CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION: AHMEDABAD INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Why is that despite ethnic diversity, some places – regions, nations, towns or villages – manage to remain peaceful, whereas others experience enduring patterns of violence. Also, after maintaining a veritable record of ethnic peace, some societies explode in ways that takes one by surprise. Is it possible to explain violence by inter ethnic, economic rivalry polarized party politics or segregated neighbourhood? What factors differentiate conditions for peace from those engendering violence?

Two crucial features can be identified in the Indian context while studying communal riots. The share of rural India in communal violence is remarkably small. Between 1950 and 1995, rural India accounted for less than 4% deaths in communal violence. Hence, Hindu-Muslim violence is primarily an urban phenomenon. However, within urban India too, Hindu-Muslim riots are concentrated in 8 cities, which account for 49% of all urban deaths in communal violence. But these cities represent merely 18% of India’s urban population. 82% of the urban population has not been riot-prone.

India’s Most Riot-Prone Cities 1950-95.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Deaths 1950-95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bombay</td>
<td>1,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ahmedabad</td>
<td>1,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hyderabad</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Meerut</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Aligarh</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Baroda</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Delhi</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Calcutta</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The Indian Express, Ahmedabad, July 23, 1996.
In the case of Gujarat, Ahmedabad and Vadodara account for nearly 80% of the total deaths. Hence, Hindu-Muslim violence is city specific. Does local (and national) politics, provide the context within which the local mechanisms linked with violence are activated? What mechanisms does a city activate to manage conflict?

The first is communication; between members of different religious communities, civic networks often make neighbourhood level peace possible. Such groups policed neighbourhoods, killed rumours, provided information to the local administration and facilitated inter-community dialogue during times of tension. The efficacy of these techniques was proved when Bombay remained peaceful in early 2002 while Gujarat burned. After large-scale violence in Bombay, post Babri demolition, the citizens of Bombay made conscious attempts to improve inter-community communication, especially in the sensitive areas.

Another mechanism is through associational forms of engagement – which serve the economic, cultural and societal needs of the two communities, the support for peace not only tends to be strong but it can also be more solidly expressed. Such organized inter-community civil networks, also constrained political behaviour. Politicians, for electoral gains have torn apart the social fabric, through the organized might of criminal gangs. A nexus of politicians and criminals lead to an institutionalised riot system. Without the involvement of organized gangs, large scale rioting and hundreds of killings are unlikely and without political protection, such criminals cannot escape the law.

---

4 The Indian Express, Ahmedabad, March 7, 2002.
6 This was very clear during the Genocide in Gujarat, refer reports in The Indian Express and The Times of India, March 1, 2002 to April 2002. (Ahmedabad Editions), Also, Ghanshyam Shah, Rediff Interviews, May 2, 2002.
Thus, we need to study the structures of civic life, which constrain political strategies and their outcomes.

Historically, most of India’s civic structure emerged during the 1920s, when politics ceased to be highly elitist. Gandhi revolutionized the freedom movement for he was not only interested in political independence but social transformation also. Between the 1920s and 1940s numerous organisations came up, for women’s and tribal uplift, labour welfare, Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of untouchability, *swadeshi* etc. Thus, the foundations of India’s associational civil order were laid by the Gandhian shift in the national movement. A space for them was created by forms of mass politics that emerged in the 1920s all over India.\(^7\) During this period, identities were also being structured.

**Conflict and Civil Society**

Many of the identities we take for granted today, were quite recently constructed in history.\(^8\) However, contemporary identities as Hindus or Muslims or Christians does not preclude the fact that such categories did not exist in pre-modern times. The identities in pre-modern times operated on a small scale. Ordinary people rarely interacted beyond their local environments. Conflict was managed locally. Extra local communities did not include “the people”; such larger communities primarily consisted of the ecclesiastical elite and the court-based aristocracy and nobility.\(^9\)

Modernity changed the meaning of identities by bringing the masses into a larger, extra local framework of consciousness. It made identities and communities wider and more institutionalised. As Anderson has observed, modern technology and a modern economic system – the printing press and capitalism, made it possible to have imaginations about

---


\(^9\) Anderson, Ibid. p.25.
large populations and secular communities based on language that overtook the pre modern extra local, religious communities of priests and aristocratic dynasties.¹⁰

How are large ‘popular’ identities constructed? Power relations are deeply implicated in the formation of knowledge, for much of what passes for objective or scientific knowledge, especially in the human science, is basically a narrative constructed by the knowledge elite and promoted by the institutions of power. Such narratives also create social, political and cultural effects of their own. Throughout history, alternative forms of knowledge were suppressed, for they were associated with pre-modern ways of knowing and patronized by those who had very little power in society.

