Violence
Women's Perception of Communal
WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Throughout recorded history, women's relationship to violence/social-conflict war has differed from that of men. War/Violence has rarely been a tool which women have used directly. It has been a method used ostensibly on their behalf for their defence. It has been something from which they have suffered, through death, rape, starvation, injury, loss of loved ones. It has been something they have endured with great courage and resourcefulness (Vickers: 1993).

"Communal violence is manifestation of communal ideology." (Chandra 1984). It propagates common social economic and political interests of a religious group. Women do not relate their religious activities with the larger issues and distant goals. Their priorities and immediate concerns are their day to day problems and family members. Religion for them is a faith and not a game of politics. It is not a question of women's incapacity or inability to use religion as an ideology. But it is outside their preview of activities.

It is true that women may not be the actual participants in community violence, they as members of community are forced to deal with the violence during the process of violence. So social violence has a definite bearing on women In this chapter we will try to understand how women perceive communal violence. Their own analysis of the communal violence, how does it effect them and what is their future discourse regarding communal violence. This chapter will try to understand women's voice in individual respect as well as in respect to her respective community and their perception of inter-faith or inter community interaction. It is important to understand the perception of communal violence by women. They are considered socialising agents, and cultural vestiges of community. As socialising agents they have an important role to play in community and in
wider society. Their opinion and relation with other communities is important to understand the future discourse of community relations. Their own perception will be an important basis for the socialisation process of their children.

HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP IN SURAT: SOME TESTIMONIES OF WOMEN

Hindu-Muslim conflict has a long history, but Surat is one place in Gujarat which had not witnessed communal violence since 1927. Communal and caste issues had not disturbed the peace of the Surat city. It is since 1990 Surat has started witnessing a change in its calm environment. The Militant propaganda of RSS had started polluting the socially friendly harmonious atmosphere in Surat Speeches of Swami Chinmayananda and Sadhvi Ritambhara of RSS had become popular not only with lower middle class but enjoy deep seated support from the upper middle class Hindus also.

The secular element in Surat had passed on the blame of recent riots on migrants from Suhrashttra who are popularly known as Kathiawari or 'Heeraghosu'. Labourers from Orissa, Punjab and Bihar were blamed for looting, plundering and killing. But they agree that this particular episode has led to the polarisation of the local people of Surat. Who before nots use to claim their Surati identity first.

"I had always been proud of our Surati culture we had never seen or heard such 'Dhamaal' (riot) in our Surat. My sister who has been staying in Ahmedabad had seen so many riots and had been a victim of displacement and police harassment, her husband use to say that Surati Muslims are cowards and wear bangles. They can never fight with Hindus. After riots I realised my brother-in-law was right, he used to say that this government and this police is for Hindus not or us".
Arifa is an educated lady belonging to upper middle class, she also could not escape the impact of riot. Though she did not suffer personally in the riots but her mobility is controlled. She tells:

"This Dhmaal (riot) has effected us a lot. Earlier, I never felt hesitant in interacting with males of 'other' community. After this though we were not personally affected in these riots but in riots there had been many incidents of rape and assault. Now our men do not allow us to go anywhere alone. We even feel scared to go alone to their' shops for shopping".

Similar feeling was echoed by Premlataben resident of Vishram Nagar. She has independent unit of metallic yarn at her residence. She felts scared that the Muslims might retaliate she told:

"After riots we felt scared and used to travel long distance to buy things and household commodities. We use to buy goods from the shops owned by our community. Our men do not allow us to buy things from other community shop and even we have to take longer routes to reach home avoiding Muslim mohalla and galli".

Riots effect the poorest section most, People who are daily wagers have difficult times during riots and even after riots they are affected most as was narrated Mehrun who sells fish:

"I sell fish, I have five children. How can we survive? I have no husband, no mother, father or brother to depend upon. What is a woman like me supposed to do? If others were doing well, one might borrow some money. But even good business have been ruined. We can not survive. We are the hardest hit in such a situation? Why do we have to suffer for Mandir Masjid, these people, who talk about Mandir-
Masjid have their houses full of rations. Colour television and cable keeps them entertained. They have no understanding of our plight. When we are sitting ideal at home from where will we fill our stomachs. Every now and then they come out with call for \textit{bandh} but none can stop the hunger. "\textit{Peth to bandh Nahi Hota, woh roti mangta hai}"  

Women are affected at all the levels of social structure, economically deprived women are worried how to utilise two meals and a middle class mother is worried how to get milk and vegetables how long her stock of dal, wheat and rice is going to last. Urmilla ben of Udhana chowk said:

"During riots we do not get anything like milk and vegetables so children have to go without tea, 'how long one can drink black tea and eat dals? Curfew is relaxed for very less time so we have to rush and get our supplies but it is not that easy, there are long queues and we have to fight for our way in it".

Similar sentiments were expressed by Anwari:

"Curfew is the worst if a man earns twenty five rupees a day and has to feed six children then what will the children eat if he cannot work for four days. And a curfew can go on for weeks. I had enough flour for four days and ate rotis with acchar. After that boiled rice was all we could get for days. In the beginning people try to share but later it is every family for itself a man is no longer a brother nor a woman a sister".

