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An Analysis into Religious Violence and Socio-Economic Impacts in India

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Abstract

India is characterised by a number of religions with religious mistrust and intolerance as part of Indian history. Most studies in religious violence mainly emphasize socio-economic and political aspects on the occurrence of violence. Communal conflicts bring down the process of national integration, peace and harmony. It hampers the overall economic growth, pushes the victims towards the edge of unemployment and poverty. A significant surge in crime and human rights violation is observable in riots. An instigating push potentially causes riots in areas having an atmosphere of communal vitiation. More often than not, political influence especially when it is based on religious identity is suspected to give this push. In this research, it was found that successive governments of different political parties have failed to address the issues of the victims of the violence. Specifically, this paper gives an in-depth case study analysis on two of the important riots of post-independent India and examines the less studied ethical, environmental and technological aspects of religious violence as a whole along with its social, economic, political and legal aspects. This paper finds that religious riots have underpinnings that are complex and evolving over time and have a trend of increasing intensity with more costs associated with it.

Keywords- *violence, riots, economic, political, social, ethical, legal, environment*

1.0 Introduction

It is believed that the etymology of religion lies in the Latin word 'religare', which means '*to tie, to bind*' This seems to be favoured because it helps to explain the power that religion has to associate a person with a community, culture, course of action, ideology, etc. Some people believe that religion does not exist at all, only culture exists and religion is simply a significant aspect of human culture (Cline, 2019). The definition of religion has been a controversial and complicated subject in religious studies. There are many different definitions of religion; some are substantive while others are functional, there is no universally accepted definition of religion among scholars. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2007) also lists some traits which include sociological, psychological, and historical factors to be considered as a religion.

Taking a quick look at human history, we will learn about the enormous influence of religion on human behaviour, as well as social construction. Human ideas and their activities are highly influenced by religion (Qayyum, 2016). Adam Smith first mentioned the Church and religion in Wealth of Nations and The Theory of Moral Sentiments. Alfred Marshall's Principles of Economics highlight the fundamental roles of religion in shaping individual motives and world history (Marshall,1890). Religion also appears in Joseph Schumpeter's History of Economic Analysis. State-backed religious views, and benefits from monopolized state-backed religious structures, can also be found in the works of sociologists such as Peter Berger (1967) (Iyer, 2016). There is only little written about the relationship between religion and economic development, which has nothing to do with Max Weber's statement (Rao, 1969).

Weber predicted a hypothesis, "*There appears to be a paradoxical positive relationship between ascetic religious beliefs and economic enterprises*". 'Religious belief' refers to Protestant ethics, and 'economic enterprise' refers to capitalism. On the basis of his historical research, Weber asserts that modern capitalism arises not only from intrinsic economic necessity but from the religious ethic of Protestantism, especially Calvinism (Thompson, 2018).

Each religion has its own dogma or scripture which the followers accept without questioning for the fact that they are '*words of God*'. This may give rise to a tendency towards intolerance and inflexibility of the people to face other religions (Brahm, 2005). Religious beliefs are so deeply held that it has become the core of many conflicts around the world. While religious leaders and politicians often share the view that religion brings peace and harmony, many intellectuals think the other way round. Almost all religions contain storehouses of symbols and metaphors of wars and violence. At the beginning of Biblical history, stories of war and conquest fill the opening book of the Torah. These texts laid the foundation for the Jihadist traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Islam tells and retells the stories of the battles and conquests of the prophets (Thompson, 2018) and the Mahabharata tells about the Kurukshetra war. Evidently, religion and violence are hardly strangers.

Religious violence is a term that covers the phenomenon that religion is the subject or object of an act of violence (Wellman, JR. & Tokuno, 2004). Religious conflicts arise when believers of one faith take extremes and force their religious views on other faiths. Before modern times, religion was not a separate activity, it was closely linked to all other activities. It permeated all human causes, including economy, nation-building, politics, and war. Before 1700, it was impossible to say *where politics ended and religion began*. (Armstrong, 2014).

The surge in religious violence is global and affects almost every religious group. Religious tensions have increased dramatically over the past decade. These range from global jihad waged by Islamic extremists, the power struggle between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the Middle East and continuing struggles between Jews and Palestinians, to the persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar, and the persecution of Christians and Muslims across Africa According to Pew's 2018 report, more than a quarter of the world's countries have experienced high-incidence hostilities caused by religious hatred, religion-related mob violence, terrorism, and harassment of women for violating religious laws. (Muggah & Velshi, 2019)

India is characterized by a remarkable number of religious groups. In India, there is evidence of religious violence as early as 1714 with some riots reported in the 18th and 19th centuries. However communal events were not a regular aspect of 19th-century provincial life (Report of the Indian Statutory Commission,1930). Religious mistrust was even part of the Indian independence movement. The Muslim League, which claims to represent the country's Muslims, has expressed distrust of the secular rhetoric of the Indian National Congress, claiming that it represents only the interests of Hindus.

Of all the religious and ethnic issues in contemporary India, history casts the deepest shadow on Hindu-Muslim relations. The most critical contemporary one in this history was the partition of 1947 (Iyer & Shrivastava, 2018). The partition did not solve the Hindu-Muslim problem. It led to a deterioration of the situation of Muslims in India. Even in the years after independence, this problem was not overcome. In fact, over the past few years, there has been an increase in Hindi-Muslim riots (Varshney, 1983).

