression Theory’ is given by John Dollard but here the discussion is influenced by Khan *ibid.*, p-170.

⁴⁷ *Op cit.*, p-12.

deprivation are more applicable to individuals, compact groups and sub-segments than to numerically large segments or heterogeneous group and they are even less applicable to a society as a collectivity. These theories and concepts appear more as an extension of individual psychology to social levels.

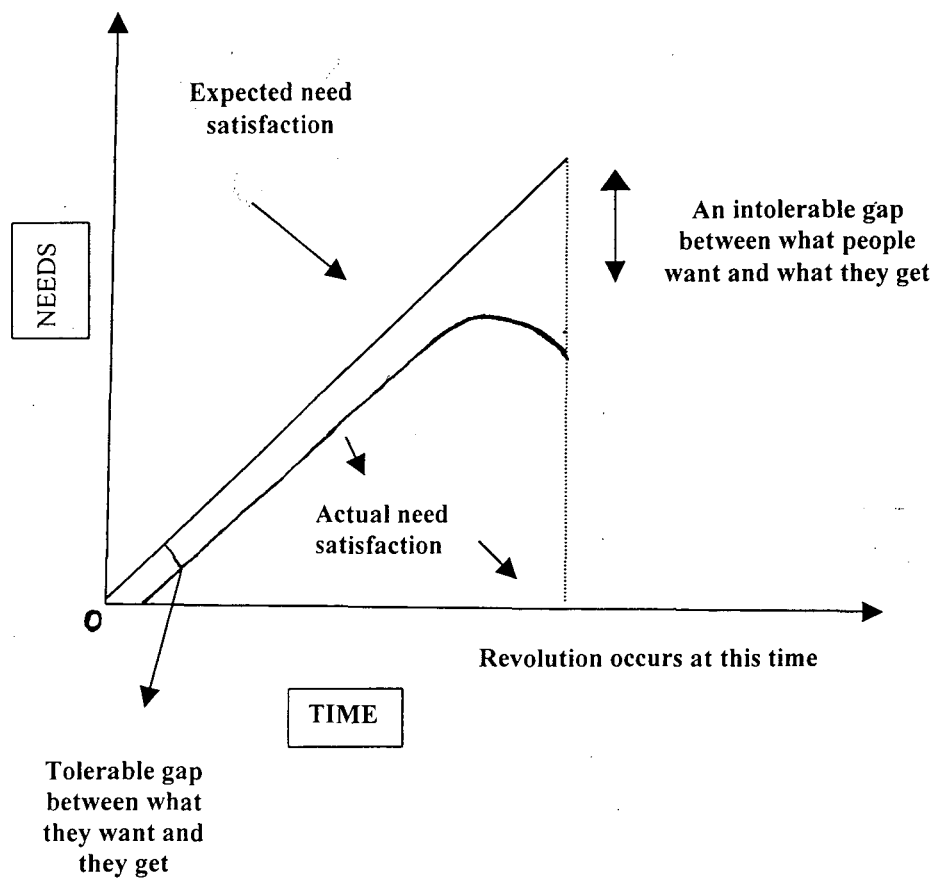


Fig. 2: Need Satisfaction and Revolution, (Davis: 291)

J – curves principle of Davies⁴⁸ – revolution is most likely to take place when a prolonged period of rising expectation and rising gratification is followed by a short period of sharp reversal, during which the gap between

⁴⁸ James C Davies “The J – Curves of Rising and Declining Satisfaction as a Cause of some Great Revolution and A Content Rebellion”, Ted Gurr and Graham Hugh’s (ed.) Op cit., p-690-91.

expectation and gratification quickly widens and become intolerable. He holds that contrary to Marxian expectation, or even the assumptions of Alexis de Tocqueville and others, revolution do not occur during periods of prolonged abject or worsening situations of social deprivation. On the contrary, revolutions occur during periods of relative prosperity and improvement. Thus, Davies postulates a J – Curve, where the discrepancy between achievement and expectations becomes intolerable.⁴⁹

The J – curve principle of Davies is valid in certain specific socio-political situation but it seems wanting in universal applicability. Davies himself opines J – curve is necessary though not sufficient part of the explanation of at least several revolutions and some contained revolution.⁵⁰

3) Feirabends – Nesvold theory of social change and systematic frustration.⁵¹— They define systematic frustration in reference to three criteria – one, as frustration interfering with the attainment and maintenance of social goals, aspirations and values. Two, as frustration simultaneously experienced by members of social aggregates and hence also complex social systems and three, as frustration or strain that is produced within the structures and processes of social system. Systematic frustration that is experienced simultaneously and collectively within societies.

Guided by this definition they adopt two basic propositions from

⁴⁹ Ibid., p-90.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p-728.

⁵¹ Ivo K' Feirabend, Rosalin L. Feirabend and B.A. Nesvold "Social change and Political violence: Cross National Pattern", Ibid., p-634-35.

frustration – aggression hypothesis and restate them with social system.

- 1) violent political behaviour is instigated by systematic frustration
- 2) Systematic frustration may stem among other circumstances of the social system, from specific characteristic of social change.⁵²
- 3) The theory of modernization causing violence in transitional societies of Samuel Huntington⁵³ -- Accepting the three tier paradigm of society as developed by structural – functionalist; traditional, transitional and modern, Huntington argues that the first and last one less prone to political violence and instability and the transitional societies are the most prone. Revolutionary upheavals, military coups, insurrections, guerilla warfare and assassinations are common features of transitional societies. He asserts that social mobilization is much more destabilizing than economic development. Urbanization, literacy, education and the mass media expose the traditional men to new possibilities of satisfaction. However, the ability of a transitional society to satisfy those new aspirations increases much more slowly: consequently, a gap or lag develops between aspirations and expectations. This gap generates social frustration and dissatisfaction, which leads to, demands on government and the expansions of political mobilization and participation to enforce those demands. The lack of adequate political institutions makes it difficult, if not possible, for the demands to be expressed through legitimate channels and to be moderated

⁵² Ibid., p-635.

⁵³ Samuel P Huntington, "Political Order in Changing Societies", New Haven, 1968, p-39-50.

and aggregated within the political system. Hence, the sharp increase in political participation leads to political instability and violence.

Though these above two theories are valid to some extent, 'systematic frustration' is difficult to measure. Huntington's hypothesis over emphasizes violence in what he calls transitional societies and overlooks the types of violence both direct and structural that are endemic in tribal and feudal societies on the one hand and in developed industrial (modern) societies on the other. In the theories there is no recognition of the basic global process, the process of decolonialisation, which permeates the life, society, economy and politics of the bulk of contemporary states and territories.⁵⁴

Harry Eckstein classified the whole theory of political violence into two broad categories.⁵⁵ They are – Contingency theory – collective political violence or such violence in its more extreme forms, should occur when, as the result of some temporal pattern, the specified contingency such as relative deprivation, is or may be accepted to be particularly great. Inherency theory – collective political violence for its most extreme form should occur when, as a result of temporal pattern a) the costs of violent collective actions are expected to be especially low or, b) non- violent actions in pursuit of highly valued goals have been shown to be unproductive.

Irrespective of the variant foci of above said five theories, one thing common to them is that, their applicability to all societies across the spectrum

⁵⁴ Op cit., p-173.

⁵⁵ Op cit., p-154-55.

of socio-economic development is restricted by their ethnocentrism. The reference point for these theories are more or less the modern Western societies with characteristics that cannot be attributed to Third World countries. Rasheeduddin Khan, who focuses on developing countries, opines that, it is not development itself but the disequilibrium in development or what may be described as 'maldevelopment' that results in tensions, conflicts and violence.⁵⁶ In an unequal society like India which is fragmented by tribal, caste, class and other cleavages, the 'maldevelopment' means unequal opportunities in the competition for jobs, services, educational and social facilities and so on, also aggravates group and class conflicts and accentuates individual frustration.⁵⁷

Rajni Kothari views in the same manner when he says that, violence induced by development which has by virtue of its monopolistic and exploitative nature, pitched one section of society against another in almost every region, particularly in poorer and so called backward states (and backward regions within the states). That is why development is necessarily becoming an arena of war between classes, castes and communities.⁵⁸

This discussion on political violence shows that more often than not, violence always starts from the below in the form of reaction. This has been an integral part of the historical approach to study violence under the profound influence of Karl Marx theory of 'Class Struggle'. Heavily influenced by the class struggle and violence against oppressive state the above-discussed

⁵⁶ Op cit., p-183.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p-184.

⁵⁸ Ranji Kothari, 'Development, the State and Violence' Illustrated Weekly of India, Jan.8 1989, p-33.

scholars accept violence as occurring out of socio-political inequalities.

In a fragmented society like India, characterized by hierarchical stratification, one can delineate the type of violence occurring at the realm of domination. In a society characterized by diverse ascriptive identities, the power relation between the dominant and the dominated takes the form of political oppression and it leads to frequent emergence of movements of assertion of their identities.

Use of violence by 'the self'- defined in terms of caste dominance, majoritarian religious affiliations and male chauvinism- against 'the other' to maintain a relationship of domination and suppression goes beyond the realm of political economy. That is, the twin concept of political power and economic power cannot by themselves explain the role of violence in Indian society. Use of violence entails use of ideology as a means of legitimization of the relationship between the dominant and the dominated. Ideology provides an evaluative framework to differentiate what is bad and what is good, thereby creating a social milieu for the use of violence. The modus operandi of violent acts in such a context is far from straight forward. Violence can be overt as well as covert. The psychological factors behind the use of violence can be explained in terms of the linkage between covert and overt violence in relation to ideology and politics.

The self-uses violence to maintain status quo, which is increasingly being disturbed by the assertion of identity of 'the other,' perceived in terms of gender, caste and religion as a logical byproduct of modernization and spread

of education. In case of women, the males use direct physical violence to crush the identity assertion of women and to maintain the status quo. The dominant male ideology is used here to define women's role in society, thereby confining them to private sphere (family) and to deny them their rightful place in the public sphere. The twin purposes of this ideological exercise are to maintain the equilibrium and to weaken social change.

Violence against members of lower castes and religious minorities also aim at consolidating and exercising political and economic domination. The role of ideology remain same as in the case of gender related violence. Hinduism and its special variant Brahmanism believes in one culture, one religion and one nation. The ideologies of Hindutva legitimize hierarchy and inequality and in the changing circumstances consider Untouchables and Ati-shudras as a part of Hindu religion. The earlier tendency to exclude them as outcaste has been conveniently forgotten not because any ideological reformulation but due to a change in socio-political thrust of the Hindu ideology which can be termed as politics of Hindutva.⁵⁹ Historically speaking the untouchable and Ati-shudras are never was a part of Hindutva. Their socio-economic and cultural life is different from caste Hindus.⁶⁰ Therefore, they tried to define their identity outside that of Hindu religion. Their self respect movement and identity assertion which they attain through social change in the form of modernization and education have been seen as the challenge to the equilibrium of the society by the caste Hindus. Therefore, they meet the

⁵⁹ This politics of Hindutva is clearly discussed by Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva" David Ludden, ed., 'Making India Hindu'. 1996, OUP, New Delhi, p. 270-93.

⁶⁰ Also discussed by Kancha Ilaiah, 'Why I Am Not A Hindu?' Samay, Calcutta, 1996.

challenge with violence of different forms, psychological as well as physical. Untouchability and societal boycott are used as a form of psychological violence.

Religious minorities are frequent victims of different forms of violence by 'the self' is represented by the self appointed guardians of Hindu religion like RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena. The forces of Hindutva use violence to project India as a country of one religion, one culture and one nation as said before. Muslim culture in India is strong, though they are a minority in India, they are able to form a separate identity outside of Hinduism. Their art, culture, which also has enriched Indian culture, is different from Hindu culture. For that very reason, they have been seen as alien to Indian culture or to India by the Hindu protagonists. So they perpetuate violent attack to impose the majoritarian culture to maintain the status quo, which they think, will disappear through the assertion of separate minority identity. This is true in case of Christian religion also. The rationality of Christianity and the English education spread by them to Indian people (mostly SC's and ST's) who reside in the remote Indian villages and are the outside the India's developmental scheme, are seen as the challenge to the Hindu culture. Now-a-days growing attack on Christianity is a testimony to this.

The above-discussed violence perpetuated by 'the self' is to prevent social change and to maintain the status quo. Any attempts by 'the other' to challenge that ideology is seen as threatening the status quo. For that reason, the others become the frequent victims of psychological as well as physical

violence by the self. This type of violence from the above in the form of domination and oppression is prevalent in India and the discussed violence can be termed as political violence because their main thrust is to catch hold of that power position and to remain in power. The remaining chapters of this study will be devoted to violence against women, against lower castes and against religious minorities, which is sought to be explained within the broad framework of politics, power and violence.

CHAPTER 2

GENDER IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

GENDER IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Simone de Beauvoir in her celebrated work, 'The Second Sex'¹ said, "Women are made not born", to justify that woman has no past, no history and no religion of their own. Women have always been man's dependent and has gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing they have only received. So, to be a woman in most societies, in most eras- is to experience physical and/or sexual terrorism at the hands of men.² These violence are the manifestations of male dominance; so often characterized as typical, it has been seen to be natural right of men. Fathers have the right to use their daughter as they please; husbands, their wives; bosses, their female employees; even men unknown to women act as if they have the right to comment or abuse any woman's body. Much of male's sexual and physical aggression towards women is not prohibited; it is regulated.³ The different manifestations of male violence collectively function as a threat to women's autonomy. They undermine women's self esteem and limit their freedom of action. Male violence expresses, 'not purely individual anger and frustration but a collective, culturally sanctioned misogyny, which is important in maintaining the collective power of men.'⁴ From the day of their birth, girls are being devalued and degraded. This apartheid of gender is prevalent in all over the

¹ Cited in Mary Evans, 'Simone de Beauvoir- A Feminist Mandarin' Tavistock, London, 1985.

² Elizabeth A. Stanko, 'Intimate Intrusion- Women's Experience of Male Violence', Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1985, p-9.

³ Ibid., p-71.

⁴ Quoted in 'Masculinity Violence and Sexual Murder' by Deborah Cameron & Elizabeth Frazer Polity Reader in Gender Studies, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 267.

world. Long after slavery was abolished in most of the world, many societies still treat women like slave: their shackles are poor education, economic dependence, limited political power, limited access to fertility control, harsh social convention and inequality in the eyes of law. Violence is the key instrument used to keep these shackles on.

Literatures on women studies are more vocal against the physical and sexual violence against women. However, less about the psychological violence which are also the causal factors behind physical or sexual violence. In this study, we will see both forms of violence against women those that are physical or overt and psychological or covert violence. The first category includes open and direct cases of inflicting harms- dowry murder, bride-burning, battering, rape, female genital mutilation, abduction, etc. The second category of covert violence includes silent and relatively invisible acts of deprivation, emotional torture and humiliation. These include the relative denial of food, medical care, education, re-enforcement of her significance and dependent role / status.

While there are many differences in social structure between First, Second and Third World societies, there are some common features of patriarchal family structure that inflict deprivation on women in all societies. Since we are concerned with violence against women in India, we have to look into the gender violence in relation to caste and religion, which are more peculiar to India. For that reason, the Indian Patriarchy has been termed differently by different scholars; 'Brahminical Patriarchy' by Uma Chakravarti and 'Multiple Patriarchies' by Kumkum Sangari.