Women are not only burdened to provide food for their family members at emotional level they are always worked up thinking about the security of their son husband and other male family members. Abida Begum recounts:
"I can not concentrate on anything till my sons come from work. After losing my husband in riots, I have became too scary even if my sons are half-an-hour late, I get worried. I pray throughout day for their safety and security. I do not know how long my prayers are going to help my sons in this atmosphere of tension and uncertainty".

For the women the riot has had the consequences of drastically reducing their freedom of movement. They are not allow to go out without escort and their interaction with other community is also checked. Zakia words her resentment in following words:

"I had to discontinue my education after the riots. My father and brother did not allow me to go out. So many women and girls of our community had been raped in the riots. Now we are not allowed to even go to school. I really wanted to study but I can not argue with my brother and father. My mother wants me to continue my studies but she is helpless against my father's wrath. Everybody quotes the example of Anjum Munshi to restrict us from inter mingling with other community.

Anjum Munshi was a school teacher and sister of Riyaz Munshi a senior police officer she used to live at Varacha Road. She was so popular with Khatiawari people, she was in every way a Hindu, she dressed like a Hindu woman putting on a bindi on her forehead, observed perfect vegetarianism and was popular for Gharbha dances. She had revived the cultural evenings after the navratra in the colony and use to perform 'aarti'. Even she was raped and killed she was in no way a Musalman if she was not spared then what is our fate?"

Roohi is very outgoing and loves to interact with people. She is pained to see change in the attitude of both the communities after riots and remarks:
"The relations with the Hindu friends have become more formal. The older ones still address us as daughters. Earlier they used to come to our place and eat and drink freely. In fact Iftar party was the occasion to socialise and specially invite our Hindu friends. I remember the last day of Traabi was jointly celebrated by both the communities and many Hindu friends use to contribute into sheer distribution after the last Traabi. I remember when my elder brother Jaffer was married all my friends and Jaffar’s Hindu friend’s sister came and stayed in our house and helped us in making wedding arrangements. Now there are no more invitations either from us or them. The riots have hastened the process of differentiation and separation from their Hindu neighbours. They have given another push toward making the Muslims more Muslims and contributed to a sharper etching of Hindu and Muslim identities. And this had definite impact on us women also.

We never used to observe purdah from our close family friends (Males). They used to visit us freely and were even friendly with the women of the household. My elder brothers friend Sanjay known as Sanjay Bhaiya, used to treat us as younger sisters, he used to sit and chat with our mother for hours after riots he makes only formal visits to our place. There is change in his attitude and similar change is noticed in male members of my family and not to step in drawing room when males from ‘other’ community come or visit our house, this was not part of our culture before riots”.

There are many testimonies which speak of relationships which have grown stronger after riots and had out lived the hostilities and have shown faith in friendship than anything else. Parveen Begum is indebted by the core of her heart to her saviour and she cherishes this relationship more valuable than anything else. She narrates:
"We often think of those who helped us with gratitude. It makes us feel that we have friends who do not treat us as different from them. Those who do not have feelings of they are different I am different. We will never forget as long as we live, those who helped us, that we were in jaws of death and they saved us from it. When I meet the people who helped us I do 'sajda' to them. My head bows to them with reverence. And I cannot help repeating how grateful I am for what they did that they risked themselves for us and that if they had not done so we would not be here now".

Shamim Shiekh is an activist and was very active during relief and rehabilitation of victims of Post-Ayodhya violence in Surat. Her response to communalisation of society is as follows:

"I really do not know what is going to happen at all I just have no idea. And frankly I am very pessimistic about the future there is obviously no end to the problem in sight. In fact now there is less possibility of interaction with them. One of my Hindu neighbours was also protected by us during the riots. I do not know what happened to this Hindu couple, we were staying together for eight years like brothers, we used to celebrate each others festivals together. His wife used to help us preparing food for riot victims. They donated generously for the riot victims and we had no ill feelings regarding each other. Two months after riots, one morning, they came and told us that they have sold this flat and are moving to Amba Nagar. The mention of the name of locality was enough for me. I feel in both the communities there are utterly stupid prejudices against each other. They are there on such a huge scale and they are held on to so vehement that I just do not think there is going to be any solution at all".
It is not that communalisation of atmosphere has not at all touched women, it has touched women and in fact in the event of social crises women become more dependent on their community as she identifies herself with the community and to defend her community becomes very important. It is true that riots had effected both communities and females are most affected by the monster of communal violence. Women who are not direct participant into the violence at times are passive supporters of patriarchal violence. For example Shakila narrates that they were not well prepared for the riots whereas other community was more organised in their attack she states:

“We did not even have lathis in our house first the Hindus started throwing stones from their side of road. Then naturally men from our side had to retaliate we helped them by collecting stones and empty bottles, but since we had not expected, so we did not get anything much. But from opposite side they were throwing acid bulbs torches stones. Then we thought of boiling water and throwing on the mob. At that time police came and all were dispersed and it again started in night Hindus attacked us, then there were shouts of ‘Allah-o-Akbar’ and scream of ‘help/help’. As soon as we heard, three four men from our side ran to help. It was a foul few Hindus had given this call and when our men went out. They stabbed them. On top of this, when police came they arrested my son. Police started harassing us, Muslims, for the call of Allah-o-Akbar while it was work of Hindu miscreants I had to run from post to pillar for the release of my son”

Muslim community feels that it is not only Hindus are against them. They opined recent riots it had proved that government is also against them and has step-motherly attitude towards them. Rashida remarks:

“The government is like Mai-baap, when a mother has born more than one child. She looks at each child with favour. Then why does ‘Hukumat’ has step motherly attitude towards us? Our Masjid was
demolished and now we are being attacked and killed without telling us our fault. Police has became 'goondas in uniform'. My niece approached to one police man for help, instead of helping they grabbed her and made absence gestures. Now whom can you trust? I am too scared to see these men in uniform. I am always worried about my children I do not allow my daughter to go out without an escort but I can not stop my sons. They can not be made to sit at home, they have to go out for work but I feel apprehensive till they come back, so one can imagine what kind of life is this? you have every thing but you can not enjoy it, you live in fear. We are always scared what will happen next moment".