Based on data collected by Varshney & Wilkinson (2004), more than 7,000 people were killed during the Indian riots of 1950-1995, which includes more than 4,600 people who lost their lives between 1982 and 1995 alone. In addition to these huge human costs, the riots also led to the destruction of physical properties and damage to the ecological environment (Varshney,2002). The period of 1950-1980 reported an average of about 16 riots per year and the period from 1981 to 2001, witnessed about 47 riots with a much higher number of incidents reported every year (Iyer & Shrivastava, 2018).

This paper will be focusing on one major riot from each of the 1981 to 2001 period and post 2001 period and its effect on the socio-economic and political landscape. Two of the many atrocities where religion has been associated with are the Gujarat riots (2002) and the Bhagalpur riots (1989). Set apart by 13 years these two riots lie on either side of the significant 1991 reforms. The former took place 11 years after the Economic liberalization that changed India and the latter took place 3 years before the same. Some experts claim that economic growth reduces riots, however, this hasn't been the story in India. Both Gujarat and Bhagalpur riots were caused by Hindu-Muslim tensions leading to thousands of fatalities and injuries.

2.0 Religious Diversity and Violence

2.1 Concept of Violence

Sociological thinkers like Marx (1967), Engels (1967) and Weber (1968) have noted that the theme of violence would never disappear from society and it is an untraceable and deep-seated social problem that cannot be ignored. There has been a quest for an adequate definition of violence among scholars over the years. Mary Jackman formulated that violence encompasses "*actions that inflict, threaten or cause injury*" where violent injuries can be "*corporal, psychological, material or social*" and actions may be "*corporal, written or verbal*". (Hall, 2001). World Health Organization (2002) defines violence as, "*the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.*"

A WHO (2002) report claims that approximately 1.6 million people across the world lose their lives to violence each year. In addition to that people suffer from a range of physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health problems. Violence further causes a huge burden on national economies costing countries massive sums of money. The field of violence encompasses brutal colonialism, genocide, the two World Wars followed by the Cold War, bombards, blasphemy in the early modern era, bullying, sexual abuse, verbal attack, vandalism, the list goes on.

2.2 Causes of Violence in History

A number of social scientists have started to learn that the human desire to 'belong' somewhere plays an enormous role in generating violence of all kinds. This evolutionary desire to belong does not mean belonging to just any group of humans, but to a cohesive social group that protects an individual from violence, and gives access to resources and partners. A social group can remain cohesive if it has the required norms and rules that resolve the basic five coordination problems inherent to groups. These problems consist of identity (who is in the group and who is out), hierarchy (who makes the decision), trade (how to share resources) and punishment (who should be punished as a group and for what). (Martin, 2019).

While talking about violence, the inclusion of religion is inevitable for religious wars have left through history a trail of blood. As a matter of fact, among all the other forms of violence, religious conflicts have alone accounted for 11 of the world's 100 deadliest atrocities (White, 2011). Superiority and Lineation are two of the most prominent reasons for religious violence. Superiority implies that people belonging to a particular religion tend to have an impression that their religion is superior to the rest. Closely related to Superiority is Lineation. Lineation is the idea of in-groups versus out-groups. It occurs because every religion has its own cultures which often clash with one another. Because such clashes are so common, it is easy to use religion as a means to define people. People are often inclined to identify themselves as a part of a group, which religion provides. (Mohan, 2019)

2.3 Religious Diversity, Intolerance and Violence in India

It is a popular belief that religious diversity and intolerance potentially lead to conflict. *"In virtually every heterogeneous society, religious difference serves as a source of potential conflict"* (Brahm, 2005).

Religious Diversity has remained a defining feature of India over centuries. The country has no official state religion, however, religion does play an essential role in Indian daily life through its festivals, religious traditions, ceremonies, pilgrimages and others. In other words, religion is essentially taken a lot seriously despite the country being officially secular. Devotees of India's religions, especially Hindus and Muslims are part of 'communities' i.e. groups who coexist but live and worship in social circles. So, whenever violence occurs between these two groups, it is referred to as 'communal' violence. (Sharma & Haub, 2009) According to the 2011 Census, the religious composition of India is: Hindus-79.8%, Muslims-14.23%, Christians-2.30%, Sikhs-1.72% and other religions-1.73%. Majority of the population in all the larger states except for Jammu and Kashmir comprises Hindus. Muslims from the next large religious group exceeding all the other religious groups combined. Looking at the absolute numbers, the Hindu population increased by 140 million from 1991 to 2001, Muslims expanded by 37 million, Sikh population remained pretty much stagnant, increasing by 2% throughout the period (Sharma & Haub, 2009).

It is often claimed that religious diversity in India has been a source of disharmony and disunity in a country. However, religious diversity is not much of a problem as compared to religious intolerance. For instance, Switzerland is much more diverse than India but is one of the most peaceful countries in the World. In contrast, Afghanistan is one of the least religiously diverse countries and yet it is the 5th most intolerant country. India has become increasingly religiously intolerant over the years often resulting in violent conflicts (Gomes and Madrid, 2013). Contradictory ideological divides, noxious rhetoric and vicious propaganda have accelerated hatred over the recent years. Additionally, the politicization of religion is evidently one of the prominent causes of intolerance in the country. Inclusion of religion in the propaganda of political leaders has been a significant feature since independence. The ideology of different parties is different from each other and is greatly

influenced by the religion and ideology of their political leaders. Religion was an important deciding factor in politics even before independence which can be inferred from the existence of the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). In 1947, the partition between India and Pakistan led to violent communal conflicts, resulting in thousands of fatalities and several were left homeless. Today, after over 73 years of independence, religious sentiments are inseparable from politics which has evidently resulted in numerous episodes of religious violence throughout the years. (Politicization of Religion in India, 2015)

Although communal violence particularly Hindu-Muslim riots are not uncommon in India, it has to be kept in mind that Hinduism and Indian Islam as a whole is not taking part in destructive conflicts (Singh, 2003a). There may be occurrences of small confrontations and tensions but they do not translate into horrific acts of violence. The riots are mostly concentrated in a handful of cities and towns. An atmosphere of communal vitiation and aggravation of communal tensions up to a bursting point potentially sets off violence. The massacres of Bhagalpur and Gujarat, both connected to the movement of Babri Masjid demolition, attributes to a climate of religious hatred.

