Process of Violence
PROCESSES OF VIOLENCE

It is widely recognized that fundamentalism and communalism have the most adverse impact on women, women are the worst sufferers in riot situations. The most savage atrocities, including sexual attacks, take place on women along with the killing and burning of men.

Since the 1980's the character of communal violence has changed. Communal violence is organised violence against a particular community, to show its place in social and political structure. All episodes of violence since 1984 communal violence is no longer a spontaneous clash or counter attack. It is organised violence or genocide of one community (dominant) by another community (minority).

We analyse here two important incidents of communal violence: Anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in November 1984 and the Surat riots in 1992 that took place after demolition of Babri Masjid. The similarity between the two riots is that they were attacks of the majority community on the two prominent minorities: the Sikhs and Muslims. At the time of the November 1984 riots the Sikhs were the target of attack throughout the country and, perhaps, for the first time in history of modern India, the Sikh community was singled out to be the target of Hindu communal frenzy. As regards the Surat violence, there is a long history of Hindu-Muslim communal violence in India. But the Surat riots witnessed frenzied attacks on Muslim women for the first time. Typically, a riot is a spontaneous situation where two communities clash with one another and there are almost equal number of casualties on both sides. However, both the Delhi and Surat riots are cases of organised violence of the majority community against the minority community.
Hindus and Sikhs do not have a history or tradition of mutual antagonism and conflict. The two communities share a common past and a common culture, but most Sikh families have Hindu relatives because it used to be a common practice for some Hindu parents in certain areas of Punjab to dedicate one son to the guru as a Sikh. Marriages between Sikhs and Hindus were considered a normal practice. Many Hindus routinely visit gurudwaras and read the Granth Sahib with much devotion. That all Punjabis use the word mona to indicate either a Hindu or a clean shaven Sikh shows that no rigid distinctions have been set up by the people of the two communities between themselves. But a sharp divide was created among the two communities by the rise of Bhindranwale. Hindus in North India were annoyed with the Sikh community for the indiscriminate murder of Hindus in Punjab in pursuance of the demand for Khalistan.

There is no denying that the manner in which the demand for Khalistan was pursued by Bhindranwale created a good deal of resentment among Hindus both in the Punjab and outside. However, that one small gang of Sikh terrorists, killed some Hindus is no reason for thousands of Sikhs all over India who had nothing to do with the Punjab killings to be massacred. The belief, that Bhindranwale and his men killed Hindus is motivated by the desire to justify the recent riots. The fact is, and ought to be well-known, that Bhindranwale's men also killed Sikhs who opposed them with greater fervour than Hindus. In fact, Bhindranwale began, as do most terrorist groups, by hitting out at those members of his own community who opposed him. This was done with the intention of terrorising the community into silent submission.

Further, the sudden eruption of violence against the Sikhs seems quite out of proportion to, and inexplicable, by the extent of anger amongst Hindus. It is noteworthy that throughout the period when Sikh Nirankaris and
Hindus were being killed in Punjab, there had been no retaliation whatsoever against the Sikhs in Delhi or in other states. Even when some sections of the Akalis organised fairly aggressive processions in Delhi, no political group or set of Hindu militants reacted with violence or even as much as tried to obstruct the processions and rallies. Clashes occurred only with the police and the administrative machinery. There were no attacks on gurudwaras or even on the homes of prominent Sikh or Akali leaders. It is even more noteworthy that in Punjab, apart from select killings by small organised gangs of terrorists, there were no communal riots throughout the Bhindranwale period.

Both Hindus and Sikhs recognise that the assault on the Golden Temple did a great deal to consolidation the wedge between them, since then both the communities felt that a gap was created between them. They began looking at one other as Hindus and Sikhs whereas earlier they used to look at each other as Punjabi. The Sikhs felt deeply wounded due to the assault on the Golden Temple as the Golden Temple is "very, very, special" for every Sikh. The assault on it became a personal hurt. This reaction on the part of the Sikh community was considered highly unreasonable by the Hindu community who felt that Operation Bluestar was essential if anything had to be "done to the Punjab". Consequently, the divide between the two communities became so great that non-Sikhs even tend to forget the position that their Sikh friends had taken before Bluestar. Even though they had been expressing themselves clearly against Khalistan, all that was forgotten, with the growing bitterness and the new stereotype of the Sikhs as associated with extremism and terrorism became firmly fixed (Gupta, 1991 : 574).

Beginning with Operation Bluestar and culminating with the carnage, the Sikhs began to feel like a marked community. Never before had these ten million citizens felt like a minority. They had always been viewed as a dominant community found in all major walks of life. The carnage dealt a shattering blow to the already battered emotions of the Sikhs following Bluestar and the self perception of the Sikhs was severely affected. Many Sikhs felt a deep sense of hurt and humiliation at the November carnage.
The suddenness of the transformation from a very visible community with a 'martial' image to one that was constantly being reminded of its 'two percent status' ensured the consolidation of the feeling of being a minority community and aggravated their sense of hurt and humiliation. The "martial" image of the Sikhs had been assiduously cultivated by the British for their own reasons and the image remained useful to the ruling elite in the years after independence. Thus many Indians had first become aware of the Sikhs as a community that was "valiant", and of whom the nation was proud. But in sharp contrast to the position that the Sikhs had occupied earlier was the perception of events between 1982 and 1984 during which a large number of Sikhs were beginning to feel 'their minority status, and this feeling became overwhelming after the November carnage.

The Delhi carnage followed Indira Gandhi's assassination on 31 October 1984. Her killer happened to be a Sikh, and violence was aimed against the community of her killers, the Sikhs in India were taken by surprise by the ferocious campaign looting, arson, killing, burning, rape and molestation that was perpetrated upon them from the time of the assassination to the lighting of the funeral pyre at 4 p.m. on 3rd November.

This was the first historic instance of Hindu-Sikh confrontation, but the form of violence was distinctive. The attacks were entirely one-sided and unprovoked, and aimed primarily at the massacre of Sikh males falling between the age-group 20-50 years. The peculiar uniformity in the pattern of violence in widely far-flung parts of Delhi and elsewhere, as well as the efficiency of the method employed by the mobs for hunting out and killing the victims with the help of iron rods used for construction purposes, cracking the skull, pouring kerosene on the bodies and then setting them aflame, sometimes with the help of some incendiary powder, creates a strong suspicious that the violence unleashed against the Sikhs was organised and
politically instigated (PUDR and PUCL, 1984). Thus, the series of attacks on Sikh homes, gurdwaras and commercial establishments seem to have been the work of hired hoodlums who collected large mobs and went out on a looting and killing spree. Very broadly, the attacks can be classified into three categories.

(a) Looting and killing in middle and upper middle class localities, such as Lajpat Nagar, Jangpura, Defence Colony, Friends Colony, Maharani Bagh, Patel Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave and Punjabi Bagh. Here, houses, gurdwaras and shops were looted and burnt, and a large number of vehicles, including buses, trucks, cars and scooters were set ablaze. Some people were injured and others killed. But, on the whole, relatively fewer lives were lost.

(b) The systematic slaughter and rape that accompanied looting, arson and burning in the resettlement colonies, slums and villages around Delhi. Most of the deaths occurred in areas like Trilokpuri, Kalyanpuri, Mangolpuri, Sultanpuri, Nand Nagri, Palam Village, Shakurpur, Gamri. Rows of houses and huts were burnt down and hundreds of men and young boys were beaten, stabbed and burnt to death while many women were abducted and raped. A large number of persons are still reported missing by their families. Houses and gurdwaras were looted and burnt down.

(c) Sikh men and boys were attacked in the streets, trains, buses, markets and workplaces, and many of them were brutally murdered, some of them burnt alive or thrown out of trains. Others escaped with, serious injuries. This kind of attacks seem to have been done executed at random; anyone who looked visibly a Sikh was made a target.
Attempts were made in the aftermath of the riots to justify the violence by asserting that the Sikhs invited attacks on themselves by celebrating Indira Gandhi's death. They were alleged, to have distributed sweets at home and champagne abroad as soon as they got the news of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination.

However, there is little direct evidence that Sikhs in general "rejoiced" at Mrs. Gandhi's death and all allegations to this effect were concocted to fuel the fire of communal passions. For instance, the rumour that the Sikh students of Khalsa college, Delhi university, danced the bhangra is a fairly typical example of how facts were distorted beyond recognition in an attempt to provide some kind of justification for the terror and killings. These students had been practising bhangra every day on their college lawn for over a month prior to Mrs. Gandhi's death. They were preparing the dance as an item for the forthcoming winter festivals that are held in every college. On October 31, they were practising as usual and stopped as soon as they got the news (Kishwar, 1984).