MUSLIM COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

Muslim community in Surat is still in the state of bewilderment to understand why there was such a brutalised attack carried against them in organised manner. Surat is the one place, where in pre riots days Muslims have never felt as minorities or discriminated.

Muslims of Surat have not emerged out of the humiliation they had undergone due to attack on their community. Violence in Surat was marked by a sinister elaborateness the arisen resembled the community bonfire organised on the occasion of the holi festival. It bore an even more bizarre resemblance one with sacrificial yajnas as some of the rioters threw into the rising flames, as oblation, live human beings including children. A display was made of the raping of Muslim women and girls and there were instances in which the ritual concluded with the killing of the victims or with the insertion of rods into her vagina and anus. None were the killings effected by the rioters always simple quick operations. The victims at times were made to utter "Jai Shri Ram" the war cry of Hindutva before being hacked to death or burnt alive" (Chandra, 1996 : 84).
Both men and women agree that Hindu-Muslim relations have greatly
deteriorated for first time among the local Surati. Muslims agree that it was
Kathiawaries who had attacked them but they have a bitter resentment to
Surati Hindus who did not put a united stand to defend their age old Surati
relationship Noorie Begum observes:

"Now the earlier friendship chords have broken among the local
people also. The earlier participat of Hindus and Muslims in each
others festivals has disappeared and ties of friendship reaching across
the communities have snapped. Old Hindu friends are now only
acquaintances to be politely greeted then one passes them on the
street but one no longer stops to exchange further courtesies".

Stronger sentiments were expressed by Razia, who was not victim of violence
but was active in rehabilitation of victims. She is teacher in Madrasa. She
state:

"Friendship between Hindu Muslim with open heart is not possible
now after the riots. Hindus are sweet outside but have poison in their
hearts. Hindu food and Hindu women are haram to Muslim. Hindu food
(Pork and other forbidden) Hindu women (body of infidel or kafir).

Hindus have no control over their impulse and behaviour. There
are no fixed times or formats to their prayer nor do their book give
them instruction on how to lead a good life-like the 'Quran' does. They
have been slaves for thousands year. They have no experience of
governance like the Muslims. They may be more educated but they
are illiterate as far as governing is concerned, now since they are in
'Hukumat' they want to crush us, they can now oppress us, take
revenge for the thousand years of our 'Hukumat'.

172
They want to finish us. They do not know how secular culture is to be promoted in the country. They are forcing through their police, Muslim youth towards terrorism. You know, our Muslim youth have vowed to revenge the rape of their sisters, mothers and daughters'. Out of three attackers identified by women for rape two have been killed. Hindus are cowards who fight only when in a large groups. They massacred us because police gave them protection otherwise they are too scared to come near our basti”.

Ayesabi feels pained at the communally contaminated atmosphere. She was victim of riots, her house was burnt and half of her family members were killed. Her small niece was rapped and killed. But still she has no hostility towards other community. She sadly remarked :

“In Surat we had never felt like outsiders but since past few years the popular slogan of RSS “Muselman ki Do sthaan Pakistan ya phir Kabristhan”, has made us feel bitter about the communisation of Surati culture. India is as much as ours, as it is of their. We would have forgotten Babri Masjid if these riots have not taken place, everything has normalised we are back again to work. In fact both the communities have realised that we are dependent on each other not only economically but socially also. Actually it is neighbours who first came to help at the time of disaster. To preserve love and harmony is equally important for both the communities”.

HINDU COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

Hindu antagonism of Muslims in Surat is not age old, it is a new phenomena which had emerged with the new Hindu identity. The new militant Hindu identity is creation of cultural memory based on imaginative bases for cultural identity for example. The cultural memory of Tipu's action of forcibly
circumcising Brahmins and compelling them afterwards to eat cows flesh as unequivocal token of their loss of caste (Kakkar, 1996 : 136). The Hindu shares the indignation of the seventeenth century destruction of the temple and their identity and this cultural memory has travelled through twentieth century. It has been orated to masses in the vociferous voice of Sadhvi Ritambhana and Uma Bharati. Both have evoked the feeling and sentiments of all Hindus (they bring dalits Sikhs jains, Parsis and Buddhist under the umbrella of Hinduism).