Apart from this, economic factors also contribute to violence. It is a common perception that economically poorer areas are more prone to riots than richer ones. However, this result is yet to be proved. Ray, Mitra (2014) based on data from 1979-2000 found that an increase in the average income of Muslims leads to a rise in violence across regions. However, an increase in the income levels of the Hindu population has little effect on rioting. Field et al (2008) suggested that living arrangements of communities also influence riots. Neighbourhoods in Ahmedabad that witnessed communal violence post the Godhra riots in 2002 were contrasted with those which maintained peace in that period. It was found out that the typical low-income mixed neighbourhoods, where Hindus and Muslims live closely witnessed the violent riots. (Bhattacharya, 2014)

3.0 Case Study

3.1. Bhagalpur Riots

Bhagalpur district in the state of Bihar has a history of community violence, which

erupted in 1924, 1936, 1946 and 1967. Bhagalpur had 88 per cent of the population living in rural areas, but it had never before spread to the rural areas of the region ("Recalling Bhagalpur a Report on the Aftermath of the 1989 Riots," 1996). There were an increasing number of state atrocities in the years leading to riots. In 1980 alone, at least 30 undertrials from the town of Bhagalpur were blinded by the police. Bhagalpur riots of October 1989, generally seen as India's worst riot of the post-independence period, killed almost 1800 people and turned over 50,000 into refugees yet no senior official has been held responsible (Iqbal, 2014).

3.1.1 What Happened?

It all started two months before the riots, from 12 to 22 August 1989, on the occasion of Muharram and Bisheri Puja, community passions in Bhagalpur were already high. However, the direct trigger for the Bhagalpur riots was the five-day Ramshila plan of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). As part of the national Ram Janmabhoomi movement, the bricks of the proposed Ram Mandir (temple) will be carried out in five processions through the rural areas of Bhagalpur and gathered in the town on the 24th. The riots are said to have started as one of the 'peace marches' passed through the Muslim area of Tatarpur, where hidden gangsters threw bombs and brickbats at them (Chakravarty, 2015). The growing influence of right-wing forces on community lines has worsened the atmosphere, and the provocations during the processions have made matters worse. People indulged in stone-pelting and Muslim shops were looted (Ali Engineer, 1995).

On 24 October 1989, prior to the outbreak of communal violence in Bhagalpur, there spread a series of rumours that about 400 Hindu students living in lodges near the Bhagalpur university had been killed by Muslims. These rumours helped spread riots throughout the city and in neighbouring areas such as Munger, Sahabganj, Dumka and Godda. Officials and police remained silent and took no measures in controlling the rumour.

On 25 October, at Mujahidpur, Mararpur and Nathnagar railway stations, hundreds of Muslims trying to flee Bhagalpur were robbed and killed. The mob did not even allow the then prime minister, Rajeev Gandhi to visit the riot-affected areas. Following the incident, the

morale of the rioters and the rebel police rose and the riots intensified after 26 October, which led to the spreading of riots to more areas (The Milli Gazette, 2014).

The violence continued into November and spread to at least 195 villages. Official sources say the death toll is about 1,000. Other sources say that nearly 2,000 people were killed. According to the PUDR report, 93% of the dead were Muslims. (Chakravarty, 2015) . The situation was then brought under control by bringing military and paramilitary forces.

3.1.2. Destruction

It can be seen from Table 1 that the violence which affected 206 villages led to the loss of livelihood of nearly 60,000 people which included around 3000 power looms gutted and 891 shops looted. In addition, 37 mosques, 7 Islamic schools, 8 tombs and 5 Shi'ite Imambara were destroyed. The complete burning of the Hindu house is not fully known, but it is, in any case, more than 300 (figures tentative). Although the state government had announced a compensation of Rs.1,00,000 for each deceased, few were benefited, as compensation depends on autopsy reports and police certificates, and the police were suppressing the number of dead.

Number of villages affected	206
Houses burnt to ashes	3932
Shops looted and gutted	891
Powerlooms gutted	3000
Muslims killed	876
Hindus killed	50
Missing persons	106
Seriously injured or disabled	259
Hindus arrested	1100

Muslims arrested	900
Persons who lost means of livelihood	50000-60000

Table 1. Destructions caused by Bhagalpur riot(Ali Engineer, 1990)

3.1.3. Role of Police

"No riot can last for more than 24 hours unless the state wants it to continue"

-Vibhuti Narain Rai I.P.S

The role of the police in the Bhagalpur massacre is doubtful if not even criminal. Instead of protecting the Muslims, they watched as the mob attacked them, or worse, joined the perpetrators. This weakened Muslims' trust in law enforcement, so much that the witnesses prefered to file complaints with the courts rather than with the police (Farasat, 2017). Cases were filed against Muslims who were killed by police of Bhikanpur in self-defence, stating they wanted to loot ammunition from police stations. There were also reports of police giving uniforms to rioters to kill Muslims. The submission of FIRs and the filing of charges is the task of the police. But when the police themselves was involved, the investigation was deliberately delayed and incomplete. The Bihar police were not only involved in the massacre of Muslims but also prevented the armed forces sent to contain the riots from completing their work. They misled the army and Border Security Forces (BSF), and they relied heavily on their information about the current situation, leading to the spread of anti-Muslim violence to the rural areas of Bhagalpur ("Recalling Bhagalpur: Aftermath of 1989 Riots", 1996).