Political Violence as discussed earlier, is a 'Collective Violence' and individual acts of violence do not fall into that category. But in a broad perspective of violence against women, caste violence, communal violence in which the individual acts of violence are manifested, can be accommodated into the scheme of Political Violence and such a view is more significant in case of gender because when a husband is beating his wife he may be doing that act as an individual but he is representing the whole male identity. That is why Linda McDowell and Rosemary Pringle opine that, although power may be experienced in individual term, it also has a systematic quality about it. The actions of individual men have institutional, ideological and discursive backing.⁵

In analyzing how power is being used against women in society, a well-established sociological model may help in this regard. This model suggests that we can best identify power at work by examining three possible guises or faces that power wears.⁶ The first face of power is visible in direct action, where force or might are used or in public decisions, taken as publicly discussed issues. The second face of power can be seen in attempts to stifle an issue as it emerges, or in attempts to redefine or reshape an issue something less threatening. Power in the third dimension is used to manipulate people's perceptions, so that they are unaware of having a grievance. The history of women oppression is littered with

⁵ In Linda McDowell and Rosemary Pringle (eds.) 'Defining Woman; Social Institution and Gender Division', Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, p-10.

⁶ The three faces of power given by Lukes discussed in Aveen Maguire 'Power: Now You See It Now You Do not', A Women's guide to how power works in Linda McDowell and Rosemary Pringle (eds.) Op Cit., p-18.

examples of all three. Once a power structure is set up its momentum is maintained on the basis of set of values and beliefs, an ideology, the same ideology by which the decision to set up the social structure were made.⁷ These value beliefs and ideologies are generally get momentum in a society, where religion, culture and tradition play important role. In India the power relation between men and women is based on the above mentioned criteria of religion, culture and tradition. Therefore, it is proposed that an explanation of violence on women be sought by situating her within the basic ideo-structure of Indian vernacular culture and practical ethics of society- the type of stereo-typed notion commonly held by men about women. Culture and the way its explicit and implicit values towards women are patterned and organized, are more dangerous violator of women than any single factor that is why Surabhi Aggrawal maintained that 'large scale violence against women has an institutional dimension and is embodied in and emerges from long ingrained anti-women cultural values of the society'.⁸ In all societies, poverty discrimination, ignorance and social unrest are common predictors of violence against women. Yet, the most enduring enemies of a women's dignity and security are cultural forces aimed at preserving male dominance and female subjugation – often defended in the name of vulnerable tradition.

⁷ Ibid., p-21.

⁸ In 'Cultural Roots of Violence on Women in India', *The Eastern Anthropologist*, vol-43 no-2 1990, p-169.

From the above discussion one can see that, how the societal arrangement in a Patriarchal Society is itself an agent of violence against women and ironically whenever they try to assert their so called 'identity' defined by men they again become the target of attack. Women have always existed mirroring a created identity that would put Patriarchs at ease. Every time a woman tries to re-define that eyebrows have been raised. It would be naive to imagine that a power struggle as intense and as politically important as this could be a simple affair. A re-definition of her status would mean re-definition of the status of men and that of men-women relationship. This could lead to a situational crisis where the male would be nursing an injured ego, which escalate to violent behavior of men against women. This assertion of identity, now a days have become a crucial area for women to face violent attack from men. Women's aspirations and achievements are powerfully inhibited not just by the injuries of physical attacks but by the implicit threat of male violence. Women's climb into the halls of power challenges the existing power structure. That is what Nandy opines when he says "the re-definition of womanhood in India during modern times has meant the re-definition of the concept of men and public functioning".⁹

The manifestations of violence against women can be categorized broadly as; violence in private sphere and violence in public sphere. Violence in private sphere often known as domestic violence. Elise Boulding calls these two types of

⁹ Ashis Nandy, 'Woman versus Womanliness; An Essay in Speculative Psychology' B. R. Nanda (ed.) 'Indian Woman; From Purdah to Modernity' Vikas, New Delhi, 1976, p-158.

violence as behavioral violence and structural violence.¹⁰ Therefore, it is necessary on our part to discuss these manifestations of violence under the broad category of violence in private sphere and violence in public sphere because the term private/public is crucial to feminist perceptions.

VIOLENCE IN PRIVATE SPHERE

For millions of women today, home is a locus of terror. It is not an assault of the strangers that women need fear the most, but every day brutality at the hands of relatives, friends and lovers. There are clear parallels between behaviour within and outside the home. If the systematic oppression of women and girls is tolerated widely at the family level, society at large will be shaped accordingly. So there is an established relationship between violence in home and violence in public sphere. Of all the forms of violence that women face domestic violence remains the least reported and largely suppressed because violence within the home constitutes more often than not, a 'private' affair because of the high value attached to family as an indisputably sacrosanct social institution. In fact, this belief disables rightful cognizance of the fact that more often than not the family, in reality, is the site of and the root of unequal gender relation and oppression of women. Violence in the forms of wife battering, dowry death, incest, female foeticide and infanticide, discrimination and exploitation in food, education and health care can be termed as 'Domestic Violence'. In a patriarchal society like

¹⁰ In 'Women and Social Violence in J.M.Domenach et al, 'Violence and its Cause', UNESCO, 1981, p-239-251.

India under the patriarchal order, kinship, conjugal and familial systems tend to construct in such a way that women are less able to act as fully operative subjects than men. Women are sought to be molded to the will and norms of the patriarchal society. But Shalini Shah sees, yet another manifestation of the design of subordination in the creation of artificial dichotomy between 'domestic' and 'public,' and in considering the former as hierarchically inferior to later, confining women to the former and regarding later as an exclusive preserve of men.¹¹

The birth of a girl grants it else where, here grant a son

(Atharva Veda)

The girl child in many parts of India rural or urban is born into a culture, which idolizes sons and mourns the birth of a daughter. This cultural background works in tandem with poor inheritance rights, the attendant system of dowry, low recognition of women's contribution to the economy and the violence, discrimination and exploitation inherent in an inequitable patriarchal society. In the socialization, process girls are made to see the world comprising of relationships achieving coherence through human connection. In essence, then, female children are cultured into a system, which teaches them to be supportive, helpful and loving and in turn see the world as an extension of them connected to others. So Elizabeth A. Stanko opines, 'If females are connected to the world

¹¹ In Shalini Shah, 'The Making Of Womanhood; Gender Relation In The Mahabharat', Manohar, New Delhi, 1995, p-162.

through relationship and particularly their relationship to men, they are likely to be confused by aggression exhibited towards them within their relationship.¹²

For women, violence in the family is a phenomenon, which starts at conception and carries on through their entire life span. In India, pre-birth selection and consequent infanticide are a common occurrence and the preference for a male offspring wide spread. Discrimination continues by way of access to adequate food, prompt medical facilities, burden of house work, care of sibling and so on leading to lack of education and consequent lack of awareness and empowerment and imparting of skills. Adolescence brings with it the complete withdrawal of the little freedom of mobility, fear of an occurrence of sexual assaults; both within and outside family. Early marriages and early child bearing and the disastrous consequences on the health of women further compound vulnerability. In India, especially child marriages further accentuate the girl's vulnerability. The reproductive age is, for many women punctuated with physical, mental and emotional abuse by their husbands. Millions of Indian women face severe harassment due to unfulfilled dowry demands and many are victims of homicide and are even driven to suicide. The most stark measures of all is perhaps Prof. Amartya Sen's concept of 'Missing Women'- the low sex ratio in India means that some thirty seven to thirty eight million women who might otherwise be alive today have died due to neglect and maltreatment.¹³

¹² Op cit., p-73.

¹³ Cited in Gail Omvedt, 'Hindu Nationalism and Women-II', The Hindu Daily Newspaper, 28th April 2000, p-10.

It is however established beyond doubt that domestic violence in the form of wife battering is probably one of the endemic forms of violence against women through out the world. Deep-rooted ideas about male superiority enable men to freely exercise unlimited power over women's lives and effectively legitimizes too. Violence is thus a tool that men use constantly to control women as a result of highly internalized patriarchal conditioning which accords men the right to beat their wives and thus ostensibly perform the duty of controlling them. Though some times battered women are viewed as mentally disturbed or sick individuals or batters as products of an abusive environment and therefore abuse of drug and alcohol majority of violence occurs due to power relationship between husbands and wives. So Dobash and Dobash opine, "the situation of wife beating arises out of a patriarchal family system in which the husbands authority over their wives create a 'particular marriage power relationship' and a subordinate status of wives".¹⁴ Violence in the home has its origin in an entire social context. Wife battering is a reflection of the broad structures of sexual and economic inequality. Studies show that rather than representing an aberration, violence in home is an extension of the role society expects men to play in their domestic sphere.¹⁵

The above discussion shows that though wife battering is a domestic violence it is often related to structural violence. The power relationship between men and women, which starts from the family, extends to public sphere. Elise

¹⁴ Quoted in Niroj Sinha (ed.) 'Women and Violence', Vikas, New Delhi, 1989, p-74.

¹⁵ Miranda Davies (ed.) 'Women and Violence', Zed Books Limited, London, 1994, p-7.

Boulding views the same, when she says, 'while the actual beating experienced by women is behavioral violence, the patterns of socio-economic and political organization that make women easy victim of their husbands are examples of structural violence'.¹⁶ In India large scale, domestic violence against women occurs because of male authority and control over resources. This has been more systematically discussed by Subadra in her study of wife battering in Chennai and she says, 'domestic violence more often than not is rooted in patriarchal notions of ownership over women's bodies, sexuality, labour, reproductive rights, mobility and levels of autonomy'.¹⁷

In India, these controls on women are stronger because of the religious practices, culture and tradition, which influence the society, which is already patriarchal in nature as said before. Control through the sexuality in India contributes substantially to the underdevelopment of women's personality, which also acts as an indicator of violence against women. However, one of the immediate manifestations of control of sexuality and body in the form of 'Sati' or widow immolation is prevalent in India. This kind of violence springs from a particular mindset based on the cultural perception of women's place in India. Therefore, it is needful to discuss control of women through sexuality, which in turn helps to control women's bodies, labour, reproductivity, mobility and levels of autonomy.

¹⁶ Op cit., p-243.

¹⁷ In her article 'Violence Against Women; Wife Battering in Chennai' EPW, April 17, 1999 WS 28.

CONTROLLING WOMEN'S SEXUALITY

For gender, violence in all its varied manifestations is not random and it is not about sex. It serves a deliberate social function: asserting control over women's lives and keeping them second-class citizens. Control of women's sexuality is not only a reason for violence in private sphere but also it is a substantial reason behind violence in public sphere. Patriarchal hegemony is such that it does not rely on sexual violence to keep women in check. As feminists across the globe have demonstrated, one of the most successful ways in which women's sexuality was controlled and disciplined was by confining them within the home and interpellating them into predominantly subordinate and familial subject positions such as daughter, sister, wife and mother. Such interpellations were facilitated through 'ideological state apparatuses' such as family, the school, media, religious institutions etc.¹⁸ In Brahminical Hinduism these ideological apparatuses function in such a way to undermine the development of women's identity. In Hinduism, the concept of femaleness presents a duality. On the one hand the female is seen as divine, creative, nurturing and supportive, on the other she is considered to be the epitome of the dangerous carnal and evil and therefore in constant need of subordination. However, that divine character of female also needs special control by the Patriarchs in every stage of her life. She has no identity of her own in Brahminical Hinduism. The religious texts refer to her as

¹⁸ Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses discussed by Malathi de Alwis and Kumari Jayawardena, 'Embodied Violence; Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia' Kali For Women, New Delhi, 1996, p-xix.

'Ardhangini', half body, and a part of men. The 'feminine religion' or 'Stridharma' according to scriptures is to look upon the husband as god, to hope for salvation through him, to be obedient to him in all things, never to covert independence, never to do any thing but that which is approved by him. The dependence of women on men is total and absolute and if they dare break these bonds of control, they should severely be punished. Manu, the Brahminical Law giver even allows man the liberty of beating his wife, if she dares disobey him. Manu has said, "By violating her duty towards her husband, a wife is disgraced in this world; (after death) she enters the wombs of a jackal and is terminated by disease (the punishment of her sin).¹⁹ The ideal Hindu woman is one who sees her highest good in her husband. In other words, she is under control of her husband and the wifely role is one of subordination and devotion, whatever may be the circumstances. In Hinduism the woman's place is primarily confined to home, her role limited to procreation and the bringing up of children and catering to the needs of her husband. Chastity and control of sexuality are the most important aspects of the role of wife. The maintenance of chastity requires control of sexuality and a woman's sexuality should always be under control of man. That is better presented by Veena Das when she quotes Manu, one of the legitimizers of Hindu caste system, who says, "In childhood a woman should be protected by her

¹⁹ In Ranjana Kumari, "Female sexuality Hinduism", Indian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, New Delhi, 1998, p-7.

father, in youth by her husband and in old age by her son". Verily a woman does not deserve freedom.²⁰

The mechanism of control of woman's sexuality by brahminical patriarchy operates through three devices at three different levels; the first was through ideology, through the Stridharma or Pativrata-dharma, internalized by women who attempt to live up to the ideal notion of womanhood construct by the ideologues of the society.²¹ These three devices are interrelated and works in tandem with relation to each other. The patriarchal caste – class structure mapped out by the Brahmins has been able to make, pativrata, the specific dharma of Hindu wife as an ideology which women accepted and even aspired to chastity and wifely fidelity as the highest expression of their womanhood. As argued by Uma Chakravarti, it is one of the most successful ideologies constructed by any patriarchal system, one in which women themselves control their own sexuality. Much attention has been focussed in recent years on the ideological control of women through the idealization of chastity and wifely fidelity as the highest duty of women, legitimized through customs, rituals and through construction of notions of womanhood which epitomize wifely fidelity as in the case of Sita, Savitri, Anusuya, Arundhati and others. When these women are projected as ideal women because of their wifely role they played, at the same time those women who lapse into unrestrained behaviour disregarding Stridharma projected as

²⁰ In, 'Indian Women: Work, Power and Status' B.R.Nanda (ed.) Op cit., p-129-130.

²¹ Uma Chakravarti, 'Conceptualising Brahminical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State' EPW, April 3 1993, p-582-83. The whole discussion on the three devices is inspired by her.

wicked as bad women. At the same time, the distorted images of women in Indian culture has also developed through Brahminical Hinduism. Women have been known Maya (illusion) and Moha (false attachment). Men as passionate being know them. As Manu said, "Behind even the innocent exterior (among the women) there is raging passion of lust, since they are beings of insatiable sexual appetite."²² Further more in the Hindu tradition a virtuous woman is one who only lack opportunity, for they can change lovers as they can shed garments. Women are unclean and inherently impure; the Hindu women's position is equivalent to a sudra and she is not entitled to the gayatri mantra or to read Veda. Consequently a Hindu woman would not even today in some household cannot eat with her husband since she has sudra status. That is why like sudra's she was also denied education. Manu by his jurisprudence made literate women a social and moral anathema. Therefore, not only literacy became a rare quality in women but also it was even regarded as 'disreputable'. Another aspect of pollution and impurity women attends through their bodily process found in Hinduism. Menstruation and childbirth are strong sources of pollution among Hindus, which make women instrically less pure than men are. It is well known that the ritual and existential notion that, women never attend the level of purity of men of their own caste, essentially because of the self-pollution that they incur through bodily processes. They are therefore regarded unfit for many roles in the sphere of rituals and worship. Priestly functions are and the worship of certain deities is not permitted

²² Surabhi Aggrawal Op cit., p-178.

to them.²³ Brahminical patriarchy, which was inspired by Hinduism, developed the image of woman who has no identity of her own. If they try to assert their identity they are seen as evil in nature and even it permits men to use violence act to get back them into their own position. Even Manu states that, “Killing woman like drinking of liquor is only a minor offence”.²⁴

Kumkum Sangari discussed the above aspect more clearly and she says, “Since men are usually perceived as having both rights and duties, while women are perceived as having primarily duties, any claim to ‘rights’ unless effectively disguised becomes a sign of women’s evil nature.”²⁵ Shalini Shah says the same when she opines, “under patriarchy, organized expropriation of women’s sexuality by men goes a long way to define the sex ‘woman’. Male right over female sexuality results in the branding of certain women (dissenters) as ‘deviant’ and other (the conformists) as ‘Sati’”.²⁶

Another feature of control of women’s sexuality has been prevalent in India that is through the discourse of shame. The power of the discourse of shame lies in the fact that it becomes part of a woman’s understanding of definition of herself. Shame cannot be merely seen, as imposition on the female body but has to be seen as the way that the female self is defined.²⁷ Sometimes men also control women’s

²³ Leela Dube, ‘Women and Kinship, Comparative Prospective on Gender in South and Southeast Asia’, United Nations University Press, New York, 1997, p-74.