The same is true of the undesired rumour that Sikh families distributed sweets and dry fruits to celebrate Mrs. Gandhi's death. Mrs. Gandhi's assassination occurred close to Gurpurab. Traditionally, about 10 days before Guru Nanak's birthday, which fell on November 8 that year, prabhat pheris are organised in each area and it is customary for families to entertain the pheri participants with sweets and other refreshments. What might have lent a degree of credibility to the rumours was this. Even so, as Dharma Kumar has indeed rightly noted: 'If all the sweets in India had been distributed, that would not have justified the burning alive of one single Sikh'.

As far as the theory of people's frenzied outrage at Indira Gandhi's death is concerned, one would have been obliged to take it seriously had the riots remained sporadic, unorganised and spontaneous. From the information
so far available in Delhi, one is left in no doubt that the whole affair was masterminded and well organised, and that the killers and looters seemed to be pretty confident that no harm would come to them. They seemed to be in no hurry. This gives credence to investigative reports in newspapers and victims' accounts that high officials of the Congress (I) masterminded the whole operation. They rounded up anti-social elements from their constituencies. These elements routinely receive Congress (I) patronage. On this occasion, they were incited to kill, rape, loot and burn, and were assured that no one would interfere with them.

The populous resettlement colonies and the UP and Haryana villages around Delhi had been meticulously cultivated as a vote bank and political base by the Congress (I) throughout the last decade. It is from these areas that truckloads of men are routinely mobilised for Congress (I) rallies and processions. These professional percussionists have become habituated to hiring out their services to the ruling party. The gangleaders are on the regular payroll of the party. That is how Congress (I) leaders could, in a matter of hours, mobilise thousands of hoodlums for the orgy of violence which they unleashed. Among the most active participants in the gangs were young boys, many in their early teens. Jat, Gujjar, Scheduled Caste and poor Muslim men constituted the bulk of the attacking mobs. This identical pattern has been reported from areas of Delhi that were many kilometres apart.

Many victims have alleged that Congress (I) men used voters' lists and ration shop records to supply the attackers with addresses of Sikh families in each locality. So pre-planned was the whole operation that the attackers not only had prior knowledge of which houses and shops belonged to the Sikhs but also seem to have known which Sikh houseowners had Hindu tenants and which Hindu houseowners had Sikh tenants. Such houses were handled differently from those inhabited exclusively by Sikhs. Instead of the whole house being burnt, only the Sikhs were killed and their possessions looted so that the Hindus in the house could be left untouched (PUCL-PUDR 1984).
Throughout the four days that violence was raging at its peak, the entire State and government machinery, the Delhi administration and Delhi police took no effective action to check it. In fact, there is sufficient evidence that policemen and police officers.

(a) stood by and watched violence, arson, rape, looting and murder without making any attempt to intervene to protect citizens belonging to the Sikh minority. They made no attempt to dissuade the attackers, to call for reinforcements or other support, or even to inform the fire brigade;

(b) actively instigated and in many cases participated in violence;

(c) refused aid and shelter to the victims and potential victims;

(d) neglected to answer appeals for help;

(e) refrained from apprehending known offenders who were continuing to commit criminal and unconstitutional offences;

(f) refused to record or to investigate charges made by reliable witnesses.

Many persons who occupy high positions in the State machinery, governmental and legislative bodies, and ruling party structures, have been clearly identified by many responsible citizens as some of the primary instigators of riots. This evidence has been in the hands of the ruling authorities in the State and Central Government and ruling party for a considerable period of time.
Neither the government nor the ruling party thought it fit to institute an appropriate public enquiry to indict those high level members of the Congress Party and the police who were responsible for the riots. The government has remained conspicuously silent as to the genesis of the riots. Apart from deploring the fact that riots occurred, no statement had been made by the government acknowledging its own responsibility for act of commission or omission which abetted riots. In fact, statements issued by government representatives such as the Prime Minister and the Home Minister referring to the origin of the riots ascribed them to "people's anger" and characterised them as "inevitable". Such statements, by blaming an abstraction, "the people", deny the responsibility of the government and of highly placed individuals therein, as also the responsibility of the ruling party. Further, such statements are an implicit justification of the riots and seek to explain them away. As such these statements are a part of the cover up operation subsequently undertaken by the guilty parties.

The shaping of a minority consciousness among the Sikhs was dramatically and painfully affected by the sheer horror, brutality, and lawlessness of the first three days of November 1984. The feelings of insecurity and persecution experienced by the community emanated largely from the perception of the Sikhs about the two recent events which had affected them collectively. The assault on the Golden Temple by the Indian army was seen as an invasion of their most sacred precincts and the November carnage had meant an invasion into their very home. A Delhi based Sikh, reputed to be a sympathiser of the RSS, said that the Sikhs were most anguished because they could not understand how they had suddenly became victims (Kishwar ; 1984).

What the Sikhs found unbearable was that it was not on the streets that they had been attacked but right inside their homes. The unexpectedness of the action of the mobs striking right inside the homes meant that they had been virtually trapped before they were assaulted and killed. Even those
who got away with relatively little damage shared with others the feeling of being hunted, holed up inside their homes, and having to seek refuge in the homes of neighbours.

The sense of insecurity has been compounded especially because the Sikhs had never expected that the state would withdraw its protection to them. Many of our interviewees point out that the Sikhs of Trilokpuri and Sultanpuri had been the traditional vote banks of the Congress I and yet they were abandoned by all the agencies of the state: the ruling party, the police, and the administration. This not only added to their insecurity but also made them angry. The collapse of the administration which many of our interviewees talk about is consider by most Sikhs to have been a “contrived collapse” and the state then, through the media, tried to make the riots look as if they were “natural and inevitable”, describing it as an expression of the spontaneous anger of the people. As the months went by their anger was intensified when it became apparent that no action was being taken against those who had been identified by the victims and despite a widespread demand for an enquiry it was initially rejected on what appeared to them to be utterly spurious grounds. When Parliament met the government did not considered it fit to even mention the violence “let alone express any regret, or condemn those who had perpetrated it”, as one of our interviewees put it. “it was hard to be rational in the face of such callousness”, he added (Haksar and Chakravarty).

POST - AYODHYA SURAT VIOLENCE

The City of Surat is unlikely to forget the nightmarish day of December 7, 1992. What began as a spontaneous expression of Muslim anger against the demolition of the Babri Masjid the previous day swiftly degenerated into a free-for-all as Hindu lumpen and communal elements stepped in to let loose an orgy of bloodletting and brutality.
Following the demolition of Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992, Surat witnessed some of the most gruesome manifestations of communal violence. Recurring a month later, in January 1993, this violence was marked by a ferocity and traits that even areas traditionally prone to communal disturbance could scarcely match. This happened in a city that had, for decades, taken pride in the peaceful coexistence of its religious communities. More and more cities and towns in Gujarat had, since the country’s partition and independence, fallen prey to communal violence which, at least since 1980, seemed to find its preferred habitat in Ahmedabad and Baroda, the state’s prime cities. All this while Surat, the chief city of south Gujarat, remained an oasis of communal peace (Chandra, 1996: 89).

The oasis was then abruptly transformed into a microcosm of communal India. For the first time in its history since 1927-28, the city experienced communal rioting arson, loot, physical assault and killing, rape, destruction or desecration of places of religious worship. Nothing from the repertoire of communal violence was missing in this orgy. The victims of rape were exclusively Muslims; and the community also suffered preponderantly.

The death toll was estimated by government agencies to be in the vicinity of two hundred and they do tend to underestimate. More than nineteen thousand women, children and men, almost all of them Muslims, sought shelter in forty-three relief camps. Such has been the trauma of the December terror for them that many of them have not to date returned to their homes in localities where unprecedented brutality was let loose upon them. Neither government officials nor voluntary organisations active during relief operations have an idea of the number of such people and of the places where they went after the relief camps were wound up (Lobo, 1994).

The genesis of the communal violence in Surat can be traced to December 6. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had organised a victory procession to demonstrate support for kar seva in Ayodhya. An estimated
1,000 processionists, among whom were the leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS) and other organisations, shouted provocative slogans such as, "Mandir wahin banayenge", "Ek dhakka aur do Babri Masjid tor do" and "Desh mein rehana hai to vande mattaram kehna hoga" (Shah. K., 1994 : 107).

The city was somewhat tense as news filtered in about the demolition of the Babri Masjid. A small group of Muslim youth gave vent to their anger on the night of December 6 by damaging the sign boards of some shops in the Old City. They also set fire to old tyres in the middle of the road. The Baratiya Minority Suraksha Sangh (BMSS), a small organisation with a few supporters from Dalit and Muslim communities, subsequently gave a call for Surat Bandh on December 7. A small crowd tried to stop the traffic and compel some shop and factory owners to down their shutters. At noon they threw stones on one factory, damaged the machinery and set the material ablaze. A clash between two groups began on the streets.