3.1.4. Riot and the Bihar Government

The violence took place when Congress was in power with Satyendra Narayan Sinha as Chief Minister. The state government allowed Ram Shila processions to march through sensitive areas with deadly weapons and offensive slogans. The police force encouraged and even participated in violence when it broke out. There was also a complete lack of any preventive action on the part of the state government The Justice N N Singh Inquiry Commission report of 2006 also holds the parliamentary government responsible for the deadly clashes. (Bharti, 1989).

3.1.5. Aftermath

The riots have destroyed the faith of Muslims in the Congress government all through Bihar. The aftermath of riots tells the series of delayed processes in every stage. It took five years for the first inquiry commission report to be published. The report also asks for a proper investigation. The recommendations of the commission have neither been published nor have any action been taken. ("Recalling Bhagalpur: Aftermath of 1989 Riots", 1996) . Even after years, most people just received Rs.3000 to Rs.5000 as compensation for the destruction of houses (Iqbal, 2014).

3.2 Gujarat Riots

Gujarat, with a majority of the population being Hindus followed by Muslims, has witnessed a thread of some of the worst carnages of religious intolerance since independence. Between 1961-71, communal violence occurred in 16 districts of Gujarat, recording around 685 incidents in urban and 114 in rural areas. 578 out of 685 riots in urban Gujarat happened in 1969 alone (Concerned Citizens Tribunal -Gujarat, 2002). Between 1987 and 1991, 106 communal violence took place in the state. 22 per cent of these riots triggered off due to religious procession and 40 per cent of them were instigated by political rivalry and conflicts during elections. September 1990 riots were the most violent in this series (History of Communal Violence in Gujarat, 2002). The string of Hindu-Muslim carnage signifies the growing religious polarization in the state which was then followed by the horrific 2002 Hindu-Muslim riots.

3.2.1 Causes

On February 27, 2002, at around 7:40 a.m, the Sabarmati express pulled into the train station of Godhra, which is a small town in Gujarat governed by a Hindu right-wing party for the past 5 years.

The Sabarmati Express transported Hindu cadres (karsevaks) from Ayodhya, where they went to express their strong support for the construction of a Ram temple in legally and politically disputed locations. After the scheduled stop, as the train started moving, the emergency chain was pulled for which the train had to stop. The train stopped at a primarily Muslim

neighbourhood in Godhra, where according to reports it was attacked by a Muslim mob, burning alive 58 Hindu karsevaks, most of the dead being women and children. In retaliation, Hindu mobs attacked Muslim homes and businesses, killing a number of Muslim men, women and children across the state. After the initial outbreak, the riots continued in Ahmedabad, Baroda and many towns and villages of Mahasana, Panchmahals, Vadodhara and Sabarkanta for several weeks. Muslims destroyed houses and businesses of Hindus in further retaliation. After the Godhra incident, the next few weeks witnessed a thousand lives being lost. Around 100,000 Muslims were pushed into the tumble-down refugee camps of the state. This incident however is largely caught up in two narratives. (Varshney, 2020)

A section of the population, majority of them being Hindu elite places the Godhra incident in the framework of age-old perception of Islam terrorism and fundamentalism that came into the spotlight after the 2001 extremist attacks in the US and India on September 11 and December 13 respectively. This narrative focalizes the Godhra violence as an instance of Islamic terrorism.

The other narrative is from the section of population consisting of Muslim elites which view this incident as death, destruction and humiliation suffered by the Muslims and put this in the larger setting of perceived conspiracy against the Muslim community. It is argued that the misbehaviour of the passengers on and before the day of Godhra carnage and particularly the misconduct of the karsevaks travelling in the coaches that were burnt triggered violence against them. This narrative to date argues that the Godhra incident was taken as an excuse to bring violence into effect against the Muslims that was planned beforehand.

However, a proportion of the population has a third perspective. This narrative argues that the politicization of religious hate and polarization has caused the violation of citizenship rights and human rights, thus imposing a serious threat to India's constitution, democracy and secularism. It places the Gujarat riots in the context of identity politics based on religion-cultural nationalism. (Ahmed, 2002)

3.2.2. Destruction

Initially causing death to 58 Hindu pilgrim karsevaks, the riots caused many brutal killings, rapes as well as widespread looting and destruction of property including religious structures. There is evidently no disagreement that the Muslims suffered more losses of every kind. According to official figures, a total of 993 villages, 151 towns, 154 out of 182 constituencies were affected by the riots (Compounding Injustice: The Government's Failure to Redress Massacres in Gujarat, 2003). The official death toll is over 1000, however, the unofficial estimates range from 2000-5000 (Ahmed, 2002) among which 1926 were attributed to violent killing (Breaking News Express, 2017). The following table highlights some of the official reports of destruction:

Death Toll	Muslim deaths	790
	Hindu deaths	254
	Total	1044
Missing		223
Injuries		2500
Property Destroyed	Dargahs	273
	Mosques	241
	Temples	19
	Churches	3
Muslim property loss	Houses	100,000
	Businesses	1,100
	Hotels	15,000
	Handcarts	3,000

	Vehicles	5,000

Table 2: Official record of destruction in Gujarat riots, 2002

3.2.3 Aftermath

A total of 27,780 people were arrested either with charges of criminal behaviour or as a preventive measure. 3269 Muslims and 7896 Hindus were taken in for criminal behaviour; 2,811 Muslims and 13,804 Hindus were arrested as a preventive measure. However, around 90% of them were granted bail almost immediately without further proceedings (Ali Engineer, A. 2003). Till 2016, more than 100 people were convicted over the riots out of whom 14 were acquitted and 17 others were sentenced to life (Mint, 2016).