Thus, the knowledge elite constructed group categories, which were promoted by its centres of power. To illustrate, the census, a modern instrument of categorization, would typically ask the masses whether they were (a) Hindu, (b) Muslim, or (c) Christian – even if the masses felt their culture borrowed from all three and their identities were an intersection of (a), (b) and (c). In the first Census of Gujarat in 1911, the census superintendent recorded 35,000 “Hindu- Mohammedans”. His superior soundly ticked him off.¹¹ The identities were split into lucid categories to facilitate administrative procedures. Thus, if public policy, based on such census groupings, allocated patronage, public offices, or state grants then the very act of census categorisation would begin to create identities. This selectivity was based on their preconceptions of what the building block of a society were or on a calculation of what divisions would maintain their power.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid.
However, this is not to argue that nationalism as a "master narrative" arose, in the West or elsewhere, merely because it suited elite interests. Nationalism sought to undermine the old order by involving the masses and posing challenges to the existing dynastic and ecclesiastical order.\textsuperscript{13} For the masses can also utilize the technologies of imagination to construct alternative nationalities and identities. The knowledge elite may also construct alternatives that in turn create newer identities, but it is not a one-way process.

With respect to postcolonial societies such as India, the principal argument is that the major contemporary ethnic cleavages were a creation of the colonial power and given the immense power of colonial masters, such divisions have endured and will last for a long-time. "Modern colonialism instituted enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowledges – the coloniser and the colonised, the occidental and oriental, the civilised and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the underdeveloped... (T)he colonial rulers enacted their authority by constituting the ‘native’ as their inverse image.... Not because of the colonizer’s bad faith but due to the functioning of colonial power".\textsuperscript{14}

Apart from 'discourses' or 'narratives', no 'scientific basis' exists about the origins, rise and spread of Hindu-Muslim antagonisms. For the British, antagonism between Hindus and Muslims became the master narrative, though there was evidence of their co-existence. Primordial antagonism was not the 'truth' about Hindus and Muslims, it was constructed and promoted as such by the British, partly because it suited them to split India into its two largest religious groups and partly because the natives, argued the British, could not constitute a modern nation – they could think only in terms of pre-modern religious communities.

\textsuperscript{13} Anderson, op.cit. pp.37-46.
Hindus and Muslims may have existed before the British came to India, but these names did not refer to large, political entities. They only signified small, personal and village-based cultural entities. Over time, the master narrative has influenced the perspective through which small clashes between Hindus and Muslims have been interpreted. Trivial incidents between 'individuals' turned into battles between the two 'communities', for these incidents came to be 'conceptualised' or 'represented' in terms of the master narrative, lending excessive rigidity to communal divisions and directly contributing to rising levels of communal violence.15

Often, this violence takes an institutionalised form if ethnic demands for higher political representation affirmative action, or personal laws are pursued in assemblies, elections, bureaucratic corridors and non-violent movements and protests. In order to explain ethnic violence it is assumed that ethnic identity has already been formed; through conflict itself is identity shaping and may have been created for that purpose by ethnic partisans.16

However, one also needs to investigate civic life, the power of long-standing hatreds, of the political elite, of political institutions and the formation of narratives. "Civil society" refers to the space in a given society that (a) exists between the family level and the state level, (b) makes interconnections between individuals or families possible and (c) is independent of the state. It is also required that civic space be organized in 'associations' that attend the cultural, social, economic and political needs

16 The entire episode of the Ayodhya Movement and its Narratives.
of the citizens and that the associations be voluntaristic and not 
'ascriptive'.

What constitutes the 'modernity' of civil society? Not all modern 
political systems have civil societies and this 'modernity' is very much 
qualified. Communist politics were modern in as much as it attacked 
ascriptive hierarchies and privileges but the state penetrated all sites of 
organisational life: hospitals, theatres, universities etc. Thus, modernity is a 
necessary but not a sufficient precondition for the rise of civil society.

A certain modernist bias exists and any form of tradition, though it 
might be highly flexible and pluralist is considered intolerant.

Not all-ethnic associations are ascriptive. The element of choice 
exists. Ethnic associations do perform many “modern functions, funding 
education professionalism, participate in democratic politics, facilitating 
modern occupations.” Undoubtedly, many ethnic associations are very 
much bigoted, however, the less privileged ones have effectively fought 
for equality at the work place, schools and places of worships. Thus, the 
traditional forms of association have also pursued highly modern goals.

Hence, one cannot equate ethnicity with conservatism or that such 
associations cannot discharge their civil functions. This is more evident in 
the developing world where formal associations are non-existent in the 
small towns and countryside. Numerous sites for interaction do exist – at 
the playground, village common, and community functions. Certain 
culturally specific sites also exist like festival venues, though informal, 
such sites help people to connect, talk and develop perspectives on local 
and extra-local politics.