As if on cue, the organised section of the majority community entered the fray. A relatively small crowd, consisting of anti-social elements and one or two people skilled at unlocking doors and shutters, began breaking shops owned by Muslims. Goods were brought out and set on fire. Soon other people joined in to help in the destruction, shouting slogans of "Jai Shri Ram". By the noon of December 8, riots spread to various parts of the city. Things got worse by the evening. By midnight, over 61 people had lost their lives. The riots raged on fiercely for the next two days and the police was conspicuous by its absence. However, the newspapers reported that the army (there is uncertainty about the exact strength of the force) had carried out flag marches on December 9 (Shah, 1993).

From all indications, the large scale looting, arson and killings were preplanned and systematic. How else could the mob which went on the rampage have been fully armed with lathis, swords, knives, iron rods, guftis,
acid bulbs, bottles and stones? Several incidents of private firing were also reported. Furthermore, although petrol pumps were closed, the crowd had enough petrol and kerosene to set ablaze houses, shops and human being.

The Hindu mobs had carefully zeroed in on their targets. Though a few shops owned by Hindus were also destroyed in mob attacks, their number was insignificant in comparison to those of Muslims. The killings and destruction of property of the Muslims were confined not only to the localities where they were in a minority, but also in areas where they were present in a sizeable number and sometimes even in localities where they were in a majority. Sometimes, even in thickly populated Muslim localities, they were outnumbered by huge crowds from "outside" areas, equipped with weapons and assisted by "local" residents. In several areas where Muslims are in a minority, the local Hindu residents had formed Ekta Samitis with their Muslim neighbours and promised to protect them against attacks by "outsiders". Eventually, however, many of them succumbed to the pressure of the outsiders and turned against their neighbours (Shah, K. 1994: 19).

Careful planning apparently went into the attacks. According to many of the victims from Vijaynagar in the north half of the city, Pandesara in the south and Hidayatnagar in the west, BJP workers, under the pretext of the forthcoming corporation elections had collected information about their families and house numbers and promised to renew their ration cards 15 days before the incidents occurred. They believe that this information was used to identify them. It is difficult to verify this, but the large-scale plunder and destruction would seem to confirm that "local" residents actively helped communal elements by pointing out their Muslim neighbours. It is alleged that informants were tipped Rs. 100 for the identification of each Muslim house or shop. Even during the rampage utmost care was taken that not an inch of property belonging to a Hindu was damaged so much so that even a wooden partition dividing a Hindu home from a Muslim would be left untouched whereas the adjoining Muslim home would be totally charred.
The madness knew no bounds. In Vijaynagar and Pandesara, roads were blocked by creating 10 to 12-feet high walls of bamboo and other material so that the victims could not run away. Telephone, water and electricity lines were disconnected. Special floodlights were installed to watch the movement of victims. Not only were holy books, places of worship and people set on fire, but raped women were made to walk under floodlights. Local imams and maulvis in Vijaynagar were humiliated and forced to utter "Shri Ram" after which they were cut down in two or three parts. One imam was thrown alive into the fire. The frenzied crowd did not spare anyone, whether young or old, man or woman. Children were struck on the head and cut into two pieces. The old were also beaten and killed. People had their heads and hands chopped off and thrown down from the upper floors of buildings. In order to destroy the evidence of the large scale killings, the dead bodies were either burnt fully or thrown into the gutters. In one instance, the crowd took many dead bodies to a nearby pit where construction work for a gutter was in progress. They filled the pit with the dead bodies, covered them with the looted household goods and set them ablaze (Shah K., 1993: 55).

As elsewhere, rumours were systematically and skillfully used to provoke and mobilise people on the streets to attack members of the minority community. The well thought out and well planned rumours were spread through telephones and cable Television. The types of rumours were also selected carefully to get the desired result. For example, the rumour that a popular police inspector of the Patidar community of Saurashtra had been seriously injured in an attack and women of that community had been molested and raped, provoked people sufficiently to come out in the streets and indulge in large-scale looting, burning and killing.

Absurd rumours also gained currency. In the posh area of Athwa Lines for instance, a rumour spread that a few people (the exact number was also given) were coming in a white Maruti with loaded guns to destroy the temple
of Amba, located at the periphery of the area. Tension built up as even residents of bungalows and large apartments said that the news had been confirmed on telephone and cable Television. People were led to believe that the purveyors of the news were speaking from the BJP office, thus giving legitimacy to the rumours.

Anarchy and lawlessness prevailed in Surat between December 7 and December 12. Curfew was imposed on December 8 and the army carried out flag marches in some localities. There were several reasons for the breakdown of law and order. Firstly, the police force in the city was inadequate since the state government had directed its attention at preventing riots in Ahmedabad and Baroda following the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Since the state government did not provide an adequate police force to the city in time, things went out of control.

Secondly, the police force was highly communalised. Thus the police chose to remain inactive when the mayhem was at its peak or went into action when everything was over and they were sure that their entry would not disrupt the rampagers from their activities. There were several complaints against the police from both the communities and victims reported that, despite their shouts for help, the police did not come to their rescue.

There were many victims of sexual violence during these riots, but because of the reluctance of the respondents to report their cases and limitation of time we were able to locate around 20 cases of women subjected to sexual violence and assault in Surat. Anti-Sikh riots in Delhi did not witness many cases of sexual violence, Mention of rape is made of some cases in east Delhi and one or two cases in west Delhi. However, during my fieldwork we encountered victim of sexual violence. Women respondents did, however, tell there of many cases of abduction, and rape. One important reason why these cases did not come to light is that rape is a crime committed on women's body, and but males of the family feel dishonoured to
let the news about them go out. Therefore, silence is maintained in such cases. Further the doctors of relief teams had discouraged women from telling about their being raped. Rape is a medico-legal matter for which special evidentiary procedures would have to be followed, and this would be embarrassing for them.

This has been reported by Madhu Kishwar (1984:31). One riot victim had narrated to her. "Most of the women who went to register a case were young, unmarried women. The woman who went were intimidated by doctors and warned not to undergo the medical examination. They were told that hands would be shoved in their vaginas and much else would be done to them. They being young, inexperienced women, got frightened, and did not insist on medical examination".

Rape and sexual assault on women were reported from Tirlokpuri. From other parts of Delhi reports spoke mainly of attacks on men. Women were spared and told to run away, violence against women was reported only in case where they refused to run away and died along with their men. We reproduce some cases from the reports prepared by various NGO's in the relief camps.

Gurdep Kaur, a 45 years old woman from block 32, Tirlokpuri, told a typical story. Her husband and three sons were brutally murdered in front of her. Her husband used to run a small shop in the locality. Her eldest son, Bhajan Singh, worked in the railway station, the second in a radio repair shop and the third as a scooter driver. She says: "On the morning of November 1, when Indira Mata's body was brought to Teen Murti, everyone was watching television. Since 8 a.m., they were showing the homage being paid to her dead body. At about noon, my children said: 'Mother, please make some food. We are hungry.' I had not cooked that day and I told them: 'Son, everyone is mourning. She was our mother, too. She helped us to
settle here. So I don't feel like lighting the fire today." Soon after this, the attack started. Three of the men ran out and were set on fire. My youngest son stayed in the house with me. He shaved off his beard and cut his hair. But they came into the house. Those young boys, 14 and 16 years olds, began to drag my son out even though he was hiding behind me. They tore my clothes and stripped me naked in front of my son. When these young boys began to rape me, my son began to cry and said: 'Elder brothers, don't do this. She is like your mother just as she is my mother.' But they raped me right there, in front of my son, in my own house. They were young boys, maybe eight of them. When one of them raped me, I said: My child, never mind. Do what you like. But remember, I have given birth to children. This child came into the world by this same path'.

"After they had taken my honour, they left. I took my son out with me and made him sit among the women but they came and dragged him away. They took him to the street corner, hit him with lathis, sprinkled kerosene over him, and burnt him alive. I tried to save him but they struck me with knives and broke my arm. At that time, I was completely naked. I had managed to get hold of an old sheet which I had wrapped around myself. If I had had even one piece of clothing on my body, I would have gone and thrown myself over my son and tried to save him. I would have done anything to save at least one young man of my family. Not one of the four is left".

According to her, hardly any woman in her neighbourhood was spared the humiliation she underwent. She said even nine to ten year old girls were raped. She was an eyewitness to many such rapes. The attackers first emptied the houses of men who were burnt alive. After that, they dragged the women inside the ransacked houses and gang raped them. Not many women would openly admit this fact because, as Gurdip Kaur says: "The unmarried girls will have to stay unmarried all their lives if they
admit that they have been dishonoured. No one would marry such a girl.”
Therefore, most families do not openly acknowledge the fact. Indra Bai narrates: "At about 4 p.m., after they had murdered all the Sikh men they could get hold of in our block, they asked the women to come out of the houses. They said: 'Now your men are dead. Come out and sit together or else we will kill you too.'