They have articulated how Hindus have suffered social loss of ancient culture at the hands of Mughals. "They had invaded our land and captured our women (Indian women Hindu Maharani of Mughal kings, Jhodha Bai, Bhagmati etc.) and destructed our temples (Somnath). In order to retrieve from sense of shame and loss Hindu community has to retrieve Babri Masjid which is birth place of Lord Rama. If we can not get back Babri Masjid we have to mourn for the lost honour, lost self esteem, lost civilisation lost Hinduism" (Bacchetta, 1994 : 256). She stresses that the self esteem can be maintained by projecting the bad, the dirty and the impure to another group the Muslim with which one’s own group is constantly compared. These values have been well grasped by masses. Similar feeling about Muslims are echoed by Lalitaben from Surat. She remarks:

"Muslim however are dirty in a more fundamental way, they eat beef Bada gosht (beef) is their favourite dish. If any of us even touches it, he must have a bath. All Muslims eat 'bada gosht'. That is why we keep ourselves away from them. We do not even drink water in their homes. We pray to the cow because it is our mother-goddess. Hindus revere even cow dung, use it for cooking, decorating the house and for many other things. They eat the cow".
Muslim community's unity seen with jealousy and is also source of resentment. Women of majority community criticise their males of their own community for not being united as Menna Ben Stated:

“Anything happens in a Muslim community they all become one. We cannot unite because of our different castes, every caste has its own customs and lifestyle. Each one is engrossed in himself. The rich try to exploit the poor. This does not happen with the Muslims. Though they have rich and poor atleast at the time of prayer they are one and they all pray together at the same time, it develops unity among them. Our system is not like that each one goes to the temple, perform Puja at his own time and in his own way and then leaves. There is no communication between us. If we could also show togetherness in our prayers, we would definitely become united and stronger than the Muslim. Muslims are more united. They eat, drink from same utensils to increase the feeling of brotherhood and unity”.

Ramilla, a young student of graduation feels that government unnecessarily appeases Muslim she sates:

“'The Muslims are by nature very cruel and violent, they are always united, and armed, Muslims are favoured by the state in India and supported, perhaps, even armed by Pakistan. Muslims have a constant supply of weapons coming from Pakistan or may be they are locally made. They are always well stocked, even the poorest Muslim house will have atleast a butcher's knife because they all eat meat. If government continues to please the Muslims and makes rules against the Hindu majority, the riots will continue forever.'

The strongest feeling against Muslims is that they are meat eaters, dirty, uncultured and aggressive who have got lot of money, but no sense of how to utilise money as expressed by Ramesh Zariwala.
"Muslim are sexual beasts and have no sense of morality they have keep on sexually harassing our women. They always had an eye for our women. This habit persists, we never look at single women of their community. They use to take ours all the time, they were rich and the rulers and did what they wanted. We are moral (dharmi) and would never do such things. Even, if rich we treat all women as mothers and sisters. You can not think of any other community going to bed with their sisters (first cousins) they are obsessed by sexuality. Look at all the children, they produce dozens while we are content with two or three.

So many of our women have got married to Muslims, either because they were in love or by force because then women were working as servants in Muslim households. None of them has been allowed to remain a Hindu or practice Hindu religion. All of them have converted whereas the same cannot be said about the Hindus. They are more tolerant and allow the other person to follow whatever religion he or she wants. Even a thought of converting of Muslim into other religion will spark of riot. They are so conformist of their religion. They keep their women in Purdah and even take our women.

The Muslim animosity also lies to a heedless pursuit of pleasure without any regard for the concerns and obligations which make one human. Their children are completely spoilt. They are used to a carefree uninhibited life. The young ones are only interested in enjoyment Everything they do is for enjoyment, we Hindus are called cowards by them because we are worried about cultivating land education for children and so many other things”.

Most of the women belonging to majority community also share the perception of their males. As articulated by Kamla Ben:
“The outbreak of violence in Surat was due to Muslim’s lewd sexual nature. They had raped a Kathiawari ben and then burn her alive. Muslim boys are especially prone to harass our girls. Unlike Muslim girls we leave our girls free to walk around and even go out of the basti. Many times the girls are victim of vulgar behaviour on the part of Muslim boys. If it was kept to verbal level it is o.k. But the Muslims often use physical harassment. This makes our boys very angry sometime these fights take on a communal colouring and in the part they been the main trigger for the outbreak of trouble”

Same sentiments were echoed by Madhu ben:

“We never used to mingle closely with them, they are very aggressive they eat bada gosht (beef) which kept Hindus away from them they used to prepare kheer (rice pudding) on their festival days but they cooked it in the same vessels. So we never ate even vegetarian food they sent to our houses. Our men only drank tea together”.

The strongest sentiment were narrated by a RSS worker who very vociferously said:

“They deserve to die they should all be killed. They spill our blood they rape our women let their blood be spilled the bloody bastards Just as Kali did not spare even one rakshas.

Since seventeenth century they have been harassing us they had mutilated our mother India, and in this amputated India also they have more rights than us, government is busy appeasing them. It is only Hindu who are trusted with Inter-faith unity. We are made samples to test Hindu-Muslim Unity, always we are told to maintain calm even when they have pierced knife into our heart, they have attacked and amputated our mother pierced destructed our temples and raped our daughters.”
There are women who do not share the views of their males and judge the 'other' community according their own experiences as was reflected by Umaben:

"I do not understand why we had to fight with them. To me they are like my brothers. I have been staying in Nanpura since past fifty years, they all are like my brothers and sons, nobody has ever given me any pain. There might be difference in our religion but why we fail to understand that different religions are different routes to reach the same destination. We human beings are same, all are one and we have same red blood running through our vein and nerves."