Police and government officials were accused of allegedly directing the rioters as well as giving them lists of Muslim-owned properties. The then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi was accused of initiating and condoning the violence (Jackson et al., 2011). The Special Investigation Team (SIT) appointed by the Supreme Court rejected allegations that the state government had not done enough to prevent the riots. Modi was also cleared of complicity in the violence by SIT in 2012 (How SIT Report on Gujarat Riots Exonerates Modi: The Highlights, 2012). It was reported that the Muslim community reacted to these judgements with anger and disbelief (Krishnan & Shams, n.d.).

3.2.4 Relief Efforts

Around 100,000 people moved to the relief camps by 27 March 2002 (Brass, 2005) which were run by NGOs and community groups with the government commitment to provide amenities and supplementary services (Chandorkar, 2002). However, it was alleged that the relief supplies were prevented from reaching the camps due to the fears that they might carry arms (Sen, 2002). Additionally, according to camp organizers, the government denied support to more than 100 camps (Kakodar, 2002). Compensation of 200,000 rupees was offered by the State Government to the families of those who died in the Godhra train fire and 100,000 rupees to the families of those who died in the subsequent riots (Dugger, 2002). Later, it was on 23 May 2008 when the Central Government announced a relief package of 3.2 billion rupees for the victims of the riots The then Gujarat Government was

highly accused on the grounds of alleged biasedness towards Hindus and discrimination towards Muslims while allocating the compensation funds. (Relief for Gujarat Riot Victims, 2008).

4.0 PESTLE Analysis

Religious riots have had complex socio-economic and political underpinnings to them. But the effects of riots have had wider implications. India had an average of about 16 religious riots reported per year between the period of 1950-80 and 47 religious riots reported per year between the period of 1980-2001 (Iyer & Shrivastava, 2018). This part analyses the latter implications of the religious riots in India with a PESTLE analysis

4.1 Economic

"The protests cement the view that India remains too fractured and unable to rise above domestic cleavages. People do worry about social instability and its significant costs."

-Alyssa Ayres

As the economy stutters, rising religious tensions may make it easier for investors to turn their backs on India (Chaudhary et al., 2020). Peacefulness has been linked to the strong performance of many macroeconomic variables. Highly peaceful countries are characterized by lower and more stable interest rates and inflation. In highly peaceful countries, foreign direct investment is also more than twice as high as less peaceful nations (Mathew, 2018). According to media reports, rising social tensions in India have led to a decline in its attractiveness to global investors. Asset managers pointed out that the rising sectarian violence and instability are the main drivers of limiting foreign investment in India (Arora, 2020).

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), violence (of all kinds) cost the Indian economy USD 1,190.51 billion (in constant Purchasing Power Parity terms) in 2017 alone, which is about 9% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), USD 595.4 (more than RS 40,000) per person and the real impact of violence of could be higher than USD 1.19 trillion. (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019).
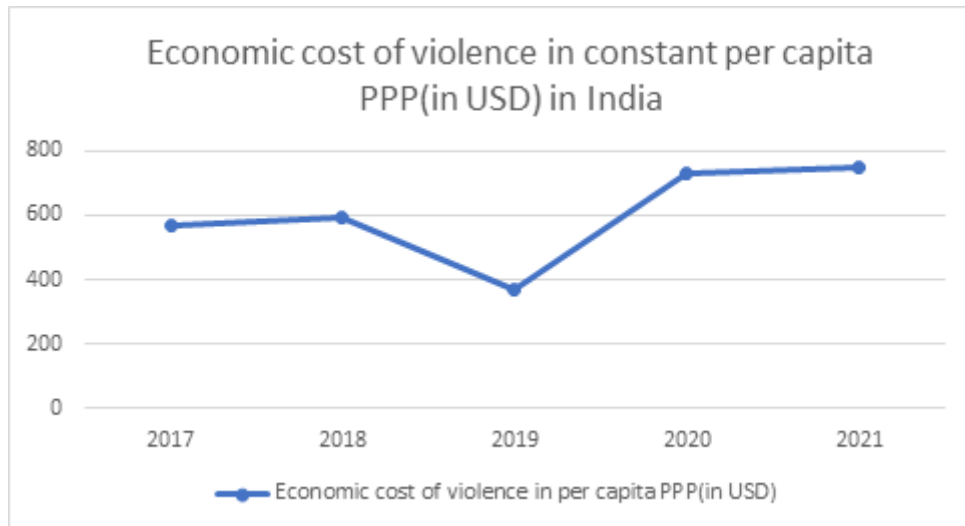
Fig.1:Economic cost of violence (Institute for Economic and Peace, n.d.)