“We women all huddled together and they offered us some water. As we were drinking water, they began dragging off whichever girl they liked. Each girl was taken away by a gang of ten or twelve boys, many of them in their teens. They would take her to the nearby Masjid, gang raped her, and send her back after a few hours. Some never returned. Those who returned were in a pitiable condition and without a stitch of clothing. One young girl said fifteen men had climbed on her”.

Nanki Bai, also from Trilokpuri, her daughter, Koshala Bai, had been snatched away from her. She says: “All night, the attacks continued. My husband was hiding in a trunk. They dragged him out and cut him to pieces. Another 16 year old boy was killed in front of my eyes. He was carrying a small child in his arms. They killed the child too.

“We women were forced to come out of our houses and sit in a group outside. I was trying to hide my daughter. I put a child in her lap and dishevelled her hair so that she would look older. But finally one of our own neighbours pointed her out to these men. They began to drag her away. We tried to save her. I pleaded with them. My son came in the way and they hit him with a sword. He lost his finger. I could not even look at his hand. I just wrapped it in my veil.

They took Koshala to the Masjid. I do not know what happened to her. At about 4 a.m., when we were driven out of the colony, she
called out to me from the roof of the Masjid. She was screaming to me:
'Mummy, mujhe le chal, mujhe le chal, Mummy. (take me with you).
But how could Mummy take her? They beat her because she called to me. I don't know where she is now.'

The rapists made no distinction between old and young women. In Nand Nagri, an 80 year old woman informed a social worker that she had been raped. In Trilokpuri, several cases were reported of old women who were gang raped in front of their family members. As in all such situations, the major purpose of these rapes seems to have been to inflict humiliation and to destroy the victims morale even more completely.

Manchi Devi, about 55, says she was gang raped. Four members of her family, including her son-in-law and her nephew, were murdered. "When I tried to intervene to save children, several of those men grabbed me. Some tore my clothes, some climbed on top of me. Some raped me, some bit me all over my body. All this happened around 11 p.m. in my own house. I do not know how many men were there. The whole house was full of them. About a dozen raped me. After that, they caught hold of some young girls outside.

Most of these rapes took place while the bodies of the husband sons or brothers of these women were still smouldering in their presence, and their homes had thus been converted into cremation ground. Baby Bai, a young bride, aged around 20, was also gang raped. She was married barely a year ago. Her husband was a rickshaw puller, and sometimes worked as a scooter driver.

She says: "There were six members in our family. The three men, my husband and my two brothers-in-law, were murdered. Now only three women are left. Our house was attacked at about 4 p.m. and the fighting continued until next morning. My husband was first beaten and then burnt to
death. I was sitting and crying when a big group of men came and dragged me away. They took me to the nearby huts in front of block 32, and raped me. They tore off all my clothes. They bit and scratched me. They took me at 10 p.m. and released me at about 3 a.m. When I came back, I was absolutely naked, just as one is when one come out of the mother’s womb. They took away all my jewellery-ear rings, a gold chain, bangles, nose ring and anklets. They left without giving me anything to cover myself. On the road, I found someone’s old sheet. I wrapped myself in it and walked up to Chilla village. There I borrowed some clothes from my relatives.”

Choosing Between Honour of Daughters and sons lives:

Women are faced with complex situation during such crises. They are mothers, wives, daughters and above all the custodian of Izzat. For a woman the defence of honour becomes very important, specially for a women who has young daughters. She is caught between duties and emotions. Her motional being tells her to safeguard her sons but her sense of duty tells her that honour of her daughters is more important and should be protected at any cost. Here is a narrative of a woman who was caught up in this dichotomy of emotions, Gurdeep Kaur lost three sons and husband but she choose to protect the honour of the family. She narrates:

“I was staying at Nangloi and came to know about Indira Gandhi’s assassination on 31st itself. There was no sense of trouble in the area. In fact, my husband and four sons were quite sad about the assassination as we were supporters of the Congress and Indira was a good leader. Nobody could eat properly that night.

On the first morning my son had gone to get milk with his friend and was planning to go to Teen Murti. My daughters were preparing breakfast in the kitchen and I was upstairs cleaning the room which was recently constructed for my son’s and daughter’s wedding to take
place on 3rd November. There were a number of relatives in my place since wedding date was approaching. At 9 O'clock in the morning I saw some people running here and there and then I saw one of my husband's friend, who is a Jat come and talking to my husband. My husband called me and told me to run away with my three daughters and other ladies present at home. I asked him what had happened. He scolded me and said: 'Do not ask what has happened? You just leave this place'. I ran away with all the ladies to my neighbour's house. It was hardly ten minutes latter, after I had left the house, that I saw a huge mob coming towards my house. My husbands Jat friend had locked all the male members of my family and another Sikh family in my house. He was sitting outside the house when the mob carne to my house. That friend of my husband told the mob that there was nobody inside, they have ran away. The mob pelted some stones on my house and went away (I was viewing everything from the opposite house). That Jat was sitting outside my house till evening. In evening he told my husband that he was going.

After he left, the mob came again. This time they had Iron rods, kerosene and explosive powder with them. I do not know who told them that sardars were inside. They pelted stones on the house, set it on fire. As the house was burning people inside the house started shouting and jumping from the first floor. As they were jumping down to save their lives, people standing outside poured kerosene and powder on them. I saw everything from my neighbour's window. I could not bear it and fell unconscious. When I gained consciousness, I saw everybody crying and wailing. I do not know from where I got courage I told them not to cry and not to make any noise, so that no one should make out that there were people staying in this room. I again went back to that window I saw all my family members (husband and four sons and male relatives) being burnt. They were groaning in pain, but the people (mob) were making fun and saying "Dekho Sardar
Aag Main Bhangra Kar rehin hai”. Simultaneously they were looting my house also. They threw everything out. What they could carry they took and the rest was throw in the fire.

Some people in the mob were asking one another, where were the girls? My daughters are very beautiful. They were saying they would keep the girls.

I was terrified and stunt I did not know what to do. Right in front of my eyes my husband and sons had been killed and now my daughters honour was in danger. I could tolerate death of my husband and sons, but honour is very important. It was only for my daughter’s security that I left my sons and husband alone to face the mob. For us honour is more important then life. I had sacrificed everything for the honour of my family. They were haunting for us and inside that house we were around eighteen women of all age group. I remember how my small niece three years old started crying and asking for food and water. She did not listen to us and was crying I tried to pacify her but she did not listen to me and her mother, so we put a piece of cloth in her mouth. She died of suffocation. We left her there.”

BETRAYAL OF TRUST: NEIGHBOURS

The happenings in Trilokpuri in trans-yamuna resettlement colony in the east of Delhi between Oct. 31st and Nov. 2nd were a gruesome picture of the intensity of the butchery. Within just forty eight hours atleast four hundred Sikhs mainly young men were burnt alive with the connivance of the local police machinery and active participation of an organised group of miscreants led by a Congress (I) counsellor. Shanti Kaur was a resident of Block 32, Trilokpuri, All the adult male members of her family were killed. She recalls:

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“Around 5 O’clock in the evening we heard loud sounds ‘maro maro sardaro ko maro snap ke bache hai Inko maro’. There was a mob of around thousand people holding iron rods. They started pelting stones at our house. We had lot of jute on our machaan I threw it in courtyard and told my brother-in-laws to hide there under it. I told my husband to hide under the bed and covered the bed with bed-sheet falling on the floor. My father-in-law was an old man he told us to go and hide somewhere and lock the door from outside. I went to the terrace to see what was happening. Outside, I saw the mob putting the gurdwara on flames granth sahib was torn into pieces and thrown in the drain and the granthi was being thrashed by the mob some were pulling his hair and other’s were pulling his beard. They then threw him in the burning gurudwara.

Mob had attacked almost all houses simultaneously, I came down from the terrace, mob had seen me, they started pelting stones on my house, I was scared to death, this was first time in my life, I had encountered such a situation. They broke into the house and asked ‘where our men were?’ I told ‘they had not come since yesterday’. In the meantime they dragged my father-in-law. My mother-in-law held the feet of the person, who dragged my father-in-law, saying ‘he is an old man have mercy on him, I also went requesting to leave him he is old man. My father-in-law was dragged out hit with the iron rod and mob had started rampaging our house. They went away finding no male members. We dragged father-in-law inside as he was unconscious.