Shantiben had suffered in her own way due to riots. She has been forced to terminate her stitching lessons she told:

"I had suffered due to this violence actually I was learning stitching school run by Muslim lady. This school is in Muslim mohalla, my parents have discontinued my stitching classes. My teacher is so good she even came to my house but my parents had refused to sent me there. I feel suffocated and yell at my father, why I have to suffer for the deeds of others. I was planning to open up my own stitching centre after my diploma. I will never feel satisfied even. If I learn stitching at centre run by Hindu lady. My teacher at previous centre is wonderful lady and has unique way to teach her students."

Mannorma ben has to now leave with strange neighbour, who have come to live in house where before riots her friend Ayesha used to stay.

"I feel very bad when I saw Ayabhai and his family being attacked I had very good relation with this family. We use to visit them on Eid and
they used to come to our place on Diwali and Holi but now they have shifted to a Muslim mohalla. The neighbours who have come are not good I always miss Ayeshabi she was so nice and gentle.

I still could not understand how does a temple at Ayodhya concern us. We in Surat have so many temples and tell me, do we have time now a days to go to Ayodhya or for that matter on any pilgrimage? Life has become very busy and cost of living is very high, where do we have time or money to go to these far flung places like Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura. 'Lord Rama', I bet would have been happy we if we would have recited 'His' name sitting at our homes and by not hurting the sentiments of our Muslim brothers Hinduism is known for tolerance and patience but the projection of Hindutva during these riots have beaten all records of our ancient culture”.

COMMUNALISATION OF 'SELF' AND 'GROUP' IDENTITIES

The insight provided by field study reflects that episodes of violence have had framed thought process in the minds Sikhs. Earlier Sikh women have never thought in terms of community and now after the riots identity consciousness is there and their attitude towards other community has been chalked out on their experiences of social violence. Many of these testimonies do reflect that women by nature are peace loving and do not want to fight. It is also true that mental processing of violence is different in the minds of women than men.

After so many years of anti-Sikh riots it seems that every thing has normalised. The old animosities are erased and the Hindus and Sikhs have patched up. But our study reflects that superficially situation has normalised but actually speaking impact of November 1984 riots had marked impact on the relationship of Hindu Sikh community. Ranjeet Kaur is a middle aged lady and has tried to overcome the trauma. She remarked:
"Initially I use to feel strong hatred for Hindu (Bhaiyas migrants from Bihar and U.P.) but now it is settled, we have to live here and work among them and if I go with brood on my face I will be replied in same fashion. I try to maintain distance from other community but working relations are o.k. My son goes out for work, he has friends in that community. They come and eat at our place so it is fine, I believe those who have done wrong will be punished by God. 'Dair hai andher nahini'.

I was hurt when my neighbours had turned their face. Though they tried to shield afterwards. They came to camp and told to come back and. They even expressed their inability to help me then as they were threatened by mob. I agree with them, but I strongly believe it if all the Hindus in the lane would have unitedly confronted mob. They could have saved the two Sikh families. Where there is will there is way"

Darshan Kaur

I have no grudges against my Hindu brethren they helped us in relief camps, their women came and helped us. I have regrets against these Jats and Gujjars they have killed our men. They killed my husband, father-in-law and other male relatives because they could not stand us as we were prospering we are hard working. They have a feeling of jealousy towards us. They could not see us prospering and that is why they crushed us in every way economically, socially and politically.

Same Sentiments were expressed by Stainder Kuar : I do not think Hindus and Sikhs can live like brothers again :

"There is divide, "Aaina Jab Tootha Hai To Judane par Nishan Reh Jata Hai". Hindu Sikh were brothers before the riots but now there is divide we have just got fear in our minds. The old camaraderie is completely
gone. We do not know what the matter is? It is all because men are killed, and houses are looted that is why the heart is broken and we do not see any hope to restoring the normal brotherly feeling. We are existing together but there is reservation in mind and we have become conscious of Hindu and Sikh identity”.

Jasbir Kaur also has developed resentment towards ‘other’ community she states:

“We never had any ill feeling towards Hindus right from the beginning. Now also we do not have any such feeling. Of course we have ill feeling towards these leaders who promoted massacre, even among the neighbours there were some who did not like sardars and said “Sardars deserved to be attacked and killed”. We certainly feel bitterness and anger against them.

We do have grudges against the neighbourhood, who helped the mobs to identify Sikh houses and led to the attack. And parmatma (God) will take revenge against them. What revenge can we take. ‘Uski lathi beawaz hai’ (His attack is silent).

Harbans Kaur is an old lady who had seen partition and November riots of 1984 she feels sorry about the divide in Punjabi culture she recalls:

“In early days we have no difference between Hindus and Sikhs. Punjabi was punjabi, Hindus-Sikhs use to intermarrry and Interdine. If Hindus did not have son, they often vowed to make their first son Sikh as an offering to Guru, so how could one think of brother attacking brother. I am broken I could have understand if Muslim had attacked us, it would not have been that painful but a Hindu attacking Hindu in fact has weakend the Punjabi brotherhood. You know we use to say that ‘roti aur beti Sanji Hai’ (Daughters and hearths are common)”
Shanmi Kaur was never identity conscious till riots broke. She used to be sensualist but after riots. She has changed. She expressed her feelings in following words:

"Men have died we are left to bear the actual brunt of the violence. Society treats as like inauspicious object. Our life is deprived of love, sympathy and companionship. I have become hard hearted after going through all this. I had never thought of in terms of community. For me we all were human beings. After riots there was tremendous change I became firm believer in religion and stopped plucking my eyebrows. I have started observing the Sikh commandment with sincerity and it provides me lot of strength. I am wearing 'kirpan' for my self-defiance. In case there is again violence, I can die with dignity defending my honour and my religion."