²⁴ Surabhi Aggrawal Op cit., p-179.

²⁵ In ‘Consent, Agency and Rhetoric of Incitement’ in T.V.Satyamurthy (ed.) “Social Change and Political Discourse in India, Structures of Power, Movements of Resistance vol-iii, Region, Religion, Caste and Gender and Culture in Contemporary India” OUP, New Delhi, 1995, p-478.

²⁶ Shalini Shah Op cit., p-161.

²⁷ Kalpana Vishwanath, ‘Femininity: The Female Body and Sexuality in Contemporary Society’. Seminar, NMML, 1994, p-17.

body and sexuality by suspicion. It happens more in the relationship of husband and wife. If wife is better educated holds better job, if her natal family is exceptionally affectionate and supportive, if she has friends who are gregarious and hearty, she immediately becomes the suspect in her husband's eye. It is as if, the husband is fearful that the object of his persistent want will disappear. He fears her independence, the fact that she has an identity of her own outside that of marriage, and on that account considers her a recalcitrant and unyielding wife and beats her, forces her to have sex, when she obviously does not want to. In this respect V.Geetha opines, 'The husband's power to judge his wife, to mark her body as clean or unclean, her sexual being as legitimate or illegitimate in the context of marriage, allows him master her sexual being'.²⁸

Most South Asian women rooted in patrilineal, patri-virilocal kinship, with limited rights over resources and virtually no inheritance rights, dependent secluded and segregated, their sexuality managed by men, don't have choices or have limited choices. This responsibility for protection of female sexuality gives male the right to exercise power over females in their charge and often to dictate every facets of their behavior.²⁹ In some cases, the responsibility of control of sexuality of women by men is not restricted to the family or the kinship. It has become the responsibility of the total surroundings to which she belongs in this process 'patrilineal territoriality' broaden its circle. Leela Dube opines that "South

²⁸ In 'On Bodily Love and Heart' in 'A Question of Silence: The Sexual Economies of Modern India' (eds.) Mary John and Janaki Nair, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1998, p-312.

²⁹ Ibid., p-7.

Asia shows a special kind of male control over female sexuality, rooted in patrilineal ideology in a consciousness of territoriality and group solidarity, which can be called as 'corporate control'".³⁰ It is well known that a male dominated village panchayat (council or adjudicating body) or caste panchayat can decide a matter of separation, divorce and compensation and can take note of the adulterates and illegitimate pregnancies of an unattached women.

In an era of bargaining power, men enjoy superiority in relation to women, because of male control of women's sexuality, which subsequently related to control of other aspects of women's life; power of directing, guiding and restraining others and of unilaterally taking decisions that concerns men's folk. Ideology is used here to exercise control over resources and over women's body and sexuality. The main mechanisms discussed by Leela Dube are the organization of work, space and time: rules of avoidance and respect modes of punishment, the distribution of resources, the withholding of love, the denial of knowledge and information and in general the absence of opportunities to develop self worth. To her seclusion and segregation are among the most potent instrument of control.³¹ parda (purdah) or seclusion of women is closely related to the concern over the management of female sexuality characterized in India. However, among Hindus, the mechanisms are somewhat different in both form and purpose, but they do impose constraints on women, restricting movement and participation in many

³⁰ Op cit., p-51.

³¹ Ibid., p-8.

important areas of life. She argues in South Asia purdah has drawn its legitimacy both from the kinship, organization and from religion and has served to sustain strongly patriarchal family structure as well as unequal gender relations.³² In her study of kinship of Lakshadweep Island and Southeast Asia where, the total or relatively absence of seclusion has enabled women to use their choices and assert their bargaining power.³³ It is true to other developed societies also.

Therefore, through the control of sexuality of women, men established their superiority and control, which enable them to deprive the labour and reproductive rights of women. Patrilineal system functions and survives at the cost of women. Women's peripheral membership of their natal group, their transfer to their husbands group and their purely instrumental as bearers of children for their affinal groups, all have definite implications. The absence of rights over property, over means of living make women vulnerable to oppression of different kind.

It is not possible to make watertight division between the reasons behind the violence in private and public sphere because one can influence another. Since, the manifestations of violence in public sphere are quite different from private sphere, it is necessary to discuss violence in public sphere too.

VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC SPHERE

In private sphere, there is more covert or psychological violence and less physical violence on women, but in public sphere, there is less psychological but

³² Ibid., p-64.

³³ Ibid.,p-65.

more physical or overt violence. Violence in public sphere in its different manifestations is sexual violence including rape, sexual harassment and molestation, abduction and kidnapping etc. Since rape of women is the highest form of violence against them, it is necessary to discuss the motives behind it. Broadly speaking the various incidents of rape fall into two broad categories: the individual or criminal and the social oppression but both represent a brutal oppressive attitude towards women. However, the individual rape cannot be dismissed as merely for sexual gratification. The offender might be doing that for his sexual desire but its lasting effects bring more problems to whole women folk. It terrorizes women so much that its effect found in women's public image therefore the individual or criminal rape indirectly acts as social oppression. The causes behind rape given by Ram Ahuja are 1) inordinate sexual desire, 2) situational urge, 3) hostility towards women, 4) intoxication and 5) the victims provocation.³⁴ Except the hostility towards women, the other causes given by him are meant for individual or criminal rape. More than any thing else the hostility towards women and the motives to keep women in their place are the two important causes behind rape of any kind. That is why feminists argue that rape is not a sexual act but rather must be recognized as an act of domination and humiliation. It is an inhuman act, which is oppressive in many ways. Both the forms of rape represent a brutal oppressive attitude towards women; they are being viewed as sex objects, commodities and second rate human beings. In the first

³⁴ Ram Ahuja, 'Violence Against Women', Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1999, p-69.

category, also rape acts as an instrument to oppress women as whole, by which all men keep all women in a state of fear. Susan Griffin says, "Legally, rape is recognized as a crime with physical aspect only: namely the penetration of the vagina by the penis against the will of the victim. In effect however the real crime is the annihilation by men of the women as a human being".³⁵ It is primarily a lesson for the whole class of women. Rape then is an effective political device. It is not an arbitrary act of violence by one individual against another. It is a political act of oppression (never rebellion) exercised by members of a powerful class on members of the powerless class.³⁶ Uma Chakravarti opines, "while rape may take the form of individual violence of men against women, as disturbingly, rape occurs as an instrument of repression and is used as a political weapon".³⁷

In India it is now a standard practice of the rural landed elite to indulge in the rape of the womenfolk of rural poor, when they begin to assert themselves in share cropping disputes, or in reclaiming lost land or in demanding the payment of minimum wages. The use of violence as part of class conflict in rural India which results in rape as an expression of the feudal attitude of the landed classes, which view women as the property of men. It is also same in case of dalit women, who for years have been denied their proper rights to life, when demand that becomes

³⁵ Quoted in 'Feminist Politics and Human Nature', by Alison M. Jaggar Rodman and Allan Held Publishers, The Harvester Press, Sussex, 1993, p-262.

³⁶ Ibid., p-263.

³⁷ In 'Rape, Class and State' A. R. Desai (ed.) 'Expanding Governmental Lawlessness and Organised struggle' Bombay Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1991, p-107.

the victim of social violence. Rape takes a different form in case of caste conflict and communal violence where women's bodies are being communalized.

Peoples movements which have attempted to organize and resist the exploitation of this type are subjected not only to armed reprisals of the landlords, but also face the repressive power of the state machinery. Mass rape is often used as part of repressive measures unleashed by the state who crush movements of dalits, tribals, peasants, workers and political dissidents. One such incident occurred in Beldiha in Santhal Praganas where CRPF and Bihar Police surrounded the Bihar village and raped and assaulted the women as part their effect to cross the Adivashi land-grab movements. In the Northeastern areas of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, atrocities by the Indian Army have become a systematic practice to suppress their struggle for freedom. That is why Uma Chakravarti again says, "An analysis of the instances of state violence reveals a sinister pattern that runs through all the incidents in which the suppression of protest movement invariably includes mass rape as one of the weapons of repression".³⁸ This 'teaching a lesson' by state institutions landed elite and Caste Hindus are more frequent in India. Wide spread violence against women were witnessed at the time of partition of India with more than hundred thousands of women abducted from each of the two parts of Punjab alone and were raped.³⁹ Not only were women abducted and raped but slogan like 'Victory to India' and 'Long live Pakistan'

³⁸ Ibid., p-108.

³⁹ Ritu Menon and Kamala Vhashin in Kumari Jayawardena and Malathi de Alwis (ed.) Op cit.

were said to have been painfully inscribed on the private part of the women.⁴⁰ That is why Veena Das argues that the bodies of women became political signs, territories on which the political programmes of the rioting communities of men were inscribed.⁴¹

German sociologist Ruth Seifert addresses the theme of gender and violence by focussing on the gender specific atrocities systematically committed by Serb-Croat forces in 1992-95 Bosnian Civil War. Seifert rejects the common explanation given to rapes in the context of war which portrays such acts as 'natural occurrences' to be attributed to a male anthropology or to acts of 'hordes run wild'. In her views, such explanations have prevented a deeper probing into the meanings and functions of collective sexual violence against women. Her objective is to identify patterns of war crimes against women and to show that they have cultural functions. She argues that such acts of violence not only destroy the physical and psychological existence of women, but also inflict harm on the culture and the collective identity of the whole groups, ethnicity or nation under attack. Thus, war crimes such as the mass rapes of women have symbolic meaning and must be analyzed within the symbolic contexts of the nation and the gender system.⁴²

⁴⁰ Veena Das, 'Sexual Violence, Discursive Formation and State' EPW, special number 1996, September, p-2411.

⁴¹ Quoted in Ibid., p-2411.

⁴² Discussed in 'Violence in its Alternative an Inter-disciplinary Reader' (eds.) Manfred B. Steger and Nancy S Lind, Macmillan, London, 1999, p-xix.

So the violence against women especially rape is not merely violence of one individual against another but there are some disguised motives behind it. Whenever women have demanded more than what they have been given by the so-called 'male authority' they are being the victims of violence more often in the forms of rape. That is why Susan Brown Miller opines, 'through the years till today rape has been a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear'.⁴³ Rape is a weapon all men use against all women. So long as one is raped, all women live in the fear of rape. It keeps all women in their respective place. Besides rape, sexual harassment in work place and for that matter in public place show the unequal gender relationship between men and women. So in a broad framework one can see that the large-scale violence against women has a 'power relation' inherent in it and when men see the challenge to their power, they become even more violent.

PATRIARCHY IN INDIAN CONTEXT: A CONCEPTUALISATION

One cannot study women in isolation. Though they have a separate identity invariably, it is often related to different caste, class, race and religion. It is more so in Indian context because of the segmented nature of the Indian society, which is based on hierarchy. A woman here is often related to her respective caste or religion.

A significant shift in the feminist thought of 1980's and 1990's were because of the visibility of the black and Third World feminist's works. Yet, there

⁴³ Quoted in 'The Crime of Rape Some Facts' in A.R.Desai (ed.) Op cit., p-103

has been reluctance on the part of white feminists to confront the challenges posed to them by black and third world feminism. "This reluctance and relative silence on part of the white feminists amount to an assumption that confronting racism is the sole responsibility of the black feminists or to a reassertion of the old assumption that the political processes of becoming anti-sexist include by definition of the processes of becoming anti-racist".⁴⁴ In India, the assertion of autonomous dalit women's organization in the 90's threw up several crucial theoretical and political challenges besides underlining the Brahminism of the feminist movement and the patriarchal practices of dalit politics.⁴⁵ There have been considerable efforts by Indian feminists to link caste and religion with gender to articulate Indian women's plight in relation to Brahminism and patriarchy.

In India, the patriarchy has always legitimized itself not independently but through Brahminism. For, the brahminical patriarchy^{45a} is seen as a set of rules and instructions in which caste and gender are linked, each shaping the other and where women are crucial in maintaining the boundaries between castes. The patriarchal codes in this structure ensure that the caste system can be reproduced without violating the hierarchical order of closed endogamous circles, each distinct from and higher and lower than the other. Brahminical patriarchal codes for women differ according to the status of the caste groups in the hierarchy of castes with the most stringent control over female sexuality for the higher caste.

⁴⁴ Sharmila Rege, 'Dalit Women Talk Differently, A Critique Of 'Difference' And Towards A Dalit Feminist Stand Point', EPW, October 31 1998, p-ws39.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p-ws39.

^{45a} The discussion on Brahminical Patriarchy is influenced by Uma Chakravarti, *Op Cit.*,

These sets of norms have shaped the ideology of the upper caste in particular. It continues to be the underpinnings of beliefs and practices to a great extent among these castes even today and is often emulated also by some sections the lower castes especially when they assume upper caste argument of self-negating inferiority to seek parity and identity with other dominant castes. For her, the effective control of upper caste women not only necessary to maintain patrilineal succession but also caste purity. Sharmila Rege views that the upper caste women not only incited their men folk into the violent acts but also participated in them whenever such parity and identity was sought by them, which presents a problem for feminist movement in India.⁴⁶

Therefore in Indian situation, dalit women are not only the sufferers of patriarchy but also of caste system. They face the violent attack not only from the men folk but also from their own gender itself. It is important to recognize that the violence against dalit women is more frequent than caste Hindu women. Dalit women who constitute the lower segment of the Indian society suffer from dual disadvantage; a) of being dalits that is socio-economically and culturally marginalized group and b) being women they share the gender based inequality and subordination. The violent practice against women reveal definite variations by caste; while upper caste women are subjected to control and violence within the family, it is the absence of such control that makes lower caste women vulnerable

⁴⁶ Sharmila Rege, 'Caste and Gender : Violence Against Women in P.G.Gogdanda's 'Dalit Women in India: Issues and Perspective', Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995, p-31.

and through history, there has been a brahminical refusal to universalize a single patriarchal mode. Thus, the existence of multiple patriarchies is a result of brahminical conspiracy. There are therefore, discrete (specific to caste) as well as overlapping patriarchal arrangement".⁵¹ Hence, Sangari argues that feminist politics has to be based on all aspects of patriarchies- systemic operation and similarities, structured and unstructured differences.⁵²

Therefore, the challenge before the Indian feminists is to look beyond gender and locate it in different social hierarchy based on caste, class and religion. This relationship between gender and community in India needs to be understood. Communities are defined in and through identities of women. In India, it has been seen that in communal riots and caste violence, women become the frequent victims of violence. The violation of woman sexuality is essential if superiority over their men folk is to be demonstrated. In an atmosphere charged with polarized interest, women of particular communities are targeted for attack. Kalpana Kannabiran argues, "since the struggle for hegemony/power is carried out on women's body, establish control over women through rape (the category of rape here include every act of sexual aggression on women) becomes a legitimate means of carrying out this struggle".⁵³ To understand this connection, the present study will take into account the case of Rameeza Bee, who was raped by four

⁵¹ For whole discussion of Multiple Patriarchies see Kumkum Sangari, 'Politics of Diversities: Religious Communities and Multiple Patriarchies', in EPW, December 23 1995, p-3287-3310 and December 30 p-3381-3389.

⁵² Ibid., p-3386.