My mother-in-law was also hurt in the process of saving my father-in-law, they had not burnt my house. I came inside the house my husband told me and my mother-in-law to leave the house and take shelter with neighbours, so that if mob comes again they will find house locked.
We did not agree to this, we told him that if we have to die we will die together. In a few seconds we were attacked again. This time they had thrown balls of clothes soaked in kerosene, so the jute lying in the compound caught fire. My husband and brother-in-laws came out from their hiding places. Mean while the mob had entered our house again. I tried to stop the mob by lying down in Trent. They kicked me and told 'Sali jhoot bolti hai, koi ghar main nahi hai'. They dragged my brother-in-laws, husband and father-in-law who was already injured. My mother-in-law tried to plead with the mob that my father-in-law was already injured and to please leave him. No one listened to our cries and pleas. They dragged my younger brother-in-law and struck a blow with an iron rod on his head, sprinkled some powder and kerosene oil and set him ablaze. I tried to persuade the mob not to attack my husband. They (mob) snatched my son and said if I did not leave my husband, they will throw the son also into the fire, I snatched my baby from his hand and ran holding both the kids in my hand, thinking that now I could not help my husband. There were many people in the mob with whom we used have good relations, we use to visit one another. I could not understand what happened to them, they were behaving so differently. I had seen the most inhuman behaviour at that young age, nothing can be worse then what happened that day. One of my cousin who was staying in that block had been abducted and raped and when she came back they had cut her finger saying that this will serve as memory of the event. She became mad after the incident. She was taken to Rajasthan where she committed suicide."

FROM FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURS TO VIOLENT MONSTERS: SOME TESTIMONIES BY THE VICTIM WOMEN

(a) Rajinder kaur was a wife of a sardar who ran a chatai (Mat) business and was killed in the November riots. She lived in Kalyanpuri. Her husband had kept her completely sheltered from all problems and has left her with a
memory of a good provider with family chests full of gold silver and stainless steel for her daughter's dowry. She has had great difficulty in reconciling herself to the loss of her economic and social status along with the loss of her husband and two sons. She told, "By the evening we heard people running amok shouting, "khoon ka badla khoon, maro maro". They started pelting stones on Sikh houses in our lane. One man from the crowd was saying, "finish off the sardars burn their houses". Ballu my son, who had been recently married begged to be spared. They hit him with a lathi and then attacked my sardar ji and other son Rangu.

I had two daughters-in-laws and one daughter. We had to run away from there. My second daughter-in-law became unconscious. She had been married just fifteen days and had chudda and henna on her hands (auspicious sign of being recently married). I dragged her. No one in the lane was willing to give us refuge. It was in the back lane that one family gave us shelter. We stayed there the night and went next day to my house. I saw my husband's dead body. My elder son was trapped under the collapsed staircase there were around fourteen dead bodies lying in my house. They had burnt down my house and had thrown all dead bodies inside".

(b) Minder Kaur was twelve years old when violence took place, she is now twenty four years, but riots had snatched her childhood from her. She lost her father and mother became mentally impaired as she could not bear the shock and violence of up Minder narrates.

Upheaval "In the middle of night we heard loud noises and sounds. All of us got scared and huddled in one room. Within few moments we were attacked. They pelted stones on our house and then started throwing cloth balls dipped in kerosene. Then they broke the main door open and entered our house. They dragged out my grand father uncle and my father. I do not know where they took my uncle and grand father but my father was attacked in front of our eyes. He was
attacked with iron rods on his head. He suffered a serious blow and fainted and then they poured some kerosene and powder on him and burnt him."

(c) Pritam Kaur Neighbours have played important role in incidents of social-violence. Many narratives describe how the positive intervention of neighbours have helped to save life and property of victimised community and it is equally true neighbours at some places have used the opportunity to settle down the old scores or even jealousy Pritam Kaur used to stay at Nangloi during 1984 her narrative describes how she had been victim of violence due to betray at of her neighbours. She narrates: "As the trouble started my neighbours approached us and told us not to worry since we had been staying together here for ages. As tension-increased, we thought of taking shelter in my neighbours house. The mob attacked my house and not finding anybody there ransacked. As they were passing our house, the neighbour who had given us shelter told the mob that we were hiding in his house, so within a second they attacked their place. They did not harm the house. They dragged all of us out and took my three sons, husband father and uncle to nearby railway track and killed them. I did not know what to do I was shocked on the behaviour of neighbours. Why had they betrayed us?

Now I was thinking of my two daughters and one daughter-in-law. I thought I should run away otherwise who knows what will be their next step. Somehow we reached Fateh Nagar camp with the help of the military. I went back to that house because that was the only property we had, it was completely looted. When we went back no one interacted with us it seemed as if we are the real culprits. We tried to stay there for a few months but inbetween my daughter-in-law had left. Then my relatives told me that it was not safe to stay in this house, since we three ladies were left alone. But where could I go with my two daughters, my husband had been already killed. I somehow lived in that house for a year till I got a flat but for one year in Nangloi we were socially ostracised.
SURJIT KAUR

Similarly there is another incidence of Surjit Kaur, who was let down by her neighbours. In fact in such situation of violence, victims are more dependent on neighbours she recounts: “We were attacked on the first morning. None of our neighbours came to our help. My husband and son had been dragged out and then I heard that they were picking young beautiful girls also. My husband told me to run away with my daughter. I ran with my daughter to the neighbour’s place and I requested he to give us shelter. They told only that they could give shelter. If I married my daughter into their family. One can understand my plight in such a condition. I ran chanting “wahe guru” to save our honour. Our neighbours had turned us down.”

ISHRIE KAUR

Many testimonies reveal women had faced courageously the hostile mobs to plead for the lives of their male members. The adid as buffer between the rioter and their men thus shielding them from the attack of mob not caring and in the process suffered severe injuries.

I was sitting in my house along with my two children and husband were watching TV I heard people shouting and carrying iron rods. They ran straight towards the gurudwara. The Sikhs inside the gurudwara tried to confront them. They burnt down the gurudwara, tore off the grant sahib and burnt the head priest of the gurudwara. All this I watched from the rooftop. Then they started attacking individual houses. In that mob people of neighbourhood were also there.

When I saw my husband’s cousin being burnt down, I was petrified. I told my husband we should take refuge somewhere as the mob passed in front of our house. We thought of hiding in neighbourhood. Within seconds I
saw mob turning back and running after. They caught hold of my husband and hit him on his head with iron rod. He fell down unconscious. The mob thought had died. I do not know from where I got energy. I put him on my shoulder and ran to a jhuggi nearby. At that time I did not care about my children, I saw my father also being burnt burning but at that time my mind was occupied by one thought how to save my husband. He gained consciousness, asked for water, I did not give him water from hand pump, as water had been poisoned, (rumour) I went to my house got some water for him and tried to comfort my husband that everything will be alright. Around mid night my husband was wailing in pain and he happened to coughed. Somebody heard and informed mob, they came again and looked into every corner with light to trace Sikh it seemed that they did not want to take any-chance of leaving any sardar alive, they were looking for Sikhs in every corner with lamps and threatening. They entered into place where we were hiding, they saw my husband. My husband told me to run away with children, one man dragged him out holding his hair, I tried to stop this man, my husband yelled at me to run away otherwise they will kill you also, but I did not leave my husband and covered him with my body. Mob started pelting blows on me they snatched the jewellery I was wearing and in the process my cloths had also torn.

They had thrown my son in fire whom I picked up immediately, one man from the mob said 'leave the child', one person was dragging me, he pulled my shirt from neck and it was torn, one man among the mob said : she is very beautiful don't leave her'. At that moment I got kind of electric sock and I do not know from where I got courage of 100 men, I pushed that man and picked up my children and ran then I did not see what happened to my husband I do not know for how long ran. I stopped only when I saw a group of women sitting in the middle of road crying and wailing they had also been already looted and their men were killed.
Alive and after that they came running to me, I told them please do not touch. You go and take us much as wealth you want from my house you will find lot of money there I threw away on road whatever cash and jewellery I had, after that I ran like mad women with my children so I did not know how long I walked until reached on road where I saw few women sitting on the road and crying. I sat with those women as morning was approaching we were forced by police to leave that place we told them tell us where to go they told us "Randiyon bhag jao yhan se nahi to tumhe bhi mar dalen ge gai".

Unlike the anti-Sikh riots, where sexual violence was unleashed only in one locality the situation is Surat was quite different. There women were targeted for attack in almost all localities and the sexual injury and humiliation inflicted on these were also far more direct and gross. The stories of atrocities on women during partition were relived in Surat. They were raped, their private parts were mutilated, they were disfigured and in some cases their hair was shaved. Rape is a phenomenon about which a community generally wants to maintain silence because in such crimes it is the victim who suffers the most. Women become discarded objects for the community to which they belongs. As a result the general tendency was for the community to talk about the atrocities committed on women in general terms.

**DISTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY MORAL**

In Surat rape was used as weapon to teach Muslim community lesson and to their women were made target to challenge the purdah culture of the community. In the words of Shahmim Shuekh, one of the women activist and social worker. "We want to maintain silence on the subject since with great difficulty we had managed to see these women get married. As you know, in patriarchy a woman has secondary status and women who have been raped have no future, no sympathy. The general attitude is one of hate or of being napaak. In Islam to marry such women is considered sawaab. So, you know,
after the riots when religions sentiments were running high and youths wanted to do something for the community, we thought it was high time to channalize those sources to do something constructive for the community. What else could have been more constructive than to settle down these girls. It is true some even became second wives, but atleast they are not leading dejected, isolated lives.

We did have difficulty in finding women victims because no relief committee had the address of the victims and the logic everybody gave was that since they has settled down, let as forget about it and let them lead a fresh life. There was no subsequent contact with the victims after the relief camps were wound up. Many of the victims were migrants from U.P. and Bihar, so they have went back to their respective native lands. It was through local friends in Surat that we managed to trace a few victims and some of these victims, specially Ayesha bi, helped us reach other victims who had left their previous homes and had settled down in the city.

Yasmeen is a young girl of 22 years of age. She is blissfully married to her cousin and has two sons. Yasmeen had been a victim of violence. There are many stories regarding Yasmeen. She was video filmed, while she was being raped Yasmeen also feels that this may have happened. There were big focus lights and one of her relatives in Bombay had seen the video cassette and recognised Yasmeen. Still, this has been not verified. In Vijay Nagar people had seen video film shown by cable operator but people are reluctant to talk about it. We went to Yasmeen. As first she was quite hostile and turned us down, saying she did not want to talk about it.

Later Yasmeen recounted the nightmarish ordeal:

"I used to live in Vijay Nagar with my family. My family consisted of Father, Mother, brother, three sisters and myself. My elder sister who was already widow, stays in the main city. On December 7, all residents of Vijaynagar did
patrolling together. Vijaynagar 2 has a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims, but Hindus are in a majority. Both communities have a good relationship. While patrolling, all of them had snacks and tea together, for which Ayabhai paid. Both the communities had decided to maintain peace and brotherhood. The understanding was that if a Hindu mob came, the Hindus would handle them and if a Muslim mob came, the Muslims would do the same.

When violence broke out, I had no apprehension of it. Infact, I was not fully aware what had happened. I heard that Babri Masjid had been demolished in Ayodhya, but, it had nothing to do with Surat and in Surat I had never heard of anything like a riot. There had been sporadic incidences of clash, but they remained confined to the main city. On eighth December, I could see some commotion and tension in the locality but since we are the poorest of all, we had no threat of being looted and it never occurred to my family that there will be killing and burning down of people alive. We were all present at home. Since it was Bandh in Surat, in the afternoon I saw people roaming about in groups in our area.

There were Kathiawaris and Muslims also roaming and occasionally we saw Kathiawarais of our locality talking to Muslims of our area. I was watching all this from my house but none of my family member went out since we preferred to maintain distance from the big people, be they of any community. I prepared lunch for my family. We had lunch at around two O' clock in the afternoon when one Maruti came to our area. Actually, he was the brother of one lady staying in Rahat Manazil. He had came to take her. While she was leaving with her brother, the car was stopped I don't know why it was stopped, but after that the trouble started. Our locality was under attack. We did not get a chance to run to where most of our community people had gathered. Till evening there was confrontation from both the sides.
At 6 O'clock electricity went. My mother said that we should go and stay with our community people in Rahat Manazil, which is just opposite my house. As it was dark outside, we thought we could manage to run there. I my sister and mother had planned to go there. My father and brother preferred to stay in the house. My father told my mother to take us (daughters) to a safe place but still when he was telling my mother to take care of us (daughters) I did not perceive that women will be attacked. I had never heard and never thought of it and in fact I wanted to stay in my house but I could not argue with my father. We came out of our house I saw a huge fire near the Rahat Manazil and I saw Muslim's houses being burnt along with household goods.

We were surrounded by a mob I do not know from where that mob came shouting slogan "Jai shree Ram". My mother shouted at us to run. I was running ahead. I was caught by five-six men. I tried to resist. I saw another group holding my mother, hitting her and there was another mob attacking the women of Rahat Manazil. I yelled for help. My helplessness was met with a dirty laughs from the mob. They said: 'whom are you calling. Call your Allah. What is your Allah doing? Tell him to come and save you'. They stripped off my clothes. I could recognise a few with whom I pleaded that I was like their sister. He pulled my hair and said that I had lost my senses. How could I be his sister. I was the maid who had refused to work in his house. (I had refused to work. I use to work as maid but had stopped working as maid two years before riots and have been working for Ayabhai). The mob was beating me. They had no sympathy for women.

They scratched my private parts with nails. I saw my mother crying and yelling at the crowd to leave me. They were laughing and asking her to come and take me away. They even made indecent sexual gestures to my mother. I do not know what happened after that, I saw them hitting my mother. I had fallen unconscious after being raped by a group and I did see many girls were being raped. They stripped us naked. There was no electricity in the area but there were big focus lights. I not know where they
came from (she is convinced that these focus light were of video camera but this fact can not been verified). I can't understand what was happening, my mental faculties had failed. It was Qayamat (doomsday); there was total normlessness. Men had turned into beast, they were looting and laughing. They killed and then burnt people along with their furniture burning on the road.

I gained consciousness in the morning and I saw not a single man on the road. I was scared to death what to do. I did not have any clothes, I was feeling very weak; did not know what to do. I managed to hide behind the bush, I saw Imam's wife lying in a nearby pit. She was burnt and her head was shaved. I covered myself with torn piece of cloth lying there. After sometime, a jeep load of people came. We were around five-six girls sitting and crying. There was another old lady in the pit who we thought was dead. We all were taken to the Sarvjanik hospital, one of the members of the relief team had given me his shirt and Imam Sahab's wife was covered with a sheet as she was completely naked and almost burnt, when I came to Sarvajanik hospital I don't remember what was going around me. I was being treated and given full attention. Hakim chi-chi wala had organised a relief camp. I told him to find out about my family, which I latter on came to know was not traceable and people told me that my mother was cut into pieces. I did see her photograph, only of her head. I did not get any news of my brother and father. About them I came to know that they were first hacked to death and then burnt along with many people in a big pit in Vijay Nagar.

Yasmeen had gone through the bitterest experience that could happen to a girl and traces of this are not easy to erase. She narrates.

"I do not know why it happened, but I think it was planned in advance and was intended to malign us, to destroy the moral of the community. At first talking (about it) gave me relief. But as time passes by I feel less and less like talking. I think it would be the best for me to try to
forget it. I know that is going to be very hard. But now that I am married and have kids I want to forget it all. Initially I had filed a case against the culprits. I recognised them. My husband has withdrawn the case. They threaten me with dire consequences if I opened my mouth. My community people wanted me to take up the issue but in my first two visits to court I was harassed with obscene questions. I did not want re-live the trauma, then finally we both my husband and myself decided let us live a peaceful life for our children's sake, and you know in Islam it's considered, sawaab to marry girls like me, destitute. Initially my husband had this feeling in his mind that he is doing sawaab by marrying me, but within two three proceedings I realised that he used to feel frustrated and suffocated. In fact, for days he used not to talk to me. Then I decided what will I get even if these culprits are punished. My life will be destroyed. Media persons, women organisations from Bombay and Delhi used to come and meet me. All this disturbed him a lot."

It was circumstances which have forced Yasmeen to compromise and withdraw the case and her sense of rational is quite legitimate, seeing her background. She wants to lead a simple family life devoid of any publicity. All the publicity of the outer world was destroying the bliss of her inner world, which she had reconstructed with much difficulty. Whether her husband, a distant cousin, married for money is difficult to say. She got compensation for both parents i.e. Rs. 1,20,000 cash and Rs. 2,80,000 as security deposit and is getting Rs.3,000 as dividend every month. So whether this economic security was reason for marriage was smartly not answered.

Zohra not only lost her husband in this violence, but has been victim of sexual violence herself. Though Zohra has been re-married and is leading a settled life, the dislocation and loss of honour and death of her husband has made a deep impact on her life. Zohra recounts about the incident:
"I did hear about the demolition of Babri Masjid. I did not know that we (Muslims) will be penalised. Our mosque was demolished and still we were dishonoured, killed and burnt alive. Surat had never witnessed communal riots and we all live here without any consciousness of identity. Religion had never been an issue for contestation. Surat before riots was quite a safe place for women. We had never felt any threat from the other community. Vijay Nagar is a new locality and all these residents are Kathiawaris, migrant from Surashtra, but still we look upon them as our brothers. It is a convention that your actual brotherhood is your neighbourhood. We lived quite a secure life, my husband was very popular, as he use to carry school children in his auto rickshaw. I stayed on the ground floor. The Kathiawari people were building a temple in the vicinity and they had taken water pipe from my house. With such kind of life-pattern, where was the space to doubt our neighbours. There was constant assurance from our neighbours not to get scared. We will not allow any outsider to enter in our society, they would say.