Laxmi Kaur could not apprehend the violence till it actually occurred and recalled:

"Hamne thodi mara tha Indira Gandhi ko, ow to hamari bhi maa thi, hame bhi bahoot dukh hua tha" (we had not killed Mrs. Gandhi then why were we attacked). In fact my husband did not eat his dinner that day we are supporters of congress, and as we being members we had feel very bad they should have punished the culprits for that but why they had to kill our poor men."

Sakhi lives in Tilak-Vihar and has turned into staunch believer of Sikhism. Before riots she was not much concerned of her religions identity she narrates:

"I can never forget November 1984 it had changed my life it has made me conscious of my Sikh identity, I was carefree person and had never
made any difference on the basis of religion and caste. I like to socialise with people in my mohalla and had cordial relations with my neighbours. We used to bring our food out and eat together sharing with each other. We stayed together for years. This issue of Hindu-Sikh had never touched us. Since 31st October 1984 had changed everything in my life our men were lost, our houses were burnt and our age old ties with our neighbours were snapped.

After riots I used to feel very scared to interact with them (Hindus). There was fear in my mind, when I use to travel in bus I use to hide my kadha under the sleeves of my shirt so that no body should notice that I am Sikh but slowly with interaction with people I regained the faith. Now every thing is normal but still I prefer to stay within my community. I can not stay in other `neighbourhood. Staying within the community is an assurances, that in any case if something happens we are together”.

We encountered mixed reaction from the women regarding attitude towards the other community. Generally most of them liked to maintain distance from other community. But many narratives describe people still have good relations and visit each other. There is a case of Gurdeep Kaur from Delhi, her husband and sons were hacked to death, but she and her daughter were saved by neighbours during the violence. She narrated:

"I have no words to express my gratitude to my husband’s friend wife who was Durga for us. After my husband was killed. I became suspicious of everybody I had seen my four sons and husband being killed in front of my eyes, but I was hiding with my daughters though who my husband had instructed me to die and kill my daughters but not surrender to the mobs. In fact I had sacrificed everything to save the honour of daughters."
I along with my daughter was hiding in one house which was under construction. From there my husband's friend wife took us to her house. There I found around 20 to 25 women had already taken shelter refugee. The owner of the house was under pressure from the village to surrender these women to them. But I have no words to express my thanks to the old lady who had rescued us. She sat outside the room in which we are hiding, holding a naked sword in her hand and warned that no male should come near the door of that room and if any body tried to cross the doorstep of the room would not be spared.

I can not forget this lady who saved all of us. It is women of the Jat community who helped us and its the males of Jat community who killed our males. When I try to analyse the event I fail to understand, than I think, may be my sons and husband were destined to die that way. If death is eternal no one can escape it, God is great, his power is supreme, not even a leaf can move without his command. I tell my daughters to be like their aunt (Jat lady). Help the poor and needy. God will help you".

Harbeer is a school teacher, her husband was killed during November violence in 1984. She used to stay in Ashok Vihar after violence she sold her house and shifted to Shiv Nagar. She reported:

"My husband was killed while he was coming back to Delhi on Train at Tughlakabad station. I was protected by my neighbours at Ashok Vihar, but after violence my mother who was staying in Trans-yamuna area had shifted to Shiv-Nagar and insisted me also to come and stay here among Sikh community.

Anti-Sikh riots was reaction of Government's mishandling Punjab Problem ordinary masses suffer for the deeds of politicians. We became pawns in the hands of politician. If government wanted to set
things right in Punjab it could have done. If State says that they could not control crisis in Punjab and thus had to resort to state *terrorism* (Army action) to bring normalcy in. State admits that it is powerless. In fact state has left communal monster loose in civil society to build its vote bank Hindu-Sikh Muslim are pawns and politicians flourish on the issues of caste and community.

I am teacher by profession and my students come from different religious background. I have to be sensitive to their religious needs. And I strongly feel in order to lead a good social life we are dependent on each other. There are number of incidences where Sikhs were provided shelter by their neighbours or were helped to reach the safer place with the help of other community. I feel that during phases of social violence we became more dependent on 'other' community. We people who have secular beliefs in fact should be more organised and try to build a alternative force to combat communalism”.

Reena Singh, who was just eighteen years old when riots broke out had also felt the brunt of communalism affecting her life. She did not suffer any material loss but suffered immense emotional loss when she noticed marked difference in the attitude of her neighbours and friends. She starting feeling that she is different from her neighbours. She narrates:

“Punjabi Hindus were concerned about the security of their neighbours, they helped them with everything but they held totally opposite kind of view points. They felt very strongly about that the assassination had taken place. On the other hand they were very protective to us but they also felt that the Sikh have to be taught a lesson.
They felt this all the time while they were at the same time looking after us so well. I remember the lady (with whom we had taken shelter) saying to my mother that it is not fair Sikhs have killed Indira Gandhi, I do not know what that you think but I am very glad Bhinderanwale has been finished and things like that. My mother said "Yes I do not care for Bhindranwale any more than you did."