According to Fig.1, we can see that even though the economic cost of violence in USD per capita PPP fluctuated significantly it tended to increase over the period of 2017-20 reaching USD 728.1 and predicted to reach USD 750.9 by 2021.
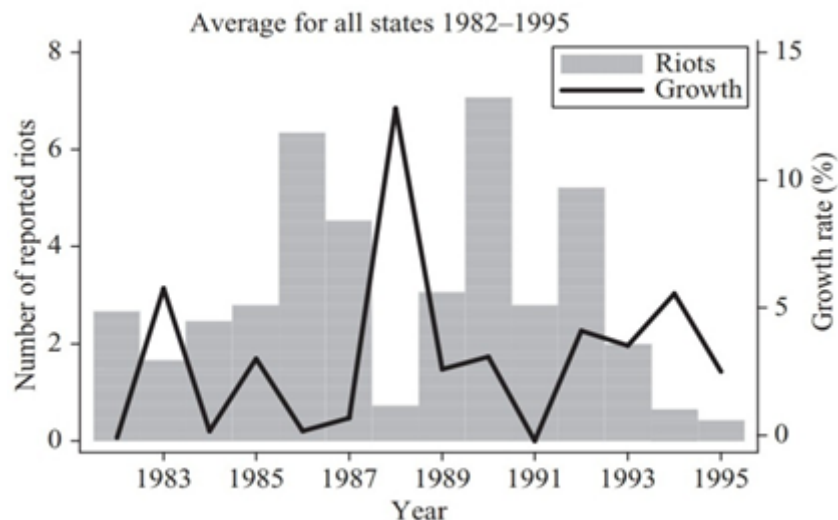

Fig. 2 Number of riots and growth rate (Bohlken & Sergenti, 2010)

From Fig.2 it could be analysed that in India the economic growth has a statistically negative relationship with the occurrence of religious violence. The slower the economy grows, the better it is for some incumbent politicians to foment national sentiments to distract voters from the declining economic conditions and ethnic problems that may be blamed. It was also

found by (Bohlken & Sergenti, 2010) that no evidence for a reduction in the occurrence of riots was found due to the increase in socio-economic factors like an increase in per capita GDP.

4.2 Political

Since the freedom movement, religious identity in India has played a significant role in the country's political domain. Religious violence not only has a political impact but is also a product of the country's politics, as claimed by many.

Political parties in India, especially the ones whose foundation is laid on religious identity, are often accused of inciting communal riots. For instance, BJP, the Hindu-Nationalist party has been heavily accused of inciting several communal riots including its involvement in the Babri-Masjid demolition, Gujarat riots of 2002, the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots and many others. Similarly, although the Congress party always had secular rhetoric, in many instances, it was also accused of invoking religious sentiments to benefit their own political agenda; a tendency that grew intensely under the reign of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (Vaishnav, 2019). Further, Congress was held responsible by a significant section of the population for their alleged involvement in the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, 'in-built' communal bias in the 1989 Bhagalpur riots among others.

Arguably, a political party would always want to incite religious riots if they think that the riots will benefit them in electoral vote share (Iyer, Srivastava, 2017). Steven Wikinson (2005) in his article on Communal Riots in India argued that, in India, riots are the product of incentives at the local and state level. At the local level, the intensity of electoral competition is the most important cause of riots. He further claimed that "*Where political competition is most intense, parties that represent elites within ethnic groups use anti-minority protests, demonstrations and physical attacks that precipitate riots in order to encourage members of their wider ethnic category to identify with their party and the 'majority' identity to rather than a party that is identified with economic redistribution or some ideological agenda*". It was also added that minorities are protected by the state governments only when it is in their electoral interests to do so.

A Yale (2014) study revealed that ethno-religious parties like BJP tend to gain more electoral vote share than the multi-religious ones like Congress. According to a study by (Iyer, Srivastava, 2017), it was found that an average increase in BJP's vote share is by 5 percentage points or more if a riot takes place in the year preceding an election. It is noteworthy here that, BJP achieved an absolute majority in the state legislative assembly of Gujarat in the December 2002 elections, which was around 10 months after the horrific communal riots took place in the state.

"The 2002 Gujarat assembly election remains a decisive milestone in the pathway of communalising electoral campaigns in India".-The Wire

A number of studies focusing on the relationship between riots and electoral politics had been done. In response to religious tensions, the voters change their voting behaviour which results in substantial electoral gains for a party based on religious identity (Iyer, Srivastava, 2017). Wilkinson (2004) shows that riots are less likely in states with higher effective numbers of political parties and where the ruling party depends on minority voters. He further found out that higher electoral competition measured as the closeness of state elections in towns leads to a higher likelihood of riots. According to the study by Pathania and Tandon (2011), there is a positive correlation between the share of close elections won by the BJP and the severity of subsequent riots, as measured by the number of people killed or injured or as the duration of the riot.

It was shown by Blakeslee (2013) that the BJP's vote share in the 1991 elections increased due to the campaign which involved the party leaders touring Northern India as part of the Babri Masjid agitation. Reportedly, the Babri demolition supported by the BJP, gained 20% of the votes, thus establishing itself as the main opposition to the ruling party (Iyer, Srivastava, 2017). According to Nellis et al. (2015), there is a reduction in Hindu-Muslim riots due to the victory of the Indian National Congress in close elections for the state assembly between 1962 and 2000, apparently because the party claims secular rhetoric. The Yale (2014) study pointed out that Hindu-Muslim violence reduces subsequent Congress vote shares. However, Iyer and Srivastava (2017) claim that correlation does exist between riots and electoral vote shares but that cannot be interpreted as causation.