There was news about the trouble in other parts of Surat, but in our area, though situation became tense, every body was inside their houses. Since our neighbourhood had assured us of nothing untoward will happen, we had no arms not even stones and sticks for attack, but finally when this clash started at three O’clock a huge mob of around 1000 men came from outside shouting slogans, “Jai Shree Ram”. They started attacking the local mosque. This was quite alarming for us. My husband wanted to go to the mosque but I forced him to came along with me to the top floor of the building, as my neighbours on the top floor were also Muslims.

With the attack on the mosque and the killing of Imam Sahab, the situation became quite tense. Our top floor was recently constructed. We had little stock of bricks lying on the terrace. We were attacked by the opposite side with glass bottles, stones, acid bombs. The congregation coming out of the mosque tried to face the mob, they did try to resist, but in a few seconds we saw that they were overpowered by the mob. We ladies of Rahat Manazil
were on the top floor praying the only respite was reciting. 'His' name, calling Allah to help us and save us. But soon this floor was also caught in fire as Ayabhai had bundles of sarees in his house, which caught fire very fast. We saw police, we women yelled at the police to help. They laughed at us, made obscene gesture and challenged us to come down.

In the meantime my husband's autorickshaw was attacked. It was burnt. My house was also looted since it was on the ground floor. They started attacking ground floor houses and then suddenly electricity went off. They had set ablaze the ground floor house. We got scared and ran downstairs and decided to leave for Muslim mohalla. But there was division of opinion whether we should not go. But I told my husband to leave this place and go to my father's place, so around 10 O'clock 15 families decided to leave. As we came down, reached the edge of the road, we were attacked again. It was a large mob.

We all started running here and there directionless. My husband caught my hand. I had my youngest son in my lap and my husband was carrying the elder son, but where could we run. I saw a pit. I was about to jump in that pit thinking a broken leg is better than a burnt leg but as I was about to jump in the pit, I was caught hold of but five six persons. They snatched my son from my lap and threw him on the ground. The other group had overpowered my husband and started thrashing him with lathis. The mob started beating me and stripped off my clothes. I kept on pleading with them to leave me. 'I am like your sister, your mother, I belong to Surat as much as you'. They did not listen to anything, they raped me. I don't know how many times and how many men raped me. My son was lying beside me crying.

I had become dumb. I did not know what happened to my husband. It was after eight days that I met my son in the relief camp. After raping me they inserted stick into my vagina. They scratched my breasts with finger
nails and left me profusely bleeding. They came again, ordered me to get up and gave me my son and told me to walk straight in noose's direction, not to turn back, otherwise they will kill me. It was a dark chilled night. I had turned into a lifeless creature. I obeyed their order, without realising were I was going. I did not even feel ashamed of my nakedness. I had lost the sense. Walking down the road, I suddenly felt one hand pulled me inside and I saw a women dragging me in the jhuggi. She latter on told me that she bathed me gave hot milk to drink, I stayed with her for two days. She gave me her saree and bindya I was wearing bindi (auspicious sign of being married worn by Hindu women) without knowing that I we no more married. I was widowed. Then after two days she dressed me in her attire, told me to tell if anybody inquired about my identity that I was her sister. She took me to my father's house. She did not enter the Muslim mohalla. She left me outside the mohalla. I reached my father's house and broke down. After that they took me to hospital, where I was treated for vaginal injuries for months. I was quite apprehensive about my husband and eldest son, whom I met after eight days. He was terrified and could not speak. He had witnessed the death of his father so whenever there is noise, he feels scared that they (mob) will burn him also.

Ayesha bi had gone through traumatic phase during the upheaval. She witnessed the killing of almost half of her family members. Her niece, fourteen yeas of age, and her mother were raped and killed. Ayesha narrowly escaped rape. She recounts.

"We heard there was trouble in the city on the 7th, Our neighbouring colony people came and told us: 'do not worry, nothing will happen here'. We decided not to leave. At that time the whole family was there, three brothers (including my husband) their wives, myself and all our children. Then we heard that 300-400 men from Varacha Road had come and were outside the colony. We were very scared. But again our neighbours came and said nothing would happen. We spent the night in fear. The next morning
a group of people from the neighbouring colony came and said to our people to take down the loud speaker from the Masjid, because people from outside may see and attack. At about 10 a.m. a young man (Muslim) came in a Maruti car to take his sister away. He was driving away fast. At the edge of the colony he was stopped on the false allegation that he was carrying arms in his car. His car was searched and nothing was found, but still he was attacked. He somehow managed to run.

In the meantime there was *Azaan* for the *Zohar Namaz*. All men went to the mosque for prayers. My husband Zakaria, brother-in-law Ayabhai, and a friend Vasudev who lived near us went to the neighbouring colonies to find out the position. They came back with assurances that the atmosphere was very tense. We were scared but the children were hungry so me had to cook and feed them.

Our colony was attacked when men were coming out from the mosque after *namaaz*. There was shouting andstoning, We all went up to my sister-in-law’s room on the 4th storey. There was a huge sea of people yelling and shouting the slogan, “Jai Shree Ram”. As the situation was tense due to the demolition of Masjid, we were expecting some violence. So our men tried to dissuade the mob by throwing stones. There was open clash between us (Muslims) and them (Kathiawaris) we also had thrown stones from our roof top, hoping that it will end soon.

In the evening the situation went from bad to worse. Electricity had been cut off. We heard screams and we could smell things burning. We became more apprehensive about our safety since the masjid was attacked, *Quran sharif* was desecrated, Imam Sahab was hacked to death. The mob was accompanied by the people of locality so it became very difficult to think about safety when neighbours turn their faces. The social support system ruptures and then it is very difficult to think of one’s safety. My sister-in-law got scared as it was getting darker. She suggested that we should move to main city. As we came down from the fourth floor we were surrounded by the mob, shouting ‘*Jai Shree Ram*’. We were attacked from all sides.
We started running but were trapped. Hen were hit on the head, my clothes were stripped. They caught hold of my two sisters-in-law: Zareena and Mumtaz, Zareena and Ayabhai, my brother-in-law, somehow managed to run away and were hiding in a pit. When Ayabhai saw that his 14 year old daughter Noor Jahan had been caught and they stripped her naked she started crying for help calling her father and mother. One group had caught hold of me I was helplessly watching my niece being raped, I saw my brother-in-law and sister-in-law running towards their daughter. My daughters and other girls were with Mumtaz the other sister-in-law. She told all the girls to run. She herself was caught by the mob. I somehow escaped as people who had caught hold of me started running leaving me, so Iran from there.

I was running across the field, I had seen other women running in that direction, trying to cover myself with torn clothes. I heard somebody whispering upstairs where the rest of my family members and women from Vijay Nagar were hiding. It was a newly constructed house. We broke the lock and stayed there without making any noise. One of the girls, whom I came to know only there gave me her dupptta to cover myself, I saw my two daughters, youngest son and other niece and nephews there but my three brother-in-laws, husband, eldest son were still missing. At that moment, we did not know what was happening around us. We women were sitting together but our thoughts were travelling to our men folk. Since we all had ran together from our houses and were dispersed as we were attacked, we did not know about the whereabouts of anybody. In such a situation one becomes only concerned with the safety of one's husband one's son, one's family. So, all of us were preoccupied with the thoughts of our family members. We kept praying the whole night because in such disasters, he is the only saviour. When all support systems fails human beings turn towards him (God).
We were too scared to stay in that house. There were photographs of Hindu deities in that house. Thus, it was clear that the house belonged to some Hindu and in case he comein and found us there, he might call the mob and hand us over to them. Since we had suffered in our own locality at the hands of our neighbours, we were doubtful that the owner will have any sympathy for us. Moreover we were all woman and being a women had become the biggest problem. Never in my life had I felt bad about my gender but since I had gone through violence and harassment I realised how unsafe I was. I had been stripped off. I could feel hands creeping on my body, I had two daughters, I had seen the fate of my 14 years niece Noor Jahan, so for me to stay in that place was unbearable. But outside it was equally dangerous and since I was not alone, there were other women also, we decided to stay in that house for a night, sitting huddled together in one corner.