Sudden loss of self respect and harassment at the hands of their so called brothers led to seclusion of Sikh community and that space was captured by religious political activity within Sikh community. Kulbir expressed her resentment in following words.

Sikh community was not that united before riots, after riots Sikh community all over India was united and there was revivalism of Sikhs through Gurudwara so Sikh sentiments loss of respect were assuaged with slogans like Sava Lakh se ek ladaun (one against one and a quarter lakhs of people) which was what the tenth guru had said when he was loosing batters "Raj karenga khalsa". The khalsas will rule) so in order to explain their own hostility and sense of injury they said we will also fight like our guru did and thereby kind of focus on the militant aspects.

After the riots whole Sikhs community felt discriminated and humiliated. It gave a feeling of being inferior, because they were taken to task in just one day. For us whole world felt apart there was sudden loss of self respect the right of walking down the road with your head held high was taken away from us just because we wear our hair long. In just one day the Sikhs had been made second class citizen in this country. Before riots Sikhs had never experienced this kind of humiliation. In fact Sikhs were considered one of the most prosperous and progressive community of India they are known for their straight forwardness honesty and hardwork".
It is popular impression in Sikh community that these riots were engineered by government. If they wanted to stop it they could easily have done. They wanted to humiliate the sardars that is why they have attacked Amandeep who had also experienced riots, but was fortunate enough that she belonged to upper middle class, thus her family was not injured, there was attack on her house which was partially looted. But riots had consolidated her Sikh identity she narrates:

"It was not riot there's never been such an incidence before that, if the leader is killed it is followed by indiscriminate killing. It did not happen when Gandhi died, when he died there was no such attack on ordinary people. Gandhiji was after all father of the Nation when his death could not provoke such sentiments then how could now at the time of Indira's death, they singled out one community and massacred them. They had decided to crush the Sikh community which was the most prosperous community in the country. Because if you look at the events closely to Indira Gandhi had died in the morning itself and people had after all got to know that she had died. It is only after they went and shouted the slogan 'khoon ka badla khoon' and repeated telecast of this scene on television had created a mood or a trouble and atmosphere for riot. If it was spontaneous it should have started off in the morning itself.

It was the next day when it really got bad. They planned and organised it in a big way because the technique use to kill people was same from Delhi to Kanpur. If there was anger, it should have exploded immediately. And if it was anger why did not they demonstrate their anger in other states? They should also have shown their anger there also but nothing happened in these states where they were not in power. There was a small attempt in Bengal which was put down immediately."
People ask "Are there Hindus only in these states? Are not there Hindu in other states too? Why was not there anger in the South? They are also Hindus after all. Did not they feel anger? Why was it only these people got angry?

This was planned by them, there is no doubt about it, police was given orders not to intervene and media did not report what was happening in the country. All over north India there were mobs attacking the Sikhs and arson and looting took place. Would they (i.e. those in power) have not got to know? No police came, no fire brigade came was everyone sitting and crying? Was there no one to think that the situation should be controlled? It could have been controlled. If government wanted to control what happened to the telephones to the transmitters at that time when this killing arson and looting was taking place?

Sikhs were not only massacred physically but they were massacred culturally also through romours which had built up anti-Sikh sentiments, it did affect the Hindu-Sikh relation even secular minded people got effected by such rumours. Raminder who belongs to upper middle class and religion never used to bother her before riots told:

Sikhs all over India felt betrayed after the carnage they still failed to understand why did they pick on one community, we would have forgotten Blue-Star by and by and then this November riots was something indelible one could not forget the cultural death of our community which is known for its martial calibre. It pains more when one is reminded that when Gandhi ji died there was nothing like this. It was just a case of one man being tried and hanged. But in this case, when they had captured one of the assassins the other had been killed. Then why did they have to start killing people of the community as a whole. It is this that has hurt us most deeply.
We feel and have all the evidences to support that it was a conscious and calculated stand. When it did not happen with a leader like Gandhi why now when they had killed one of the guilty and the other was in their hand should this kind of carnage take place? The due process of law could just have taken its course.

It was a collapse but to great extent a contrived collapse. Because the police, I believe had orders not to intervene. And we have evidence eyewitness accounts telling us that the police not only stood by but sometimes actively participated in the violence and the looting”.

PROCESS OF COMMUNAL GHEETOISATION

Riots has led to the re-ghettoisation of the community, now people are scandalised to stay in mixed surrounding. These continuos episodes of social violence have led to the community based dwelling which are dangerous for the health of social fabric of society. It provides very little chance for interaction with other communities and strengthens community identity. This lack of interaction among the communities, further strengthen the prejudices and biases against each other.

Keemat Kaur used to stay in Sultanpuri before riots, she had lost two sons and her husband in this violence, she managed to save her youngest son by dressing him like girl. She had never thought that her neighbours with whom she had been living since ages will turn their faces She states:

"When we received the orders to vacate the camp. I thought to go back to Sultanpuri as I had a very big house. I had come in that home as bride and had sentimental attachment to it, I went back there. I was shocked to so changed and hostile attitude of my neighbours. It gave
me a chilled feeling in my bones and seeing my youngest son, my neighbour said "Tu zinda kaise bach gaya" (How come you are live how did you manage to escape). I had never expected this from my immediate neighbours. This behaviour of my neighbours after riots had shattered me completely. After this incident I could feel the undercurrent and did not had courage to stay in that house with my kids."