⁵³ In Kumari Jayawardena and Malathi de Alwis Op cit., p-34.

policemen in 1978. In her case, she had to prove that, first, she was not a prostitute, second, she was not a woman of loose character who had married several men before cohabiting with Ahmed Hussain, third, that she was in fact legally married to Ahmed Hussain, fourth, she was a good Muslim and knew and respected the tenants of Islam. The fact of rape in her case is lost in a maze of consideration that in no way disproved the rape; on the contrary, they effectively justify it that women are trapped in battles of identity.⁵⁴ In such cases, women are not seen as simply women but as Muslim women, dalit women etc. Moreover, in some case, women have to sacrifice their identity in order to keep their respective community identity intact. As it is well known that in 1985, the supreme court ruled in Shah Bano case that section 125 of the criminal procedure code override, Muslim personal law (Shariat) in matter of divorce. The judgement created such a storm of protest among patriarchal sections of the Muslim community, that the Rajiv Gandhi government giving into the pressure, adopted legislation that abrogated the right of the Muslim women divorcee to maintenance under section 125 of the criminal procedure code. The community turned inward in response to what it perceived as an external threat to its identity. In the process, the gender justice was rendered hostage to community identity. This aspect is also true in the case of dalit women. Vasant and Kalpana Kannabiran argue "that the gender within the caste society is thus defined and structured in such a manner that the 'manhood' of the caste is defined both by the degree of control men exercise over

⁵⁴ Ibid., p-40

women and the degree of passivity of the women of the caste. By the same argument, demonstrating control by humiliating women of another caste in a certain way of reducing the 'manhood' of those castes".⁵⁵

So the issue of violence against women cannot be seen autonomously as a community issue or a gender issue but it must be located in the links between the two. "In fact delineating the real interest of women requires the analysis of the complex inter linkages of gender and other structural inequalities or else the demands of the women's movements could well lead to consolidation of some of these inequalities".⁵⁶

To conclude, one can clearly say that the presence of brahminical patriarchy and multiple patriarchies have made Indian society more oppressive against women. They exist in the created identity of the patriarchs and whenever they try to assert their so-called identity; they have been the target of more attacks. In addition, this intense and politically important power struggle is not a simple affair and it has to be located in the broad framework of political violence of men against women. That is why feminists locate male violence against women in the realm of 'political'.

⁵⁵ Op cit., p-2131.

⁵⁶ Sharmila Rege 1995 Op cit., p-35.

CHAPTER 3

CASTE IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

CASTE IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

*...To create a good slave you must first kill his pride, his self-respect,
his notion of himself as an ordinary, equal human being...
"The upper castes have the past and the present; they want to ensure
that the future also remains with them.*

M. J. Akbar in 'Riot after Riot'.

Dalits¹ in India frequently face atrocities of one form or other at the hands of Caste Hindus,² that have increased in recent times (Human Rights Watch 1999). The various forms of atrocities dalits face in India are, social violence in the form of untouchability, social boycott and physical violence including mass killings and rape of their women folk, etc. Nearly 1/4th of the India's population live a precarious life because of their birth attributed to a particular community.³ In clear contrast to the commonly held belief that the frequency of the occurrence of atrocities has decreased after independence, the dalits are facing more wide spread atrocities in independent India, and the situation is deteriorating day by day.⁴ The government of India on its part have come out with the Untouchability Offences Act in 1955, which was again amended in 1976 as Protection of Civil Rights Act

¹ Dalit as a term was first coined by B. R. Ambedkar to identify the untouchables in India who were outside of the caste system but dalit as an identity was popularised by the Dalit Panthers India in the 70s. Dalit as an identity will be discussed later in this study.

² Caste Hindus generally known as the people who fall within the category of caste structure i.e., Brahmins, Kshytriya, Vaishyas and Shudras.

³ According to the 1991 census out of 84,63,02,0688 population nearly 20,59,81,557 belongs to SC's and ST's, SC population 13,82,23,277 and ST population 06,77,58,380.

⁴ Nandu Ram, 'Beyond Ambedkar: Essays on Dalits in India ', Har-Anand Publishers, New Delhi, 1995.

(PCR), under which the offence of untouchability, with other socio-religious discriminations and crimes were seen as the violation of civil rights of dalits. Having seen the failure of this Act, government again in 1989 came out with another more comprehensive Act, Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. However, the ineffective implementations of these laws have led to no substantive change in the life of dalits. The continuing subjugation of the dalits by caste Hindus-accompanied by the non-implementation of the state laws- is due to the functioning of a multitude of institutions- both state and society related-which are controlled by the caste Hindus who use them to protect and assert their power positions. 'Untouchability' which was a creation of the Brahminical Hinduism is still practised in most parts of India, in one form or other. In rural areas, dalit cannot enter the caste Hindu sections of the village. They have no access to village ponds and public wells and places of worship. They cannot drink water or tea from the same cup or glass used by caste Hindus. In urban areas, where dalits predominantly work as bonded labour and street cleaners also discriminated in many ways. However, there is no uniformity of caste violence in India as some castes or some regions are more prone to it, but it is an established fact that dalits in India face violation of their basic rights in their everyday life.

The spread of English education, the voting rights of dalits, the reservation in higher education and services have made dalits more conscious of their rights. This is reflected in their attempts at recurring their own identity vis-à-vis the

acculturation of Hinduism. The dalits have tried to organize themselves to assert their rights and demand their due, what they were not given till date. Therefore, the dalits are seen as the challenger to the social equilibrium by the caste Hindus. The demands for equality by dalits are seen as the challenge to the status quo and consequently their movements are being crushed by the caste Hindus. The dalits who dare to challenge the hierarchical social order have become the target of violent attack by the caste Hindus. In this context, the violence against dalits are neither a law and order problem nor a simple caste violence of one caste pitted against another. It is an socio-economic problem arising out of the deeper processes at work in the economic, social and political structure. In this context, the politics adopted by caste Hindus is to *maintain* their power positions and not allow others to achieve that. If at any time dalits, try to achieve that power position they are easily put down by caste Hindus with the help of state machinery. This politics of violence against dalits will be discussed further in this study. The attempt here is not to see caste violence against dalit as simple social violence but a political one. The premise on which the caste violence against dalits occurs in India is the caste system. Therefore, it is quite imperative to look at the various tenets of the caste system.

India's caste system is one of the longest surviving social hierarchies in the world based on inequality. It is a product of Brahminical Hinduism. The caste system is a composed and cohesive group based on the principles of birth ascription and social hierarchy. The spirit of hierarchy in the traditional Indian

society embodied in the institution of Varna or Jati. Louis Dumont discusses this notion of caste system on the basis of three characteristics: 'Separation', in matters of marriage and contact, whether direct or indirect, 'Division of Labour', each group having, in theory or by tradition a profession from which their members can depart within certain limits and finally, 'Hierarchy', which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another.⁵ The relations among castes throughout the hierarchy are expressed in terms of relative social distance and exclusiveness governed by the concepts of purity and pollution. The Hindu society was divided into four varnas namely- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras with the population outside the scheme subsequently known as 'Avarna', outside of Varna. These Avarnas are described as varna-shankara, so 'outside the system' so inferior to other castes, that they are deemed polluting and therefore untouchables. Whereas the first four varnas are free to choose and change their occupation, these castes have generally been confined to the occupational structures into which they are born. These people are merely treated as objects - as impure, polluted and untouchables so are unapproachable and their very shadow is considered a curse. Determined to keep them under subjugation the caste Hindus look them as inferior and treat them as slave. This 'hidden apartheid' segregated them, made them to live in habitations away from high caste people on barren land without food, water, electricity and proper sanitation facilities.

⁵ Dumont, 'Homo Hierarchicus' has been discussed by Anup Kumar Dash and Raj Kumar in their study on the implementation of PCR Act in Orissa, NISWASS, Bhubaneswar, 1994, p-6.

The caste system in India has been legitimized by the Brahminical Hinduism and it has survived because it is attributed to gods creation and the breaking of that system is still considered as the breaking of divine wishes. It has survived because no one dare to question the divine basis of social order and those who have benefited from this system are not at all prepared to reject the god that divides human beings. Manu Smiriti and other Hindu scriptures have justified the exploitation of lower castes and difference in status is attributed to the religious doctrine of 'Karma'. Manu, who legitimized the caste system through his writings in Manu Smiriti says, " the dwellings of Chandalas⁶...shall be outside the village... and their wealth shall be dogs and donkeys. Their dress shall be the garments of the dead, they shall eat their food from broken dishes, black iron shall be their ornament and they must always wander from place to place. A man who fulfils a religious duty shall not seek intercourse with them".⁷ Dalits were denied education because education was the prerogative of Brahmins. Since, caste Hindus were free to choose and change their occupation, the social mobility and social changes were easily available to them. However, that was not so in case of untouchables, because the principles of hereditary division of labour or following of one's parents profession were more strictly mandatory to the lower caste. Therefore, the social mobility and social changes were never easy for them. Therefore, the caste system for dalit was a system of exploitation and

⁶ Chandals are the classical fore bearers of SC's or dalits today.

⁷ The laws of Manu p-10, quoted in Anup Dash and Raj Kumar, Op Cit., p-11.

discrimination. The degraded conditions of dalits can still be attributed to the oppressive caste system, which is based on inequality. Ambedkar himself opines caste system was the monster and unless and until we kill it, we may not have equilibrium. Once he said, "the root of untouchability is the caste system, the root of the caste system is religion attached to varna and ashram, and the root of the varnashram is Brahminical religion and the root of the Brahminical religion is authoritarianism or political power".⁸ The principles of Brahminism enumerated by Ambedkar are - a) graded inequality between the different classes, b) complete disarmament of the shudras and the untouchables, c) complete prohibition of education of the shudras and untouchables, d) ban on shudras and untouchables occupying the places of political power and authority, e) ban on the shudras and the untouchables for acquiring property, and so on....⁹ Therefore he pleaded that to eradicate the subjugation of dalits and to liberate them, it is necessary for annihilation of caste. Consequently, dalits in recent years are trying to define their own identity outside of Hinduism by rejecting the unequal caste system.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF DALIT IDENTITY

For a long time dalits do not have a identity of their own. Their identity was imposed on them by the upper castes and by their oppressive mind set. Earlier they were known as Achhuts, Panchamas, Atishudras, Avarnas and Antyajas. Then they were designated as SC's by the Britishers in the Government of India Act

⁸ Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in 'The Untouchables: Who were they and why they become Untouchables', Amrit Books, New Delhi, 1948. Quoted in P. G. Jogdand in 'Dr. Ambedkar's Views on Women's Question', A seminar paper presented to Seminar, "Ambedkar in Retrospect", Organized by JNU, New Delhi, 1998, p-2

⁹ Ibid., p-2.

1935. They were also known as 'Harijan', an identity that was imposed on them.¹⁰ Ambedkar came up with the book titled "The Untouchables" in 1948 in which he has discussed how these lower castes became untouchables. Though he frequently used the word untouchable and he patronized it, the identity of untouchable is an inaccurate usage. Lower castes cannot properly be known as untouchables because untouchability is also practised among caste Hindus themselves. There are instances of even upper castes not being allowed to touch Brahmins. Moreover, a menstruating woman according to certain tradition cannot be touched. Thus, untouchables cannot apply only to those understood to be outside the caste system.¹¹ Though the practices of untouchability towards dalits are more than other castes it is improper to put these depressed castes alone under the identity of untouchables. At the same time it is seen there is also untouchability among untouchables. The above identities attributed to lower castes are the words of hatespeak and of social conservatism. That is why it is quite natural that these impositions of identities were rejected by lower castes themselves. They prefer the identity 'Dalit', which derives from the conceptualization 'Pad- Dalit' or squashed under foot. Dalit is a challenging identity, an identity of assertion and power. Dalit Panthers India popularized the notion of dalit- literally meaning broken people. For the dalits, whose identity was defined by caste masters over the years, it was necessary for them to define their own identity.

¹⁰ The dalit perception of 'Harijan', an identity of upper caste formulation, which was imposed on them means they are the children of god, hence, illegitimate.

¹¹ This understanding is also given by Andre Beteille. Discussed by Sagarika Ghose in 'The Touch of Kant' in Outlook.

Defining an identity in the context of caste system, which is the embodiment of inequality, is to reject the system altogether, which is socially and economically oppressive to dalits. Therefore, they are trying to build their own identity based on their own beliefs, attitude and thoughts, which were already been popularized by Phule, Ambedkar, Periyar and others. Therefore "denunciation and enunciation are the two aspects of defining dalit identity".¹² In this context, dalits are supposed to denounce or reject the oppressive Hindu social order to construct Dalit identity based on egalitarianism. The denunciation is necessary because, their historical, cultural, social, economic and political life have been marginalized by caste Hindus through their hegemonic ideology. Dalits feel their egalitarian social order has been replaced by hierarchical and unequal social order of Brahminical Hinduism in which they are placed at the bottom. Their cultural torchbearers like Buddha, Ambedkar, Phule and others are neglected by Hinduized history and they are relegated to insignificance. Therefore, their consciousness made them to think of an alternative identity, which is outside of Hinduism. So "As against the stranglehold of Hinduism of the economy and hence politics, it counter-argues for 'Dalitization', i.e., incorporating gender parity, dignity of labour, horizontal division of labour, heterodox interpretation of socio-religious values, the understanding and practice of gastronomic practices such as beef eating and pork eating to undo the politics of vegetarianism and so on".¹³ The movement

¹² Quoted in Ambrose Pinto's 'Dalits: Assertion for Identity', Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1999, p-3.

¹³ Opined by A. Gajendran, 'Transforming Dalit Politics', Seminar, November, 1998, No. 471, p-26.

of dalits also try to acquire the support of other marginalized people. In this respect, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) plays a significant role. It tries to incorporate all marginalised people under the umbrella of Dalit-Bahujan, which includes SC's, ST's, some sections of backward castes, and other religious minorities. The aim of this grand alliance was to challenge the leadership of high caste and emphasizes that "The most marginalised should be given the leadership".¹⁴ This transformation on the part of the dalits are to acquire power positions in society which includes political power. Dalit Panther movement also popularized this aspect. In its manifesto it declares-"We do not want a little place in the Brahman alley. We want the rule of the whole country. Change of heart, liberal education will not end our state of exploitation. When we gather a revolutionary mass, rouse the people, out of the struggle of this giant mass will come the tidal wave of revolution... We will hit back against all injustice perpetrated on dalits. We will well and truly destroy the caste and Varna system that thrives on people's misery, which exploits the people and liberates the dalits. The present legal system and state have turned all our dreams into dust. To eradicate the injustice against dalits, they themselves must become rulers. This is the people's democracy. Sympathizers and members of the Dalit Panthers be ready for the final struggle of dalits".¹⁵

This construction of separate dalit identity is resisted by the caste Hindus and they use every means to stop this assertion of identity, even by perpetrating

¹⁴ Ibid., p-27

¹⁵ The Manifesto of DPI (1973), quoted in Gail Omvedt, 'Reinventing Revolution, New Social Movements and The Socialists Tradition of India' an EastGate Book, M. E. Sharpe, New York, 1993, p-47.

violence against them. In this background, the study will take up the issues of politics of violence of caste Hindus against dalits.

Different social, psychological and physical violence dalits faces are - untouchability, segregation, social boycott, harassment, battering, rape, murder etc. These are used as retaliatory violence to suppress their assertion. The context in which these violence are perpetrated, involves the question of land, role of police, political movements of dalits, the growth of Dalit Panther in India, Naxlites, and the rise of backward castes etc.¹⁶

Untouchability, which is abolished in the Constitution of India under article 17, still exists in one form or other all over India. In 1997, National Commission for SC's and ST's declared that Untouchability- the imposition of social disabilities on persons because of their birth in certain castes was still practiced in many forms through out the country. It mentioned some caste based discrimination practiced in recent times are; SC's bridegrooms were not permitted to ride on a mare in village, they could not sit on their charpoys (rope beds) when persons of other castes passed by, they are not permitted to draw water from common wells and hand pumps, and in many tea shops and dhabas (food stalls) separate crockery and cutlery were used for serving the SCs.¹⁷ Dalits are forced to live a segregated life separately from the caste Hindus in many parts of India. Though these restrictions and discriminations are undoubtedly influenced by the traditional dominance of

¹⁶ These context are also discussed in 'Broken People; Caste Violence Against India's Untouchables', Human Rights Watch, New York, 1999, p-23-41.