I could not understand what was happening, my head was paining and slightly bleeding also. I had suffered lathi blow on my head but still I was thanking my Lord that my daughters are not dishonoured, they are safe. My youngest son, hardly four years, he was constantly asking 'Anun are they going to kill us?' Have they killed abba'? He had seen his uncle being hacked to death. It was very difficult to answer the question. I could not control my tears, I was crying holding my son close to my bosom, thinking god knows when we will part from each other. The thought of my husband and eldest son was sending shivers in my body. My daughters sat quietly huddled together, without uttering a word and I was not able to give them any solace or courage since I was myself a shattered person. All the ladies were sitting quietly waiting and watching the night to pass. As soon as we saw the night passing into morning, we left that place.

Sharija Banu of Vijaynagar had lost her husband in the riots. She recounted 'the first episode of rape in our locality occurred with the attack on the masjid. The mob of Heera Ghasu (diamond cutters) from Saurashtra
attacked the masjid and tortured our Imam and relentless beat him. all the while forcing him to say 'Ram', which he refused to do. They tied him to a fan and when he did not give in, they chopped his off head with the sword. Thereafter they dragged his wife. She was hardly 18 years old and had never stepped out of her house without burqua. She use to be covered from head to toe. People told that she had been raped by the local sweeper and had been then gang raped by mob and set on fire. She survived for a month. She had suffered eighty percent burns.

Many women were witness to the killing of their husbands and children. Cases of mental shock have also been reported. Jaminabanu Nabiulla, a resident of Vijaynagar is a concrete example. Razia, an old lady who had been actively working with women rendered destitute during the riots had been taking care of this lady, who lost her mental balance during the upheaval Jamina Bi had seen her husband alongwith four sons being hacked to death. She was eight months pregnant at that time. No one knows whether she was raped or not but she was in a fit of madness when she arrived she did not respond to the treatment and has yet not recovered. She has been admitted to Baroda Mental Hospital. She gave birth to a girl after riots, but does not recognise her as her own child. The daughter has been named Noori and is staying with Razia's family. Jamia has permanently become a victim of violence. She is migrant from UP but nobody has been able to trace her family.

Parveen Begum of Surat was fortunate enough that she did not suffer loss of any of her family member. She was resident of Evergreen society. She and her family had managed to escape with the help of her husband's Hindu friend, he helped many families to save their lives. Parveen's house was looted but she feels indebted to her husband's friend she recalls:

"We came to know about demolition of Babri Masjid by evening when we watched the news on TV My husband was angry on the demolition. In fact
all of us were feeling bad regarding demolition of Babri Masjid it is symbolic of our ancient culture, in fact it is our national monument. We ladies were sitting at house, males had gone out as my husband has a shop of electrical goods in main bazaar, when my husband and sons came back I overheard their conversation, for a bandh called by a muslim local leader called Mehboob Pardewala. My husband was of the opinion that we should not call bandh in fact those who want to keep their shops closed should do that and their should be some other way of expressing our grievances, since it had not to be taken lightly. In fact he had suggested of peaceful protest march. I kept serving dinner, I had not much interest in politics but my daughter-in-law, who is sister of congress leader Kadir Pirzada was apprehensive of violence, not in Surat but in other parts of India specially Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Since Surat had never witnessed communal riots so we could not think of it but there was some change in Surat's secular climate it had been contaminated by Sangh Parivar since Shilla-nayaas. RSS had been very strong since then, but still Surati Musalmaan and Surati Hindu was Surati first and then anything else and we never experienced any hate or prejudice against each other. We respected each other's religion and practices. One important part of our culture was to celebrate Diwali and Eid together. Surat has a culture of eating out specially in evenings local Suratis are very hardworking both men and women work very hard and enjoy in the evening. So eid, diwali and holi had attraction for all the communities for shopping and eating out, to think of riots in Surat was impossible.

We did not witness any incidence of violence in our society on 7th December but on 8th situation had became tense with the news of attack on Vijay Nagar and specially omission on the part of Government and Police created panic in our society. Actually since 7th night we heard loud noises voices and screams that created panic in our mind, that what should we do my daughter-in-laws brother had also informed us through phone that situation outside is quite tense and there is indiscriminate attack on Muslims,
their women and religious places. Now the important question was how to save the honour of the girls, I had three daughter-in-laws in my house and there were around twenty five young beautiful girls in the society. Though we had not been attacked but now we were apprehending attack any moment. In the meantime one of my husband’s friend who is Surati came with his son, he told my husband to leave the house as soon as possible, because he was also apprehending violence. My husband told him to take away all the women to safe place, he lived across the road, he shifted all the women to his house, men had initially planned to stay there in Evergreen society, but my husband’s friend forced my husband and sons to accompany us he helped some of the men to evacuate to safe place.

As perceived our society was attacked on eighth afternoon. There was complete rampage, they burnt down our recently bought Maruti, nothing was left in my house. In fact they looted what they could carry and what they could not carry was burnt down. But I was thanking this man who had saved all of us. Material loss was not important one can recover it, he saved our honour, our lives and our men though we came on road with this episode. He had taken great risk. When his neighbours came to know that he has given refugee to Muslim families, he received threatening phone calls. He was also scared that his house might be attacked it is with great difficulty on 8th midnight kadir Pirzada with the help of military could evacuate us from that place. Latter we learnt that he faced wrath of his community but he cherished my husband’s friendship more than anything.”

Passengers travelling in train were thrown out, raped and killed. How else does one explain ordeal of Ayesha Pattan a fifteen year old girl who lives in Udhnayard in Surat. After four or five days of rioting in Surat, her family was feeling insecure in the city. Her father told Ayesha, her brother and sister-in-law to go to the family’s hometown of Nandarbar. He told than that if the situation worsened the other members of the family, that is, her parents and two brothers, would also come there. Ayesha can never forget
the harrowing — and as it turned out-aborted—journey to Nandarbar. In her words:

"We left for Nandarbar on the morning of December ten. Travelling with us was my ten-month old nephew. We boarded the train from Udhna. The train was full of passengers, most of whom were Hindus. One of our co-passengers gave us a seat. The train had hardly started moving, when the chain was pulled. People were shouting and asking people to get down from the train. There was chaos. All the passengers got down, but my brother, my bhabhi and myself remained seated in the train. Suddenly four strong young men rushed towards us and pushed and dragged us out of the train. They ruthlessly beat iron rods on the back of my bhabhi, She fell down along with her baby. She was beaten mercilessly on her back by five or seven people and they tore away her clothes. They also beat my brother.

"They hit a sword on my head, they tore away my clothes and pierced a knife in my breast and on the face. Around 10-15 people actively participated in this incident. Four persons raped me and then iron rods were inserted in my private parts. Then they threw me into the fire. In the meantime, there were shouts of 'Police, police'. and the people who had thrown me into the fire took me out and threw me on the railway track instead. They were standing near me and I thought that if they came to know that I was alive, they would beat me again. So I pretended to be unconscious. The police came and took me to the Civil Hospital in an ambulance. I was unconscious. I don't know when I regained consciousness. Everybody told me that my brother was in old Civil Hospital but actually he had bad sword injuries on the face and was thrown into a fire. I can identify the people who did all this, but the police has not produced them for identification as they should have".

Zakina bi was staying in Vishram Nagar during riots, here house was attacked but she were fortunate that her family escaped unhurt; she said
during attack their prime concern was how to save the honour of their daughters, she narrates: "Social parameters are same be it Delhi or Surat. In middle class society societal norms are more important. The honour of Patriarch has to be protected at the cost of life. My husband had ordered me to commit suicide along with my three daughters in case of attack on us, he told me he will prefer death of his daughter than a defiled daughters. He gave strict warning to my daughter in case of mob attack either hang yourself with your dupptta or jump into ground but at no cost you should fall victim to the mob".

In fact our field work experiences has shown that women who are considered vulnerable in normal times become the essential decision makers and they deal better with hostile world. Here we will see how women cooperate up with the situation of violence when it comes to attack on themselves or instances of attack on their husband family and children.

Women, the survivor is the receptor of the event, who lives with permanent guilt of watching her near and dear ones die. The yet another important aspect is that they have to reconstruct their life, their familial responsibilities, their duties make them to forget their torn self and rebuild the shattered life, and in many cases after the violence, and distraction the actual violence comes as routine, when they have to live with the after math, the sudden change in their organised secure world and in their status makes them to interact with the outer world, which is very harsh and there begins the actual trauma of their pain and loss.

Most of the women were not willing to say they had been raped, although most of them did talk about women in general having been abducted and raped. They are pressured into staying silent because rape is a crime in which the victim is penalised. In fact women bodies are violated during the process of violence and in post violence phase their sense of dignity is violated, the way they are treated at the hand of their community.
The silence is maintained not only for the fear of social ostracism but to avoid men of the family going through humiliation. It becomes difficult to find a match for unmarried girls and at times they have to lead single life or to be content being second or third wife, or marrying some widower.

The physical violence that these women experience comes to be buried in their hearts as their own "shame" and they are found to lead worthless life. No one can share this pain, not even their soulmates.

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