4.3 Social

Religious riots, often a product of deep-seated hatred and mistrust, damage the process of social integration by further aggravating mutual suspicion and distrust. Communal carnages even create an environment of mistrust between communities who have stayed together for years. The victims are usually pushed towards the edges to make their ends meet. They face several socio-economic problems; thousands are left homeless, widowed, orphaned and injured. Most of them end up in relief camps having poor living conditions. The 'survivors' not only have to live with the memories of their horrific past but are also expected to struggle in their new status. As a result, riot survivors are most likely to develop a negative attitude towards society on the basis of their experience. (Riot Survivors: Victims Who Retain the Memory, 2013)

For instance, after 36 years of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, 95% of the survivors didn't have enough money to live on. Children of most victims had to drop out of their education and ended up as low-paid and daily-wage earners. In order to feed their families, unqualified women were compelled to do odd jobs, and the majority of the victims survived with the issue of unemployment and poverty. These families might take many more generations to return back to the position that they enjoyed before the riots took place. (36 Years On, Economic Status of Survivors of Anti-Sikh Riots Remains Deplorable, Says Minorities Commission Report, 2020).   These circumstances place the riot-affected families behind others.

Consequently, religious riots create inequality in the society and mark a significant division between the people, causing a serious threat to social integration, peace and harmony. There have been instances of serious human rights violations during the communal riots in India. Recently, this came to light during the protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAA), which critics say is anti-Muslim. The highest number of alleged harassment cases of human rights defenders has been recorded during the anti-CAA (2019-20) protest (Agha, 2020). These alleged violations include Delhi police indulging in violence with the rioters; excessive force on protestors; torturing in custody, dismantling protest sites used by peaceful protesters (Outlook Web Bureau, 2020).

Severe human rights violations such as violence against women and girls was a key feature in the Gujarat (2002) riots. Throughout the duration of the riots, women suffered in specific ways determined by their gender. Scores of Muslim women and girls were sexually assaulted; many saw their family members killed and their homes and businesses being destroyed ("India Justice, the Victim - Gujarat State Fails to Protect Women from Violence," 2005). This also highlights the incidents of a heinous crime that takes place during and after the riots including vandalization, sexual assault, injuries, mass killing among others.

4.4 Technological

Even though technology has not been a key factor in riots in the past, with the rise of social media, there has been an increasingly influential role played by technology mainly through the spread of fake news. Even though the first incident of fake news through media can be traced back to 1835 in the US, with the emergence of social media, there has been an increasing trend of highly politically motivated and communally sensitive fake content being spread (Panigrahi & Singh, 2017).

The number of social media users in India grew from 142.23 million users in 2015 to 400.3 million users in 2021 and India has the largest number of WhatsApp users in the world with more than 200 million users (Statista, 2020). According to a study of online news consumers in 2015, 41% of respondents identified social media as the source of their online news and 56% shared the news with others on social media.

It was observed by (Altnews, n.d.), one of India's leading portals for exposing fake news, started by Prateek Sinha, that religious fundamentalists often spread fake news. It was also observed by them that there is news spreading business enterprises. The Muzzaffarnagar riot of 2013, Akhlaq Lynching of 2015, Chhapra (Bihar) riot of 2016 and Basirhat riot of 2017 are a few riots that were triggered by such spread of fake news via social media (Panigrahi & Singh, 2017). Social media has changed the traditional models of communal violence. With the fast spread of rumours and information, riots in Delhi can now help a party win an election in Assam and West Bengal. Now, community polarization at the national level is driven by stringing together different local community events (often fake) to create a narrative, thereby diminishing the role of local factors in triggering violence. (Sircar, 2020)

There have also been reports of extensive use of technology in the law and order of riots in recent years. Latest technologies such as facial recognition, drone mapping, crime scene reconstruction, retrieval of deleted data from electronic devices, closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage, Global Positioning System (GPS), Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) fingerprints and others have been used for investigation during Delhi riots (The New Indian Express, 2021). It can be analysed that in India there has been extensive use and misuse of technology for causing the riots to spread and in the investigation of riots.

4.5 Ethical

Riots and religions have always played an important factor in structuring the socio-political-economic nature of India. After the happening of any communal riot and its widespread destruction, one may expect a favourable change in the people's ethical behaviour, thus reducing future possibilities of riots. According to the data collected by Anand Srivastava and Sriya Iyer (2018), out of the 7119 Hindu Muslim riots reported from 339 districts of 16 states between 1980-2000, most than 70% of riot-affected districts had only one riot-affected that year. Out of a total of 7,119 observations, 499 districts have had at least one disturbance, so the unconditional probability of at least one disturbance in a district within a year is 7%.

Total observations: 7119

Observations with at least one riot: 499

Number of Riots	Observation	Duration of riot	Observation
1	357	1 day	271
2-5	130	2-5 days	159
>5	12	>5 days	69

Table 3: The reported number and duration of riots in 339 Indian districts between 1980-2000 (Iyer & Shrivastava, 2018)