¹⁷ National Commission for SC's and ST's in India, Report for the Year 1994-95 (New Delhi Government of India 1997) p-2. Mentioned in the Human Rights Watch, Ibid., p-27.

high castes on dalits, these are still prevalent in India. The dominant ideologies of high castes were declared as 'laws' for dalits, (which still are) and they had to follow those laws, and in some places, they were pressurized to do so. In Tamil Nadu a dalit elder recalls, how the high caste issued ten (10) commandments to be followed by dalits in 1918 and it again renewed in 1929. These commandments were, 'dalit would work only in the fields of high castes (mainly Thevars). There were forced labours, they could not draw water from the community well, and dalit children could not be educated. They could wear no clean or decent clothes no shirt or towel over their shoulder. The women could not don gold or silver ornaments and were not to cover their breast. Their menfolk could wear no headgear, footwear, nor carry umbrellas even if it was raining. They were forbidden from residing along side caste Hindus and they had to live away from the main village. Dalit could not enter temples and use the cremation or the burial grounds of the village. Funeral processions for dalit peoples could not pass through the Hindu settlements'.¹⁸ The restrictions on dalits still continues all over India as in Meenakshipuram District in the Manjam Patti and Mangudi villages, where the Thevar and Nadar communities (caste Hindus) announced to all tea stalls to serve tea to dalits in coconut shells.¹⁹ These restrictions were forced on them because dalits are no longer working for them as they have economically become more affluent. The reasons for this crime as one dalit youth said, "The

¹⁸ P. Sainath, Report The Hindu, A Major Backlash Hampers... Melavapuvus Government in Exile. Sunday, April 11, p-ii.

¹⁹ See S.Vishwanathan's Report in Frontline,' Far from Peaceful, Fresh Trouble in Southern District of Tamil Nadu', June 13, 1997, p-130.

only crime we have committed is that these days we are trying to be independent and self reliant and we no longer seek the help of the other castes for everything".²⁰ These restrictions on dalits are present not only in Tamil Nadu but also in other states as well. The atrocities further increase when dalits are segregated from the main stream village lands to live in separate colonies in barren lands. Human Rights Watch Reports (1999) find that 120 villages in Villapuram districts in Tamil Nadu have segregated dalit people into separate dalit colonies where they are living a precarious life.²¹ If dalits are minorities in villages, then the atrocities against them increased and the restrictions are even more. Moreover, any effort to defy these social orders by dalits is met with severe punishments including social boycotts and retaliatory violence. Social boycotts are used to crush the assertion of dalits who demand for equality. It is used by the high castes who generally have the economic, social and political power to 'teach a lesson' to dalits. These boycotts are - dalits cannot enter their lands, cannot work for them, they cannot get woods and goods from their stores, cannot grind their grain in the flour mill and not allow to go near the well in the upper caste territories to fetch water.²² The term used for social boycotts in Orissa are, *Nian Pani Banda* (ban of fire and water) and *Ek gharia* (no access to outside to maintain their household). Getting education for dalits is not at all easy even today. Despite the help of Government, they are in several places not allowed to go to the schools by the

²⁰ Ibid., p-130.

²¹ Op cit., p-26.

²² Ibid., p-3

upper castes because of the apprehension in their mind that education would inculcate a sense of equality among dalits which will prompt them to question the authority and ultimately demolish the age old social and economic hegemony. Therefore, the social change and mobility are not smooth for dalits. Any change in the so-called status quo is met with violent attack on them. So, "Whether caste clashes are social, economic or political in nature they are premised on one basic principle; any attempt to alter village customs or to demand land, increased wages or political rights would face violent attack and economic retaliation by those who are threatened by the changes in the status quo".²³ In this respect Prof. Nandu Ram opines, "Atrocities against dalits are rooted in the unequal material and non material opportunity structure in which the under privileged try to improve their life chances whereas the privileged ones resist that and make all efforts to maintain the status quo".²⁴

According to 1991 census, bulk of the dalits – more than 83% live in rural areas (all India figure is 74%). These people are mainly agricultural workers, sharecroppers and peasants owning small plots of land. Dalits in rural areas face violent attack at the hands of landlords and landed elite who generally belong to caste Hindus. In Indian society, there is an unequal land distribution along caste lines. Before land reforms in India, the upper castes were the main owner of landed resources and after the land reforms, the backward castes who were earlier

²³ Quoted in Human Rights Watch, *Ibid.*, p-29.

²⁴ In 'Studying Atrocities on Dalits: Some Theoretico- Methodological Explanations' Paper presented to Seminar, 'Atrocities on SC's and ST's in India', organised by Ambedkar Chair, JNU, New Delhi, 2000, p-6.

tenants and sharecroppers became the landed class with high castes. The unequal distribution of land is the main reason of caste violence in rural India. In Bihar where the disputes over land is acute, the general socio-agrarian structures is like this-

Class	Size of land holding	Caste	Feature
Upper class of landlords	Very large and holding (more than Thirty Acres of land)	Bhumihars, Rajputs, Brahmins	They do not undertake cultivation on their own. The land is cultivated by intermediaries.
Rich farmers	Large and holdings about (8 to 30 acres)	Bhumihars, Rajputs Kayasthas but mostly by Yadavs, Kurmis and Koeris	Cultivate themselves. For some farming are based on exploitation of labour.
Middle category Farmers	Medium land holding about 5 to 8 acres	Mainly by Yadavas, koeris, Kurmis	Partly by themselves and partly by Employing cheap labour.
Poor farmers	Small holdings less than 4 acres	Mainly backward and Scheduled castes	Cultivation is mainly done by themselves.
Agricultural labour	Either landless or own very small land.	Mainly poor strata of backward and scheduled castes.	Most of them are landless labourers and certain areas like Palaman and Purnea few of them are bonded Labourers.

Source: -Field survey of Bihar conducted during November - December 1994. In

Sudhir Hindwan's, 'caste war in Bihar', Mainstream, November 9, 1996 p-25.

This pattern of land holding suggests that more or less, the disparities in the socio-economic hierarchy run along the disparities in caste hierarchy through out in Bihar. Though this problem is much more acute in Bihar this pattern of land holding is same in all other states, where dalits have no land and they are denied minimum wages and used as forced labour and bonded labour. This lack of access to land makes dalits economically vulnerable and their dependency on caste Hindus who exploit them. The demand for wages and proper share in sharecropping make them vulnerable to various kinds of atrocities of landlords and in some states by their caste based armies.²⁵ In one of the most gruesome attack of this kind occurred on the Christmas day of 1968 when 44 dalits were burnt to death by upper caste landlords in Kilavenmani village in the then undivided Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu for demanding higher wages.²⁶ The Minimum Wages Act legislated as early as in 1948 and revised many times there after, now prescribes daily wages of Rs32/-, also not properly implemented and are paid much less than the prescribed rate of Minimum Wages Act, by the landowners. The various caste armies of caste Hindus operate in Bihar to put down this demand of minimum wages and proper distribution of share crops. In some cases, the leftist guerilla organizations help dalit to put forward the demands of land reforms and increasing wages. That also vulnerable to them, because by doing that they are seen as the sympathizers of guerilla groups and subsequently tortured by caste

²⁵ Caste based armies are not present in all over India. They are more active in Bihar though present in some of its neighbour states.

²⁶ Mentioned in Frontline June 23, 2000, p-105. Reports by Venkatesh Athreya and R. Chandra.

armies and police and in some cases even killed. In the districts of Central Bihar (Patna, Gaya, Jehanabad) over 400 people were killed in between 1995 to January 1999 by the Ranvir Sena one of the caste armies of higher castes alone.²⁷ Since its inception in 1994, the Ranvir Sena has been implicated in killings, rapes, looting in villages of Belaur, Ekwari, Chandi, Nanaur, Sarathau, Haibaspur, Laxmanpur-Bathe, Shankar Bigha and Narayanpur etc. Amongst, the recent have been Shankarpur and Narayanpur in January 25th and February 10th 1999 when 22 and 12 dalits killed respectively. But the most violent attack carried on by Ranvir Sena in December 1997 when they attacked Laxmanpur-Bathe village killing 61 peoples including 16 children and 27 women because they were demanding more equitable land distribution in that area. During the attack they raped and mutilated five dalit girls less than fifteen years before killing them. The attack against women and children were justified by Sena members, as one of them said, "Women are killed because they give birth to rebel any more and children are killed because they will grow up and become a rebel".²⁸ So the message of the attack was clear, that they won't allow anybody to challenge their authority. According to a member of Bihar Dalit Vikas Samiti; a grassroots organization the purpose of the attack was, "To teach others not to raise their voice".²⁹

In all these cases, the police and the other state machinery act as the abettor of the crimes committed by the caste Hindus. Under the pretext of seeking out

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, Op cit., p-53.

²⁸ Ibid., p-63.

²⁹ Ibid., p-63.

Naxalite militants who are the sympathizers of dalit cause for demanding more wages and equitable land distribution, police often conduct raids on dalit households and arrest innocent dalit youth accusing of harboring. In dealing with the encounters between caste militia and Naxalite, police use excessive force when dealing with Naxalite. In their raids on dalit villages' police take several dalit youth into custody without any evidence and torture them and in most cases even kill them. Human Rights Watch reports two such raids took place in Audhrachak and Jhunauthi respectively. Often these raids were conducted in the mid-night in the pretext of searching Naxalites. However, they often end up with torturing dalit women and extortion and looting properties etc. As noted in People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) report, "The loot of property and molestation of women by the policemen in the course of search is a fairly common feature of routine police searches in poor settlements. Therefore, searches end up as punitive measures inflicted upon a section of the populace, already targeted by Ranvir Sena. Search operation in upper caste localities are not only rare but also very cursory".³⁰ The failure of the most state governments to implement land reform legislation has only added to the sense of economic vulnerability that fuels militant movements. In Bihar, in particular guerilla enjoys dalit support as most of them live on the edge of starvation. Laws and regulations that prohibit alienation of dalit lands, set ceiling on a single landowners holding or allocates surplus government lands to SC's and ST's have been largely ignored or worse manipulated by the

³⁰ Quoted in Human Rights Watch, Ibid., p-76.

upper castes with the help of district administration. In some cases, dalits even cannot cultivate their own land because of the threat of caste Hindus who do not want dalits to prosper. Caste Hindus think if dalits starts cultivating their own lands then they will not work for them. In one such incident on 25th January 1986 (eve of Republic day) in Gujrat's Kheda district, four dalits were killed and twenty others injured in connection with land granted by the government to dalit agricultural labourers, who are also released bonded labourers. This and the formation of a co-operative by them to secure for themselves economic and social self-reliance was resisted by local dominated middle castes that prompted them to kill dalits.³¹ All these violence are not simple caste violence where one caste pitted against other. This pattern of violence has an act of politics inherent in it where one group wants to remain in the influential position and not allow others to reach that position through domination.

Sometimes, the caste violence of the upper castes take a different form. In Bihar, the Ranvir Sena, it has been seen not only pitted against dalits but also against backward castes. Because Ranvir Sena was not formed against any castes, it was formed to protect the interests of landlords by crushing the struggle of the labour force of dalits and backward castes against exploitation and injustice. In one such case, Ranvir Sena killed 34 persons at Miapur village in Aurangabad district of Bihar on June 16th. The victims included dalits and members of the

³¹ P. S. Krishanan, 'Untouchability and Atrocities', in *Social Action*, vol. 43 October-December, 1993, p-422.

backward Yadav caste. Though there is report that Ranvir Sena targeted Miapur, a Yadav dominated village because, it had information that the residents of the village had provided shelter to the M. C. C. (Mao Communist Centre) cadres after the Senari killings of March in which 35 upper castes Bhumiya had killed,³² one can see a pattern of their attacks. Because, from the beginning they have targeted both dalits and backward castes.

It is also true that in land related issue dalits face exploitation of the backward castes in Bihar mainly by Yadavs, Koeris, and Kurmis who engage in forced labour and bonded labour. When the caste violence take the form of class violence as discussed above Bhumiya and other upper castes annihilate both backward castes and dalits to maintain their supremacy and retain power.

The atrocities on dalits as mentioned earlier are not uniformly committed. Nor are those committed in equal degree on all dalit castes. The Chamars in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Mahars in Maharashtra, Malas and Madigas in Andhra Pradesh and Pallars and Pariars in Tamil Nadu are some dalit castes who face direct attacks because many of these castes are the caste traditionally treated as most down trodden even among dalits. Their customary services have also remained vulnerable to the traditional village society. However, most importantly these castes have gained relatively more progress as they become socially, politically more conscious of their rights. They are also now-a-days have become able to

³² Discussed by Kalyan Chaudhri in Frontline, July 21st, 2000

articulate their interests in more organized fashion.³³ In this context, the understanding of caste violence between Pallars (Dalit) and Thevars (Caste Hindu) in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu is necessary, where the violence between these two castes is for competition to achieve power positions: be it economic or political. Caste clashes in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu have largely been attributed to increased dalit economic and political autonomy and the backlash against it. As has been the case of other states dalits in Tamil Nadu have long suffered from exploitative economic relationship and have frequently been victims of violence. However, in the 1990s, the relationships between Thevars and Pallars have been altered. State's policy of reservation with English education and income provided by relatives working abroad (mostly in Gulf States), the Pallars are now less dependent on Thevars for employment. Rejecting their caste based customary service they have began to assert their identity for equality in all arenas including political. The Thevars have responded to this as a threat to their hegemony with violence. Dalits being more conscious of their rights with virtually no help from police in some places have begun to fight back. According to the Tamil Nadu state government, at least 251 people died in caste violence between August 1995 and October 1998, where most of them are dalits.³⁴ But the attack unleashed by dalits should be understood differently as Murugeswari one female, who was the first president of the Kandamanur village council has stated, "while both parties have

³³ This aspect is also discussed by Prof. Nandu Ram, 'Beyond Ambedkar...' Op cit., p-28.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch, Op cit., p-83.

indulged in violence, there is an essential difference. Dalits are fighting for their rights and Thevars are fighting to retain their hegemony. It would be cruel to equate to fight for livelihood to the arson (sic) to retain power on the basis of birth".³⁵ The presence of Dalit Panther India and Devendra Kula Vellalar Federation led by K. Krishnaswamy which has become a full fledged political party named as Puthiya Tamalingam have given a platform to dalits to resist the untouchability in the state. With the help of these political movements dalits have demanded equal treatment in Temple festival, have refused to carry out ritually demeaning task, have demanded access to public water sources and have claimed an equal share of public goods and village properties. Thevars have responded by "clinging more resolutely to their caste status as a way of affirming their superiority".³⁶ The dalit communities with better economic status have begun to resist their traditional ill-treatment politically by contesting elections which they are still not allowed to do where upper caste dominance is more. Even in some of the reserved panchayats, there are hardly any members. In one such incident, in June 1997 Murugesan, the Melavalavu village council chief with five others was hacked to death by Thevar castes. Murugesan was murdered because he dared to contest election which was disturbed by Thevars twice before he was elected.³⁷ It is quite clear that the violence in the village and the resulting tension to a shift in power relations brought on by the governments mandate on reservation of

³⁵ Ibid., p-88.

³⁶ M.S.S.Pandiyan Reports in 'The Hindu' 'Elusive Peace in Tamil Nadu', May 30th 1997.

³⁷ P.Sainath in hi report in 'The Hindu' Op cit.,

panchayats seats for dalits, because panchayat has the potential to change powerful rural groups, where the power is concentrated in the hands of privileged few.

In the whole gamut of violence in the Southern districts of Tamil Nadu, police acted in a partisan manner. Local police who were mainly drawn from Thevars community acts as the protectors of that community. In search for militants, they often raid on dalit bastis to harass them. Human Rights Watch reports that the police forcibly replace dalits from one place to another to live a segregated life. They detained many dalit activists working for DPI and other NGOs for the betterment of dalit people who are struggling to get minimum civic facilities. In their separate raids in Kodiyankulam, Gundupatti, Desikanpuram police also harassed women and raped them. In one such incident, Guruswamy Guruammal, a pregnant 26 year agricultural labour was brutally beaten and dragged naked through the streets before thrown into jail after which she miscarried her baby.³⁸ This attitude of police towards dalit have increased day by day because of their jealousies towards dalits prosperity.