Janaki Kaur had never imagined that she will be one day target of communal frenzy this lady from Alwar had came and settled in Delhi with her husband in hope of better future but destiny had something else in store for her. She reported :

"I had heard stories of Partition from my mother and grandmother, my father used to tell us how Men were killed, women were raped, houses were burnt, and they travelled in Kafila's from sind to Alwar. But those accounts were of Hindu/Sikh at one hand and Muslim on the other hand. No one could have ever Imagined Hindu attacking Hindu. We were brought up with this feeling that Hindu and Sikh are one and Muslim are different, So I never had the feel that they could be Hindus attacking Sikhs, their own brothers.

It was a tremendous shock its true people who came to loot us were Schedule Caste and backward castes but people who were n police and Government were not from lower classes, its with the help and encouragement of these two agencies we were butchered our neighbours were not if active participant. They definitely sided with their community by not intervening. There are examples where neighbour hood had intervened mob could not attack Sikhs. This mistrust which we suffered at the hands of our neighbour made me resentful of Hindus. I did not go back to Sultanpuri. My neighbour did came but I refused to go."
Whole of west Delhi has become Sikh dominated area. One single episode of anti-Sikh riot had permanent impact on the relationship between the two communities. Most of the Sikhs have moved into west Delhi riots of 1984 and most of Hindus have sold off their houses in West Delhi and moved into other parts of Delhi.

Women are affected in communal violence as wives, mothers sisters and daughters women live within their communities, and so they can not choose between their gender identity and identity as members of a community during communal-violence. During riots one is attacked on account of being a member of a target community. Women have to fear for the safety of their own life and those of their loved ones become crucial to the survival of a threatened community.

It is strongly felt that the mental processing of the events of the riots is different is women. It in not only that women's memories of the riot tend to be circumscribed by what happened inside the house rather than outside and that their anxieties are centred around the danger to their children with women anger at Muslim/Hindu/Sikh is not the baffled rage encountered among men. Women also find it easier to think and plan of moving away from their endangered homes to leave it all behind and get on with their lives. Men seem to find it more difficult to free themselves from the impact of recent violent events. They aquoife over leaving their house and the implications such a move may have for their own self respect and the community's sense of honour. The men brood over the events of the riot more.

Women of both majority and minority community are worried about the safety of their men. Both feel insecure about their own and as well as the safety of their kith and kin. Even in situation of relief camp and curfew women are busy performing their the role of mother and wife. Women are worried for the scrutiny of their men during the riots. They are scared of being attack
or retaliation. Fear adds to their day to day worries they stated that they feel apprehensive, , men do not understand their insecurity. The other major problem faced by women is to arrange food for the family in situation of riot. As break down of normal structure leads into hike in prices of the eatables. Women have to manage with these pressures during riots. Security of children is also taken care of mothers. Women are afraid to send children out and to control mobility and keep them busy is duty of women.

It is true polarisation on community basis has impact on the women's perception of communalism. They feel more secure by affiliating to their own community. But there are many evidences which show that women of majority had helped their 'Muslim sisters' and 'Sikh sister' during the communal violence.

Religion has very important meaning for women they suffer on account of religion and yet religion is source of healing in aftermath many women have accepted trauma of dislocation and lose of their dear ones as ordained by God. In fact in aftermath religious identity becomes much stronger and it has definite impact on the secular fabric of the society. During the study of the these two episodes of violence it has been discovered. That riots have had an impact on the friendships between Hindus-Sikhs and Hindu-Muslim. Friendships especially those that go back to childhood have not snapped completely because of the heightened conflict and violence between the communities but it suddenly has impact on the depth of relationship.

It both the riots it was discovered that it has led to re-ghettoization of the community dwelling. Re-ghettoization of community not only strengthens community identity but it reduces the opportunity for women to interact with the members of other communities. As discussed earlier riots lead to control on the mobility of women, thus homogeneous dwellings provide them little chance to interact with deferent people and develop their own understanding of inter-community relations. Thus we see in conditions of
re-ghettoization women learn about 'other' community through their males. Thus unconsciously their prejudices and biases are based on the perception of the collective consciousness of the community.

As observed in Delhi and Surat minorities have been antagonised against majority community. In fact in Delhi state is also responsible for strengthening community identity among the victims of riots by rehabilitating around 900 dislocated Sikh families at one-place.

It has strengthened the prejudices and biases against the 'other' community among the victims. Women are also part of community. Thus they can not remain untouched by communal-ideology.

It is also true except few instances of women being perpetration of riots. Generally women are non-violent. The most accepted argument for their non-participation in violence is they are mothers, they give birth and thus are aware of the cost of human flesh.

This aspect of women's nature gives us hope that women can prove strong force against the communal violence. Women have to emerge on common platform maintaining their religious identities to protest against social-violence as it affects them not only personally but as wives mothers daughters and sisters and they are left companionless and shelterless to reconstruct the world.
REFERENCE