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, the number of reported rioting cases have been decreasing, but the intensity of the riots have been increasing. According to NCRB 2017, India witnessed 58,880 rioting cases while the number of riot victims stood at 90,394 ie. almost 161 riots and 248 victims per day ("Crime in India Report", 2017).
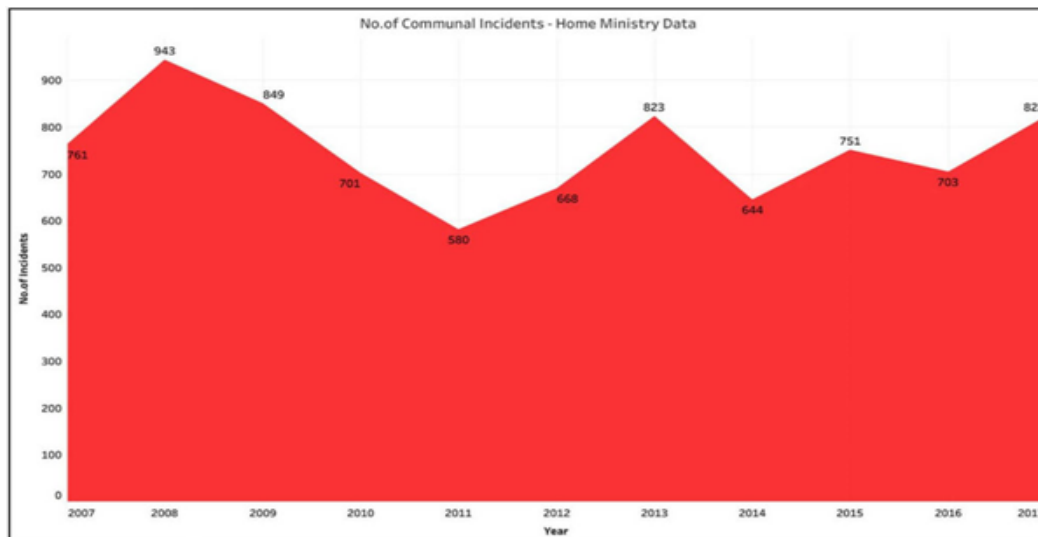

Fig 3. Number of communal incidents (Kancharla, 2020)

As per Fig 3, the number of communal incidents has been fluctuating over the past few years. But there have been significant fluctuations in the state-wise religious conflict incidents. States like Haryana, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Kerala and J&K showed a significant decline in religious riots, states like Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana marked a sharp rise in religious/communal riots (Kancharla, 2019). The reports of riots with offences promoting enmity among groups have increased from 458 in 2016 to 958 in 2017 to 1114 in 2018 (Tiwary, 2020). Even though criticisms existed with the credibility of the data produced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) due to the variation with the data reported by NCRB and the states, the MHA stopped publishing the religious violence data in 2018. (Kancharla, 2020)

4.6 Legal

Communal riots impose major challenges before the country's legal system as it debilitates the inside security of the country. To ensure security and protection of the citizens,

there are various legal provisions relating to communal violence, e.g., The Indian Penal Code, 1860; The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973; The Police Act, 1861, The National Security Act, 1980, The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984 and the like. Provisions to prevent and control communal violence as well as protection of minority rights, human rights and human dignity have been incorporated in the constitution since independence. (Communal Violence: Legislative Enactments, n.d.)

However, more often than not, the victims of communal violence fail to get justice even years later. Some claim the reason for this as bureaucratic hurdles while others cite the cause of political control. For instance, according to reports, even after 10 years of the 2002 Gujarat violence, true justice was not served for which the victim's struggles in social, legal and financial aspects continued. The guilty were punished only in a few instances and even in those cases where the rioters had been convicted, no state protection was offered for which the witnesses had to live under fear of retaliation.

The 1989 Bhagalpur riots also share a similar story where prosecutions for the massacres have been far and between. Soon after the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, anti-Sikh riots happened where around 3000 Sikhs were killed with alleged support from police as well as government machinery. Ten inquiry commissions and committees were formed, however, the Congress leaders who were evidently involved in rioting have not faced any consequence despite irrefutable evidence documenting their direct roles. It is often found that, in the aftermath of communal riots, the Government of India forms inquiry commissions to investigate the crimes and submit the reports. But their recommendations have been largely ignored, whether it is the Srikrishna Committee Report on the Bombay riots of 1991-92 or the inquiry into the 1979 Jamshedpur riots in Jharkhand. (Farasat, 2012) . Fast forward to recent times, the investigation has remained pending in 407 of the 755 cases of the 2020 northeast Delhi riots (Bharadwaj, 2021). Justice would be served only when those who were responsible for religious massacres are held accountable. Sadly, that hasn't been much of a case in India.

4.7 Environmental

Religious massacres not only account for mass human suffering but also cause environmental destruction. Commonly, burning of houses, hotels, and other property, consequently leading to human displacement causes significant damage to the environment. Burning of property has been widely common in most of the major riots of the country. This results in harmful emissions into the atmosphere and pollutes the air. Human displacement is a common consequence of many conflicts. Camps set up for the displaced people can have large environmental impacts, especially where they are unplanned or lack essential services, like water, sanitation and waste management. The location of these camps also plays an important role as the camp residents may be compelled to use local resources such as firewood, thus potentially placing local resources under pressure. Displaced people may even have to move internally to the urban areas, thus resulting in expansion of population and putting local environmental services under strain. (Weir, 2020)

5.0 Conclusion

Communal violence has complex socio-economic and political underpinnings. Communalism has spread in our social fabric and collective response is needed to ensure that it does not lead to discrimination and violence based on religious beliefs. This paper demonstrates how religious riots have significant impacts on society with much larger costs associated with it. It is found that religious violence has a statistically negative relationship with economic growth. Communal violence tends to develop a negative attitude towards the society which gets reflected in the socio-political nature of the affected area and involvement of politics in communal violence further aggravates the consequences.

The increasing rise in social media users in the country has been extremely significant in the cause, effect and aftermath of the riot. The destruction and reconstruction processes caused by the riots along with significant human replacement hampers the environment. Even though the number of riots reported is decreasing, the intensity of the riots has an increasing trend. It has been observed that the police and different political parties have played a suspicious role in the entire timeline of the riots. Successive governments of different political parties have failed to comprehensively address the issue of judicial accountability,

compensation and victim rehabilitation. The results of this paper imply that communal violence is not always just the result of communal tension, but it has complex and evolving underpinnings and many less intended costs associated.

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