This partisan attitude of police against dalits not only present in rural India but also in urban areas. In urban areas, police see dalit people who generally work as bonded labour and street cleaners in suspect eye as anti-social elements and often take them into custody without any evidence. Since, dalits in urban areas live in segregated colonies, they become an easy target of police raids. Their protest against injustice brings more sorrow to them, as police often open fire without

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, Op cit., p-116-117.

warning in the pretext of so called 'self-protection'. In one such major incident occurred in Rambai colony in Mumbai in July 1997, where police firing killed ten dalits and injured twenty six, when they were protesting against the desecration of a statue of dalit leader Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Rambai incident is a classic example of caste Hindus and state machinery's combined effort to crush the assertive movements of dalits whom they want to remain as slaves. Firstly, their cultural and political symbol i.e., Ambedkar's statue was desecrated by a garland of sandals around his neck. This is to denigrate that person and his beliefs and the followers of that belief that is dalits. Therefore, by undermining the ideologies of Ambedkar they undermine the ideologies of dalits, which is a fitting case of 'Ideological Hegemony'. At the same time, when they protested against a wrongdoing, the police ordered fire to kill them. In most of these cases of police violence which also can be termed as 'state terror' police generally choose dalits for their attacks because they are anti-dalits. In Rambai killings, Kadam, the police sub-inspector who ordered the firing was a man who committed several atrocities on dalits.³⁹ Therefore, these police actions are only the manifestations of their intolerance of dalit assertiveness. This is also seen in many cases that police with the help caste Hindus deny dalits their political and voting rights. That is because they do not want to see any political leaders coming from dalit community and the leader chosen by dalits from other communities because that will destroy the traditional power relations in society. In Bihar, police and upper caste militias

³⁹ Ibid., p-129.

operate at the behest of powerful political leaders in the state to punish dalit voters. The Ranvir Sena was responsible for killing more than fifty peoples during Bihar's 1995-state election campaign in which most of them were dalits.⁴⁰

The above discussed violence against dalits are the clear indication of frustration on the part of caste Hindus and state machinery of dalit assertiveness, who do not want these marginalised people to rise. If one sees from the victims point of view in all cases of caste violence women are the frequent victims of attacks and are the worst sufferers. Apart from the reason that she bears the prestige of the whole community to which she belongs, dalit women are the frequent victims of attack because they give birth to rebels. Therefore, it is a clear message that they will not allow anybody to disturb the social structure. Dalit women are the frequent victims of sexual violence which prompts one government investigator in Tamil Nadu to say, "No one practices untouchability when it comes to sex".⁴¹ Women of SC's and ST's are raped as a part of an effort by upper caste members to suppress movements to demand payment of minimum wages to settle sharecropping disputes and to reclaim lost land.

Another form of violence against dalits occurs in India, which is related to communal violence. In most of the cases violence against religious minorities are also related to violence against dalits, as dalits are the ones who convert to

⁴⁰ Ibid., p-7.

⁴¹ Ibid., p-30.

different religions in pursuit of better social life.⁴² The various cases of religious conversion in which dalits are converted to Christianity, Buddhism and Islam are the by products of the manifestations of different atrocities against them ranging from untouchability to physical violence. However, after their conversion also they are attacked by the caste Hindus, by the Hindu fundamentalist organizations namely, RSS, Bajrang Dal, VHP, Shiv Sena etc. This violence is neither simply communal violence against religious minorities nor caste violence but a combination of both. A dalit Christian or a dalit Buddhist is attacked not because he/she simply belongs to other religion but also because he/she is a dalit. In many cases, SC's and ST's are the target of attack because they dare to convert to other religion thereby trying to disturb the social order. The most ironical part of the story is that even after conversion there is no deprivation from untouchability. Though there is no much caste distinction in Buddhism as now a days predominantly dalits convert into that religion as Buddha has been regarded as one of the cultural and religious father, and this belief strengthened after Ambedkar himself converted to Buddhism. However, in Islam and Christianity there is a clear-cut distinction made between high caste and low caste converts. One identifies himself as Brahman Christian and Rajput Muslims and so on. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to eradicate caste practices from India. "The caste system is a great conditioner of the mind and leaves an indelible mark on a person's social

⁴² This understanding may not be applicable to all communal violence against minorities, but the pattern of growing attacks on Christians and in some cases Buddhists who are mostly converted dalits can be seen from this angle.

consciousness and cultural mores".⁴³ The SC Christians continue to suffer from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the traditional practices of untouchability. Untouchability and segregation's are very much present in dalits social life as Catholic Bishops of Tamil Nadu in 1988 admitted, "caste distinction and their resultant injustice and violence do still continue in Christian social life and practice. We are aware of and accept the situation with deep pain".⁴⁴ Though in Islam the access to the mosque for prayers is not restricted and the practices of untouchability is not blatant but Varna and Jati like distinctions, indicating social status and governing social interaction are present. Still the converted Dalits are living a better social life and most importantly, they are living with some dignity. In this respect, the Christian religion has a significant role. The English education spread by it has made converted Dalits more conscious of their rights to protest against injustice. Converted Dalits are now practicing their respective religious culture and they have more equitable life style. This is not tolerable by caste Hindus and the so-called guardians of Hindu religion. Dalit Buddhist who are mostly present in South West India are the flag bearers of Dalit Self Respect Movement in India which was started by Periyar. At the same time they are people who are mostly the members of DPI who are inspired by the Black Panther Movement of US to overthrow the existing exploitative caste system and for that matter Hindu religion

⁴³ Mandal Commission Report, 1980. Quoted in S.C. Dube, "Indian Society" NBT, 1990, New Delhi, p-59.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p-60.

and try to build a separate identity for themselves outside of Hinduism. That is why dalit Christians and dalit Buddhists are the target of growing attack by members of different Hindu fundamentalist organizations. The main thrusts of these attacks are to suppress the dalit movement to build their separate identity and to maintain the status quo. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the parliamentary wing of the Sangha Parivar and other Hindutva forces has called for national debate on conversions. The reason behind the call is to maintain the Brahminical hegemony which are being challenged by the dalit converts who are challenging the Brahmanic religion and caste system in which caste Hindus enjoy the superior status. This is a politics on the part of Hindutva forces to oppose dalits to be a part of bargaining politics for power.

Atrocities committed by the caste Hindus against the dalits as a means employed by the former to suppress the identity assertion of the latter has of late become a part of the latter's life. With other region such as English education, reservation in jobs and in higher studies, and the different social and political movements which are popularized by the advent of Dalit Panther Movement in 1970s, the dalits have become more assertive of their rights and are able to present their demands for equality more systematically. Against this background, the violence against dalits has increased in recent times. Before 70's, the natures of atrocities were more psychological and less physical since there were more untouchability and segregation. Now violence against them are more physical in

nature as there are systematic attacks on them.⁴⁵ These atrocities are inflicted on them to push them down to a state of helplessness and extreme deprivation. Earlier the SC's were socially boycotted and were in certain cases physically tortured if they tried to violate the existing social norms by asserting for achieving their socio-economic rights. Now they are facing a collective outrage if they try to disown their traditional caste calling. In this context, the atrocities are neither simple law and order problem nor simple caste violence. Again, there are atrocities caused due to non-economic issues like refusal to pay respect to caste Hindus, overlooking their wishes and views in certain issues and dissociating from the caste calling. An attack of this kind perpetrated on dalit in Themnavur village of Pudukkotti district of Tamil Nadu very recently (May 17th 2000) only because dalit are refused to beat drum in the Temple festival of the caste Hindus.⁴⁶ In dalit perception, for them to be called exclusively to perform the task of drum beating for Temple festival and for death ceremonies is a symbolic reiteration of their oppressed social status. However, in most of the areas in rural India they are forced to do so otherwise they are at the receiving end of violent attacks. These are not simple violence. These are systematic attacks on them to remain in degraded position and in disrespectful manner.

In every sphere, be it social, economic and political - the assertion of dalits are seen as the challenge to the existing status quo, in which caste Hindus enjoy

⁴⁵ Understanding on these lines influenced by the writings of Prof. Nandu Ram's 'Beyond Ambedkar' Op cit.,

⁴⁶ In this incident 30 dalits including 7 women seriously injured. Report of Venkatesh Athreya and R. Chandra, 'The Drum Beats of Oppression', Frontline, June 23rd 2000, p-103-105.

the superior status. Any attempt to defy that status quo for more equality by dalits have resisted by the caste Hindus with growing attacks on them to maintain that status quo in intact. This type of violence of domination is the politics of caste Hindus to remain in power positions in society and maintain that position by not allowing anybody to compete with them to achieve that power position. This politics for power has its genesis in casteism, the embodiment of inequality, generated by Brahminism to maintain the hegemony of caste Hindus over dalits. Therefore, these attacks are needed to be seen in the realm of 'politics of violence' or 'political violence'.

CHAPTER 4

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

At a time, when efforts are being made to make liberal democratic state more practically democratic¹ by granting special (more often cultural) rights to minorities within the nation-state, Indian democracy having fails to achieve that goal find herself at the crossroad of secularism being overtaken by the 'Majoritarianism', which is in Indian context, Hinduism. The concept of 'Multiculturalism' and 'Pluralism' came into the premises of democratic polity to make society more practically democratic. Some liberal democracies like USA and Australia have already transformed their polity in the above-mentioned manner. The effort of this kind is meant to fulfill the aspirations of minorities, who very often than not marginalised by the nation-state through its process of homogenization. In Indian context, the process of homogenization is related to Hinduization, which means other religious communities face the biggest challenge of preserving their respective identities. Democracy is very often defined as the majority rule. Given this logic, since Hindus are the majority in India it must be ruled by them. This principle of majority rule has been termed as majority tyranny by the critics of democracy. In this context, Prof. Rajeev Bhargav opines, "a society where a group is permanently

¹ Here a difference has been made between democracy as a method of governance and democracy as a way of life. In recent times, efforts are been put to make society more democratic which serves the later; as a way of life.

entrenched, as political relevant majority can not be democracy. For quiet simply, there exists no permanent majority within a democracy. A person in the minority must have a reasonable hope of being majority tomorrow.”² But in India, the slightest chance of communities identified as minorities becoming a majority tomorrow is not there but quite reversibly the permanent majority has been able to form and legitimized the principle of Majoritarianism, which is based on the politics of assimilation and delegitimizing the minority identities. This politics on the part of majority is to maintain their power positions in the society and at the same time not allowing the minorities to attain those power positions. This politics of Hindutva will be discussed in this present study to see how the majoritarianism works through delegitimizing the identity of the religious minorities. In Indian context, the majoritarianism is based on the ideology of Hindutva, which discounts the identity of other religious minorities namely Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Sikhs etc. This Hindu communalism which was started in the pre- independence India by the organizations namely Arya Samaj and later by Hindu Mahasabha to challenge the Muslim communalism of Muslim League had ultimately led to the partition of India, is still dominant in post-independent India. Though, Hindu communalism was covertly present in whole congress regime, it has come out overtly in the 80s and 90s. This rigorous revival of Hindu communalism started with the Ayodhya campaign in mid-80s ultimately transformed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from a mere communal party into a party of government.

² Rajeev Bhargav, “Secularism, Democracy and Rights” in Mehdi Arslan and Janki Rajan (eds.) “Communalism in India, Challenge and Responses” Manohar, New Delhi, 1994, p-65.

But 'its more durable impact was institutionalization and legitimization of discourse of majoritarianism in civil society'.³ Therefore the minorities in India face the challenge to preserve their respective identities from the dominance of majoritarian Hindu identity. Earlier, the Hindu communalism was pitted against the Muslim identity but now it has changed its stand to take on both Muslim and Christian identity.

This would be a partial study if it does not mention the minority communalism in India. But more often than not, their communalism is meant to preserve their identity not to challenge the majority identity. Therefore, it is a situation where one fights for the mere existence and the other fights for the dominance. Perhaps for that reason Nehru once said, "I agree that there is Muslim communalism in India and I would also probably agree that Muslim communalism is much worse and stronger among Muslims than Hindu communalism but Muslim communalism cannot dominate Indian society and introduce fascism. That only Hindu communalism can".⁴ The fascism has finally arrived in India, where the Sangha Parivar combine are (RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena) working in the name of Hinduism, to suppress the minorities in India. That is why, there is tremendous increase in communal riots in Muslim and Christian dominated areas in India. This communalism on the part of Hindutva is meant to build a 'Hindu Rashtra' on the basis of

³ Neera Chandhoke, "The Tragedy of Ayodhya" Frontline, July 7, 2000, p-16.

⁴ Quoted in Bipan Chandra, 'Communalism and the State: Some Issues in India' in K. N Panikkar (ed.) 'Communalism In India: History, Politics and Culture', Manohar, New Delhi, 1991, p-140.

assimilating and eliminating minorities in India. Therefore, 'assimilation and elimination has become the part and parcel of Hindu communalism'.⁵

In a multi-religious country like India, where one religion commands an overwhelming majority, the minority religious communities might naturally feel insecure of their existence and self-identity. They feel that the religious majority might interfere with their fundamental beliefs and practices and that they may be discriminated against in economic, civic and social life because of their religion. Therefore, modern liberal democracies reformed their institutions to accommodate minorities and to see whether the minorities are properly represented or not. This is precisely what multiculturalism stands for.⁶ It proposes to eliminate the discrimination against minorities by majoritarianism by granting them special cultural rights. In India, minorities do get some preference in their cultural rights in the form of Muslim Personal Law instead of Uniform Civil Code. This with other special rights, which are given to them by successive congress governments, has been termed as appeasement to the minorities by the BJP and its Sangha Parivars. They term this secularism of congress as 'pseudo-secularism' and came up with a proposal of a secularism in which the state treats every religion equally. In this situation, it has been seen that the state has become the agent of majoritarianism and functions according to the wishes of majority community. This domination of identity by

⁵ Arun Patnaik and K.S.R.V.S.Chalam, 'The Ideology And Politics Of Hindutva' in T.V.Sathyamurthy (ed.) "Social Change And Political Discourse In India, Structures Of Power, Movements Of Resistance" vol iii, "Region, Religion, Caste, Gender And Culture In Contemporary India", OUP, New Delhi, 1995, p-260.

⁶ The discussion on Multiculturalism and Minority identities are influenced by Gurpreet Mahajan and D.L.Seth (ed.) 'Minority Identities And Nation-State' OUP, New Delhi, 1999 and Neera Chandhoke, "Beyond Secularism: The Rights Of Religious Minority", OUP, New Delhi, 1999.

majority has made life insecure for minorities in India. And it has been seen, this violence of domination on the part of majority identity works in tandem overtly and covertly to suppress the minority communities who are competing with them to share the power positions which the majority does not want to concede. These violence are nothing but political violence on the part of majority which will be discussed further in this study.

Religious communalism has been and is a great curse in Indian society. It is the greatest threat to national integrity and social harmony. Religion itself is usually held responsible for communal violence (which it is not). More often than not religion is used or a religious color is given to violence, which are meant for social, economic and political interests. Ashis Nandy makes a distinction between religion as faith and religion-as-ideology, a faith when it is 'a way of life, a tradition, which is definitionally non-monolithic and operationally plural' and ideology when it is a 'sub-national, or cross-national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious usually political or socio-economic interests'.⁷ Modern society treats religion as ideology, which has assumed increasing significance in socio-political life. This ideology helps in creating an identity, which gives people a sense of security. But the identity formation of individuals and communities often takes place against or in opposition to other communities, which are considered to be threat to one's own identity. In Indian context, the Hindu Identity legitimizes its own identity by delegitimizing the minority identities. Identity based on

⁷ In 'The Politics Of Secularism And The Recovery Of Religious Tolerance' in Veena Das (Ed.) 'Mirrors Of Violence: Communities Riots And Survivors In South Asia' OUP, New Delhi, 1990 p-70.

religion leads to communal ideology or communalism, which is therefore, defined by Bipan Chandra as, “philosophy, which stood for the promotion of the interest of a particular religious community at the expense of other religious groups”.⁸ Many social scientists after studying the phenomenon of religious communalism in India have shown that it is not primarily religious beliefs that cause communal tension and violence, but the assertion and domination of religious identity, which cause communal tension and violence. In Indian context, the religious communalism of both majority and minority meant for socio-political power which ultimately leads to communal riots. But a difference should be made between majority communalism and minority communalism as one is meant to maintain the power positions through domination and other is meant to achieve that power position which is ‘just’ to them but denied by majority community. This majority communalism or Hindu communalism with its many tenants will be discussed further in this study to see the motives behind it.

HINDU COMMUNALISM

Communalism in the context of Indian politics since independence expresses the relationship of domination and subordination between the Hindu majority and various minorities. As stated earlier, Hindu communalism came to India in pre-independence era to challenge the Muslim assertion of Jinnah and other Muslim leaders of Muslim league. It was imperative, as some theorists also agrees, Hindu communalism grew to challenge Muslim communalism

⁸ In ‘Communalism in Modern India’ Vikas, New Delhi, 1984, p-16.

because at that time the respective communalism of Hindus and Muslims were meant for the greater share of power which subsequently led to the partition of India. At that time also Hinduism was enjoying the majority status and the fear psychosis on the part of Muslims of Hindu domination prompted them to demand for a separate sovereign state for themselves. Therefore, the fear psychosis on the part of minorities of majority domination and the actual domination were the tenets of Hindu communalism then. But ironically, it is still present in India. And after independence this has led to the another near partition of India. Fearing the extinction of their separate religious identity, Sikhs in Punjab demanded a separate Punjabi-Suba (Punjabi speaking state) to preserve their identity. The trend set by Hindu Mahasabha and other Hindu communal organizations of that time as revived more rigorously in the 80s and 90s though it has always been present covertly in India. It has resulted in increasing communal riots in Muslim dominated areas and now there growing attack on Christians in 80s and 90s as mentioned earlier. This time the communal ideologies are being spread by BJP, Shiv Sena and other members of Sangha Parivar. However, if one can understand the aims and objectives behind this communalism then one can clearly perceive that the motives for power positions are behind it.

One can understand the Hindu communalism of pre-independence era as Muslim population was substantial in number and the challenge to preserve their respective identity was there. Though there is no such challenge to Hindu identity in post-independent era the communalists play that card to spread their

ideology. When Hinduism enjoys the unprecedented majority (84%),⁹ there is no grain of truth in Hindu communalists argument that Hinduism and Hindustan (the very name on which they carry out their communal agenda) facing the challenge of its mere existence. It is absurd to presume that 84% population of a country faces the challenge to its identity by 16% of the population, which is again divided in nature because there are so many religious minorities in India. The real aim of the militant Hindu organizations including their parliamentary wing BJP is to capture the power positions in society including political power by playing communal card. The Rath Yatra of L.K.Advani, the then BJP president on the Babri Masjid- Ram Janma Bhoomi issue is the best example of the exploitation of the religious sentiments for political mobilizations.

The goals of a 'Hindu Rashtra' set by Sangha Parivar have further aggravated the fear of the religious minority who suffers from a fear psychosis of social extinction and cultural assimilation. The Hindu communalists are spreading their communal ideologies by some time glorifying history and sometimes by mere citing of history. For them, Muslims and Christians are enemy of India and cannot be true Indians because Medieval India was ruled by Muslims and later it became a colony of British. Without blaming Hinduism itself which has divided itself into different sects and castes dominated by

⁹The claim that India is a country of 84% Hindu majority is disputable given the cultural heterogeneity. There are ethnic communities and castes (OBC's and Dalits) who rejects their identities being assimilated as Hindus (G. Aloysious).

Brahminism¹⁰ which prompts Prof. Romila Thapper to opine that Hindu community is an 'Imagined Community'¹¹ which helps other communities to attacks Hinduism and therefore India. The majoritarians are not merely citing or glorifying history to achieve their goal of Hindu Rashtra, at times they are also rewriting history. The temple construction movement at Ayodhya started by BJP and its Sangha outfits is a good example of this, which they claim was desecrated by Babar in the 16th century and built Babri Masjid, which they in turn claim is the birth place of Ram, their cultural and religious hero, about which there is no authentic historical proof. This movement of Sangh Parivar was so popular and so strong that it really changed Indian polity all together. BJP as a political Party really came as a force afterwards and the Sangh Parivar have been able to spread the hatredness against Muslims and also getting supports from the masses by citing this.

As stated earlier, the proposed Hindu Rashtra, which is based on Hindu identity, is based on the process of social extinction and cultural assimilation. They do it by spreading hatredness against Muslims for the misdeeds committed by Muslim conquerors of medieval India and cite the issue of forced conversion against Christians. This concept of Hindutva was evolved and elaborated by Hindu communalists. As V.D.Sarvarkar evolved a problematic nationalism in direct opposition to non-Hindu communities. Hindutva regards

¹⁰ From the very beginning, the Aryan culture including the Hindu culture has been more prone to challenge because of their divisive tendency. Brahminism played an important part in this respect as it was based on hierarchy and subordination. That is why Hinduism and India time and again has become the target of attack of the outside forces.

¹¹ Quoted in K.N.Panikkar, 'Communalism In India: A Perspective For Intervention' in Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan (Eds.) Op.Cit., p-46.

India as Hindustan, as their Pitrubhumi (fatherland) and punyabhumi (holyland). Sarvarkar argues that Muslims, Christians and Parsis cannot be included members of Hindutva. Even though for these communities Hindustan is their fatherland, their respective Holyland lie outside its confines. Sarvarkar thus implies that these communities nurture 'extra-territorial loyalties'. Therefore, they cannot be true Indians as their holylands is not Hindustan.¹² This misconception and mistrust spread against minorities creates fear in the minds of minorities and their very existence in India.

While accusing Christians, Muslims and Parsis as 'Non-Hindus',¹³ Sarvarkar opines that other minorities such as Sikhs, Jains and Buddhist are the part of Hindutva and thus Hindustan. Because the generic term Hindu Dharma and Hinduism can be used to refer the above named minority communities, because the majority and the minority religious communities represents (according to Sarvarkar) a common race and a common civilization because their holyland is Hindustan. Sarvarkar thus proposes that the bitterness between the majority and minority religions can be removed by assimilating the minor communities as 'the remaining Hindus'.¹⁴ This politics of Hindutva proposed by Sarvarkar is meant to assimilate the minorities, which have their birthplace in Hindustan and eliminate those minorities, which are not. BJP the parliamentary wing of the Sangh Parivar came up with its manifesto in 1998 election, which

¹² The ideas of Sarvarkar discussed in Sumit Sarkar, 'Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva' in David Ludden (Ed) 'Making India Hindu; Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India' OUP, New Delhi, p-274 and Arun Patnaik and Chalam, Op.Cit., p-258.

¹³ In the language of Hindu communalists, Hindu and Hindutva sometimes used as a symbol of nationality and not as a religion or religious identity.

¹⁴ Arun Patnaik and Chalam Op.Cit., p-259.

states, India, 'is one country, one people and one nation'.¹⁵ This one can see has serious implications for the multi religious, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic nature of Indian society. This politics of assimilation of the minorities into the culture and identity of the majority creates fear psychosis in the minds of minorities. These minorities undergo the experience of intense hurt and loss when they are told that their tradition are of little value and they should integrate with some other tradition via the politics of assimilation. This open assertion of majoritarian power inevitably results into a conflict situation, where minorities organize themselves to preserve their separate identity and self-determination. 'The politics of merger, therefore gives rise to acute political tension and insecurity even ethnic explosions as minority groups rightly resist this devaluation and dismissal of their culture'.¹⁶ Hindutva seeks to construct and legitimize the definition of the nation in largely Hindu terms by consistently devaluing minority identity. Thus the 'Flip side of legitimization is de-legitimization'.¹⁷

Hindutva tries to develop a 'national culture', which is based on Hindu culture and Hindu cultural personalities. The slogans like, 'Hinduism is Indianism, more secular than secularism' is nothing but the assertion of majority identity. Christianity, Islam is diametrically different from Hinduism, so that these faiths have always refused to be absorbed in it. Therefore, they are more prone to attacks by militant Hindu organizations. Hindus regard the

¹⁵ Mentioned in Neera Chandhoke, 'Beyond Secularism', Op.Cit., p-2.

¹⁶ Ibid.,p-8.

¹⁷ Ibid., p-11.

religions of Indian origins as mere extension of Hinduism. T.K.Oommen opines in this regard that, "in a multi-religious society if the dominant religion claims that several minority religions are mere extension of it, the latter religions may face the threat of extinction through assimilation".¹⁸ This is what precisely happening in India. The growth of Buddhist and Jain identity has faced severe blow in India due to the assimilating tendency of Hinduism. Though Sikhism has resisted this assimilation by demanding separate Sikh identity by demanding separate Punjabi-Suba, still it has not been able to build a separate identity of itself, outside that of Hinduism and many a times known as a reformist Hindu sect.

Majority denying the existence of minority has two aspects: a/ Exclusionary and, b/ Inclusionary. Exclusionary when majority denies its rights to minority and Inclusionary when majority wants to assimilate it.¹⁹ The Sangh Parivar would like to see the religious minorities Hinduised. In other words, they reject the concept of diversity and would like to see the whole India Hinduised. The majoritarian political discourse according to them, is the mainstream political discourse. Golwalkar expresses this Hindu attitude very clearly. He wrote, "the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of Hindu race and

¹⁸ Quoted in P.S. Daniel, 'Hindu Response to Religious Pluralism', Kant Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p-58.

¹⁹ Asghar Ali Engineer discussed these two aspects, 'Fifty years of independence and minorities in India' in Uday Mehta's compilation of Engineer's essay in, 'Essays in Contemporary Identity, Religion and Secularism' Ajanta Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p-218.

culture that, is, they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age-long tradition, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion or may stay in this country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation; claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, for less any preferential treatment nor even citizen's rights".²⁰ He argued in one of his book, 'We, Our Nationhood Defined' that, as long as the Muslims and the Christians failed to abandon their own religion and culture they cannot but only be foreigners in this country. And if they stayed here without losing their 'separate existence' they might be treated 'enemies and at best as idiots'.²¹ He treats Christians as hostile who are agents of international movements for the spread of Christianity. This treatment of the minorities as 'Others' is nothing but a greater design of Hindu communalists to transform multi-religious and multi-ethnic country into a mono-religious country, where the majoritarianism based on Hindu identity will prevail over the minority identities.

This assertion of majoritarianism is meant to spread fascism in India, which is based on the ideology of Hindu communalists who call themselves as Hindu nationalists. They tend to forget that India being a country of multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state cannot become one nation. For the reason, only the theorists of nationalism used the word nation-state to emphasize the significance of state in maintaining and building a multicultural nation. In contemporary India, BJP and Shiv Sena create a religion based false

²⁰ Quoted in P.S.Daniel Op.Cit.,p-59.

²¹ Quoted in Neena Vyas, 'The Hindu' Sunday June 25th, 2000, p-40.

consciousness among people to organize themselves for political formations. They explicitly make their political programmes around a communal goal, which is 'Hindu Nationalism' and 'Hindutva'. All their political programmes are geared to the creation of Hindu identity and Hindu consolidation at the expense of minorities. This aim is expressed in all that, they do from Ram Shila Puja, and Advani's Rath Yatra to instigation of communal riots. All of these are meant to create a Hindu identity and define a goal which is based on religion. 'This endeavor of their is aimed at the creation of a religion-based sense of nationalism somewhat on the lines of what the Nazis in Germany and the Fascists in Italy did in their quest for power'.²² The BJP's expectation is clear: the creation of Hindu consciousness would open the road to 'power'. Therefore, the majoritarianism, which has worked in tandem in India by opposing minoritism, is meant to maintain their power positions in society. This violence of domination for political ends or political violence used by Hindu communalists are to get political as well as economic power, because the power seekers know, it is easy to exploit the illiterate and tradition-bound masses by manipulating communal feelings.

The Hindu communalism is also spread in India by denigrating the minority identity and questioning their loyalty to India. Communalism against Muslims mainly serves this purpose. The partition of India, the Kashmir problem today, the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971 have kept the question of the loyalty of Muslim citizens to Indian sovereignty, alive. The Indo-Pakistan

²² K.N.Panikkar, 'Communalism In India; A Perspective For Intervention' Op.Cit., p-31.

cricket matches constantly revive this question where Hindu communalists accuse the Muslims of supporting Pakistan and opine Muslim should better go to Pakistan. They again accuse Muslims are the agent of ISI and claims Muslims have overtly or covertly support the functioning of ISI to create instability in India. Hindu nationalists claim that there is an eternal unity of India in which Muslims and Christians cannot be a part of. That is why in many riot situations Muslims are forced to utter nationalist slogan like 'Vande Mataram'. In the anti-Muslim riots in Surat and Bombay after the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6th 1992 the Muslim riot victims were forced to utter 'Jai Sri Ram' (hail to Lord Ram) whom Hindu nationalist project as national idol before they were killed and raped.²³ Those Muslims who opposed to the demolition of Babri Masjid and construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya were told as *Babur Ka Santan Jao Pakistan* (children of Babur go to Pakistan). Constructing the image of 'self' to themselves and 'others' to minorities, Hindu communalists construct the image of minorities as 'anti-national'.

Muslims are often accused of practising polygamy, that they also breed faster, which is against the national interests. *Hum Paanch Hamare Pachis* (we are five and we will have twenty-five) is the motto of Muslims, accused by racist Hindutva ideology. But in fact, the report on the status of women in India (1975), however, have found the rate of polygamy actually higher among Hindus than Muslims (5.06% as against 4.31%).²⁴ Birth rate is more related to

²³ Findings of Asgar Ali Engineer. Mentioned in 'Bastion Of Communal Amity Crumbles' in EPW, February 13, 1993, p-263.

²⁴ Mentioned in Sumit Sarkar, 'Fascism of Sangha Parivar' in EPW, Jan. 30, 1993, p-161.

illiteracy and poverty than to religion. It is a well-established view that birth rate among poor is more than the rich. Since Muslims in India are poorer in India like the dalits, the birth rate among them is more. Therefore, by giving the religious colour to birthrate is another trick of Hindu communalists to denigrate the Muslim identity in India. Majoritarianism again came up with the issue of singing of national anthem to be made compulsory to every one. The issue came to the picture only when in some schools minority students refused to sing the national anthem. That had become an issue for Hindu communalists to accuse minorities as anti-national. Madhu Kishwar who made a case study on this issue found that the enthusiasm about the national anthem does not arise primarily from any love for the song but rather from the following reasons-²⁵

a). A strong suspicion and mistrust of the minorities and a belief, that the refusal to sing anthem by minority students in schools is a reflection of inherent anti-national character of the minorities.

b). A feeling that Hindus need to protect the nation and the national symbols from the minorities- that Hindus are the special guardians of the national honour.

c). An assumption that minorities can live in India only if they abide by the terms and conditions laid down by the majority community- that if they allow to dissent on some issues, they may become uncontrollable.

d). A forced association of the national anthem, other national symbols with Hinduism.

²⁵ The above discussed six reasons are found by Madhu Kishwar. Quoted from 'Religion At The Service Of Nationalism And Other Essays', OUP, New Delhi, 1998, p-316.

e). A willingness to advocate compulsions together with an underlying presumption that only minorities will need to be coerced since it is assumed that Hindus already in unanimous agreement on such issues.

f). A belief that if people are taught to respect the national symbols, it would promote national unity.

These findings of Madhu Kishwar are appears to be correct, since it has been seen that many people from the majority community also do not know the national anthem and in many parts of India, national anthem is used in the spirit of Hinduism. Singing 'Saraswati Vandana' and other Hindu religious prayers are also mandatory in some schools. Therefore national anthem sung in schools is not in the spirit of nationalism but in the spirit to coerce the minorities. That is because the Hindu majority is increasingly being taught to believe that the country belongs to them and the minorities can live only on the terms decided by the majority community. The slightest evidence of dissent by the minorities is taken as an affront to the self-appointed owners of the nation. Since, "national unity has increasingly become synonymous with bowing before the will of the government and the Hindu majority, 'putting the nation above all else' in concrete terms means submitting silently to every dictate of the government as these dictates increasingly coincide with the sentiments of the chauvinistic organizations which claim to speak for the Hindu majority".²⁶

Recently the factual change of history and the publication of distorted history have become the part of the communal agenda of Sangha Parivar to

²⁶ Ibid., p-380.

accommodate the glorification of Hinduism, (sometimes-false glorification). This glorification with denigration of factual history as a part of the Hindu communalist agenda is meant to make India, predominantly a Hindu Rashtra in which Hindus can only enjoy the powers in the society. M.S.Golwalkar legitimized this idea when he says, "when the vast majority of people are Hindus the state is democratically Hindu".²⁷ This certainly is a view of democracy, which is otherwise known as majority tyranny. In a democratic polity majoritarian discourse cannot prevail and all communities would like to be recognized as separate religion and cultural entity. In India, this process though still on but facing a real challenge since the BJP has come into power which governs by the agenda of Sangh Parivar. Ever since the BJP has formed the government, the militant Hindu organizations have started the attack on the minorities. They have been able to gather the supports of the masses by creating the false consciousness about nationalism. They are also engaged in circulating hate literatures to spread hatredness towards minorities and to devalue the minority identities. Their attempt to distort history meant to project predominantly Hindu history of India, thereby taking away the credits from others who also enriched the Indian history. The good works of Muslim invaders could not give any credit to Indian Muslims but their misdeeds gave them the image of bad Muslims who subsequently are termed as 'anti-national'. The BJP and other Sangh Parivar's campaigns have communalized common people as well as the middle class intelligentsia. Not only is violence against

²⁷ Quoted in K,N.Panikkar, 'Communal Threat, Secular Challenge', Earthworm Books, Madras, 1997, p-7

Muslims legitimized but also the rape of Muslim woman as being their deserved fate since they did it to the Hindus in the medieval ages.²⁸

In the Ram Janma Bhoomi movement and aftermath of it, the Sangh Parivar has stereotyped the Muslims into a certain image that can be used to evoke hatred. Militant Hindu right has been trying to built into the Hindu psyche of the 'Muslim' as rapacious, lustful, violent and go on to 'convolute this argument into how these tendencies are turned into the political occupation and rape of the motherland'.²⁹ This negative image of Muslim created by Hindutva is meant to devalue the Muslim identity in India and meant to devalue the deeds of Muslims to India from pre-independent India to till date. Their contribution to Indian art, music and culture has been systematically undermined and devalued by majoritarianism, who in reality do not want to see a parallel culture grow in India with Hinduism which will challenge their power positions in the society.

Their recent shift of focus towards Christianity is also meant for that. The popularity of Christian Missionaries in India, who are working in the remote Indian villages and serving people who are outside the developmental scheme of government has been a cause of concern to Hindu communalists. That is why in recent times Christians are facing growing attacks at the hands of Hindu communalists. According to the United Christian Forum for Human Rights (UCFHR) there have been thirty-five recorded anti-Christian crimes

²⁸ This discussion is influenced by Engineer's writings in 'Bastion of communal amity crumbles', Op.Cit., p-264.

²⁹ Sumit Sarkar and Pradeep Dutta, 'Manufacturing hatred: The image of the Muslim in the Ram Janma Bhoomi Movement', in Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan (eds.) Op.cit., p-83-97.

between January and June this year.³⁰ In a most gruesome attack on Christianity in January 23 1999, Dara Singh a member of Bajrang Dal, the Youth Organization of VHP killed Australian Missionary Grahame Staines and his two sons in Manoharpur village of the Keonjhar district of Orissa. The hatredness created by Sangh Parivar against Christianity in that area is so strong that after working his whole life for the betterment of the tribal people Grahame Staines was projected as Villain who was instrumental in conversion through proselytization. So much so that, the murderer Dara Singh has been projected as a hero and why he killed Grahame Staines, which he written in a book, 'Mun Dara Singh Kahuchi' (I am Dara Singh Speaking) has become a best seller in Orissa. Seeing the popularity of Dara Singh, 'Dara Sena' an outfit of Dara supporters has come out and the rumor in the air is that he might contest next election in Orissa. This is a proper example of communal mobilization for political power. This hatredness towards minorities especially Christianity now a day is very powerful. Several lakhs of members of Sangha outfits are carrying out this job to create hatredness towards minorities in India by creating a false image that minorities especially Muslims and Christians are anti-national and it is the duty of Hinduism to defend India from those anti-national elements. In a recent interview to Outlook, a weekly English magazine, Girija Kishore, the VHP vice-president say, "Christian are more dangerous than Muslims because they are an, 'unknown evil' as for us Akbar is more dangerous than Aurangzeb".³¹ These open accusations go unnoticed

³⁰ Mentioned in Outlook, June 26, 2000, p-27.

³¹ Ibid., p-27

because of the BJP controlling the governmental structure. The series of attacks against Christianity have established a pattern of violence unleashed by the Sangha Parivar to establish their superior identity by rejecting the minority identities.

POLITICS OF CONVERSION

Another notion of Hindu communalism one can see is in the issue of conversion, which has created havoc in the minds of minorities. The issue of conversion has given a false sense of insecurity among Hindu communalists, especially since, some dalits converted to Islam in Meenakshipuram in 1981. VHP made it a point to accuse minorities that they are converting through proselytization. The recent attacks on Christianity are primarily related to the issue of conversion. The Hindu communalists have accused that Christians are converting innocent tribals and dalits into their religion by proselytization. This accusation and consequent attacks on Christians is the politics of Hindutva to broaden the circle of their identity by associating dalits and tribals who are non-Hindus into their fold and at the same time by accusing them (religious minorities) of forced conversion they have been able to create a fear psychosis in the mind of minorities. In some cases, they have been able to re-convert some Christian tribals with the help of state machinery. In such an incident, seventy- (70) tribal Christians were re-converted to Hinduism in Keonjhar district of Orissa.

The constitution of India in its article 25 (i) gives everyone the right to, 'prefer, practice and propagate' any religion he chooses, subject to public

order, morality and health. Though proselytization is not justifiable and those who involved in it should be punished, but under the cover of such acts in some parts of the country Christians are prosecuted and even denied of their primary right to practice their faith. Though the state claims to be secular, it takes the interest of the Hindus as the norm and thereby denies the religious freedom of minorities. The Prime Minister of India Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, proposed for a national debate on conversion at a time when numbers of Christians are being, killed, raped and tortured. Hindutva regards Christianity and Islam, as the basis of anti- national activities and hence the growth of these communities they claim is threat to the security and territorial integrity of the Hindu nation. So much so that, these conversions are not seen mere change of religion or faith but a change of nationalism. As opined by Hindu communalists, "conversion to Islam in India is not a conversion of religion but a conversion of nationality. Conversion means complete de-nationalization of the individual. It is not a process of Islamization but a process of anti-Indianisation".³²

The different interpretation to conversion by Hindutva forces are the politics of majoritarianism and to create a fear psychosis in the minds of minorities thereby, who never again will try to assert their identities, which will guarantee majoritarianism the absolute control of all power positions in the society.

There is a considerable difference between communalism and communal violence. Though communal violence needs communalism or the

³² Quoted in P.S. Daniel Op cit., p-262.

growth of communal ideology but one cannot equate communalism with communal violence. Communal ideology cannot only exist but can grow decades before it takes the form of communal violence.³³ Bipan Chandra has discussed the idea of Communalism on the above light. He has presented a dividing line between communalism and communal violence but the spread of communalism or communal ideology is itself is an act of violence. The spread of majoritarianism or majority identity in Indian situation is a violent act as the growth of one identity takes place against or in opposition to other communities and identities. In Indian situation, Hindutva perform these violent acts to maintain its superior identity. For that matter, the study makes the difference between the communal violence and communal riots. Communal violence can be both covert as well as overt but communal riots are only overt violence.

In Indian context, communal riots are of regular phenomena. Hundreds of communal riots have broken out in India since its independence. All social scientists are more or less agreeing on the point that "all riots take place not because of communal ideology but to acquire economic and political power". It has been seen in India that political parties play direct role in instigating communal riots for the appropriation of voting base and to win elections and in some cases the conflict between two different business groups belongs to different communities instigate communal riots for their economic benefits. So communal riots often take place for economic and political power.

³³ The opinion of Bipan Chandra. Discussed in "Communalism and the State: Some issues in India" in K. N. Panikkar (ed.) "Communalism in India" Op.cit., p-132.

However, it has been seen that often-communal riots broke out in India only after the continuation of communal ideology by Hindu communalists. It is not a partial view as in reality, a mere 16% of minority population, who are again divided on the different ideology can not wish to instigate riots in which they know they will be the worst sufferers. The studies on the major riots in India in Bombay, Surat and Ahmedabad have found that it is the Hindu communalists who are the first instigator of communal violence. In Bombay riots of 1993, which broke out in the aftermath of Babri Masjid demolition, the Shiv Sena played the instigator role. Shri Krishna commission in its report also has named several Shiv Sena leaders including its chief Bal Thackeray as the instigator of violence. They often do it to 'to teach minorities a lesson' as Thackeray puts it, 'they (Muslim) want to implement their Sharia (Islamic Law) in my motherland - yes this is the Hindu motherland... This is a Hindu Rashtra (nation).'³⁴

This open assertion of majoritarianism by a few in India is often found in communal riots because for them, it is a safe platform to perform their communal agenda. An assertion is made that India is their nation and minorities are outsiders to it. For that reason, they are often reminded in communal riots to go to Pakistan. 'Jao Kabarstan or Pakistan' (go to grave or Pakistan) and 'Babar ka Santan, Jao Pakistan' (children of Babar go to Pakistan) are some of the slogans frequently used in communal riots. Communal riots are

³⁴ Quoted in Jim Masselos 'The Bombay riots of 1993', John McGuire, Peter Reeves and Howard Brasted (eds.) 'Political of Violence: From Ayodhya to Berhampada', Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p.118.

also used as the platform for domination of majority identity and beliefs. Muslim are often made to utter Jai Shri Ram ((Hail to Lord Ram) and Jai Jagannath (Hail to Lord Jagannath) as said before. This was done by majority to devalue the minority belief systems and at the same time to legitimize their own ideology. In most of the riot situations, the majority community along with so-called secular state machinery (including police and bureaucracy) act together in the mission to 'teach minority a lesson' and to remind their place in their own country.

The communal riots are claimed by different studies as the final stage of communalism.³⁵ However, in reality the end of Hindu communalists is the withering away of the minority communities. Therefore, for them, withering away of religious minorities is the final stage of communalism. That is why elimination and assimilation are the two important aspects of Hindu communalism. The ever-growing violence on minorities in India is often carried out by a majoritarian notion to disgrace those very communities. The rape of minority women is carried out by majority to disgrace their respective communities as women are projected as the bearers of prestige of that community to which she belongs. After the Surat riot in May 1993, Muslims told after the riots that they were constantly humiliated in the streets as "cowards", who could not protect their families by the Hindus.³⁶ Therefore, the communal riots often carried out by majority communities to terrorize the

³⁵ Bipan Chandra has discussed his ideology along this light.

³⁶ Findings of Peter Van der Veer in Surat Riot of May 1993, mentioned in 'Writing Violence' in David Ludden (ed.), Op cit., p.267.

whole minority communities, which will make them to live a disgraced life. These attempts of majority again show that they are interested in creating majoritarian state, where every thing will be done along the lines of Hindutva. Minorities can live but with permanently bowing their heads before the wills of majority and the often to the wills of the state which is governed by the principles of majoritarianism. Any kinds of dissent to this majoritarianism by the minorities are seen as the threat to the national interest and for that matter to national integrity. Therefore, the riot situations in India are good platform for Hindu communalists with the help of state machineries to dominate the minority identities and in some case even assimilate and eliminate it. This identity domination on the part of majority is aimed at the creation of one identity, one culture, one nation, in which majority will enjoy the status of power holder, including political power.

The whole gamut of Hindu communalism is mean to design India in predominantly Hindu term, to make India as Hindu India, where other religious minorities will not be allowed to have their respective identities but the identity of Hinduism i.e. Hindutva. When all liberal democracies are making efforts to make democracy more practical by accumulating all groups including minorities in a nation-state, to make democracy as "consociational democracy". On the other hand, Indian democracy is functioning quite reversibly. Claimed as the largest democracy in the world, in reality it is governed by the principle of majoritarianism identity, which is oppressive towards minorities. For that reasons India is a classical example of democracy of the majority tyranny. This

is not as simple as we perceive. This is a politics on the part of majority to remain in "power" for ever and not allow any body (minorities) to compete for that power positions as it happens in societies of scarce power situations, the different groups compete for powers in society. This domination of identity for power many a time attended through the violence of different kinds; overt as well as covert. This politics of violence for power is nothing but 'political violence' of Hindutva identity against minority identities.

CONCLUSION

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This study embarked upon analyzing various questions such as, whether it is possible to establish a relationship between violence and identity? How violence by one community is used to check the social mobility and social change of other communities? Is it possible to conceptualize political violence by analyzing the motives behind the violence?

To discuss these questions, the study considered three identity markers, gender, religion and caste. The findings conclude that since, one identity develops in opposition to the other identities, it is imperative that there is a constant tussle between them. The one that is in dominant position tries to maintain its dominance by not allowing the space for the growth of other identities. This dominance is manifested as social, economic and political power and it is achieved by violence hence, it becomes political violence.

In a patriarchal society like India, where men enjoy favoritism in every aspect of life, they do not want to give space for the growth of women's identity. Women are not allowed to have an identity of their own. They always had known as mother, sister and daughter. Moreover, when they construct their own identity and try to assert their identity, then they face the fury of the male violence. This 'teach a lesson' method is used to suppress their identity assertion and in some case identity construction, which the male world thinks is a challenge to their

power positions in the society. This domination is nothing but a power relationship, which is therefore 'political'.

This is true in case of violence against dalits in India. The violence against dalits has increased in recent years because of the assertion of dalits. This assertion has been resisted by caste Hindus, who over the years have been enjoying the powers in the society and still want to maintain their positions by suppressing the dalit identity. Firstly, they are discriminated because of their birth being imposed in certain communities; secondly, when they question their own positions and demand for equality in every sphere as equal citizens, they again become the targets of attacks by the caste Hindus. This oppression against dalits by caste Hindus meant to maintain the unequal status quo, in which upper castes enjoy the socio-economic and political powers. Therefore, these violence against dalits are political violence.

The violence against various religious minorities in India serves the same purpose. There has been conscious effort always on the part of so-called Hindu majority to build a Hindu identity by oppressing other minority identities. They want to build majoritarianism based on Hindutva ideology. In that majoritarianism, only Hindus can enjoy the power. Any attempts of other religious minorities to achieve the power positions are suppressed by direct or indirect violence. Therefore, this again is a political act, that is why it is political violence.

Several studies on the violence against women, dalits and religious minorities have established that these are social violence and some even opine that

these are simple law and order problems. But in reality, as this present study establishes that these violence are not mere social violence or law and order problems, since the question of power is inherent in all those violence, this politics of violence can be termed as political violence.

In India therefore, the relationship between men folk and women folk, caste Hindus and dalits, Hindu majority and other minorities have been a relationship of domination and subordination; that is why it is a power relationship. These violence for power are nothing but political violence.

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