17 Ashutosh Varshney, op.cit. n.11, p.40.
18 L. Rudolph and S. Rudolph, The Modernity of Tradition, Chicago, 1967. The numerous schools and 
colleges set up by the caste associations in Ahmedabad to promote modern education. (For details 
refer chapter 3).
When villages became towns, towns turned into cities and cities were transformed into metropolises, people began to travel long distances for work, face-to-face contract was not possible beyond neighbourhoods. So, associations were necessary not only for civil peace but also for many economic, social and political aims and interactions.

It is possible to specify two links between civic life and ethnic conflict. Firstly, prior and sustained contact between members of different communities allows communication between them to moderate tensions and pre-empt violence, when such tensions arise, owing to an exogenous shock – a riot in a nearby city/state, distant violence or desecration reported in the press or shown on television, rumours planted by politicians or groups in the city in order to arouse communal bitterness and passions, or a provocative act of communal mischief by the police or thugs. In cities, where there is deep interaction between different communities, in various neighbourhoods, peace committees emerge ‘from below’. Such committees are not imposed ‘from above’ by the local administration. Because there is better communication across communities, such committees can dissolve tension and prevent rumours. Else, politician members, who, though inducted for peace purposes may have already polarized the policy for electoral purposes, hamper their work. They only have a notional presence on peace committees.¹⁹

The second aspect is that the prospects of peace increase where cities have associational as well as everyday integration. Here, even politicians find it difficult to engender ethnic cleavages. Without a nexus between politicians and criminals, big riots and killings are highly improbable.²⁰ Everyday engagements in the neighbourhoods may not be

²⁰ The presence of such a system was evident in Gujarat. See, Genocide in Gujarat, Sabrang Communications, Bombay, 2002. The Census and Municipal Records were used to identify Muslim homes and business establishments.
able to stand up to the marauding gangs protected by powerful politicians, but the organized strength of unions, associations and even political parties not interested in ethnic violence, can deter violent mobs. When associational integration is available, the potential space of destructive and violent action simply shrinks.  

Civil Society and Conflict in Ahmedabad 1856-1919

As a postcolonial industrial city, Ahmedabad has earned notoriety for communal violence. Any festival, be it kite flying, Ganesh Utsav, Rath Yatra, Moharram, inevitably leads to clashes. The walled city areas especially had the dubious reputation of being afflicted with this virus. One gets so saturated with negative reports of the city’s communal strife, that only the statistics of the dead or injured grab headlines and the rest get buried in the inner pages of national dailies. Hence, what was the nature of inter-community relationships during our period of study? No city which boasts a grand business tradition as Ahmedabad does, can afford strife to derail its trade. There was the interesting incident of the Nagarsheth Kushalchand interceding with General Goddard to prevent the loot of the city during the British takeover, promising the same cooperation as with the earlier political masters, the Mughals and the Marathas. This reflects the practical common sense approach of the people. The innovative education of the Raj paved the way for a more rational and secular learning as compared to traditional methods. The first generation educated in the Western mould like Bholanath Sarabhai, Mahipatram Rupram, Bhogilal Pranavallabhdas, Lalshanker Umiyashanker were committed to the cause of removing old taboos among the Hindus – expensive death rituals, ban on foreign travel, the plight of child widows etc. A climate of debate and

21 Varshney, op.cit. p.47.
discussion was thus created and journals like *Buddhiprakash* widely circulated such ideas.

However, the scenario among the Muslims was different. Though divided into different castes like Vohras, Khojas, Saiyads and Memons, the caste system was not rigid among the Muslims. Also, they were slow to grasp the opportunities the new learning provided. However, the Muslims were very much part of the civic life. *Buddhiprakash*, over several months, presented a history of Muslims in India, written without any prejudices. Articles were written to impart sanitary consciousness to Muslims. The finer points of the Raj were also explained. An interesting piece pointed out the perils of * bidi* smoking. The importance of history and its teaching was also stressed. The Mohammedan educational boards were set up and public notices were issued about fellowships to deserving students. A Muslim education conference was held in Surat, which called for students to aspire for Aligarh, curbing lavish birth-death rituals and female education.

In 1868, the education inspector, Mr. T.B. Client and the Sadr Amin, Ghulam Moniuddin set up three Urdu schools in Ahmedabad. A comment in another article reflected the gradual changes... ‘The Muslim youth have left loitering and taken to education. In 1869, Sheikh Bademiya wrote an article, warning Muslims that they are lagging behind

---

22 *Buddhiprakash*, The Issues of April, May, June August and September, 1874.
26 Ibid. November 1905, No.11, Book 44.
27 Ibid. June 1902, No.6, Book 41.
28 Ibid. May 1901, No.5, Book 40.
Hindus and Parsis in education.\textsuperscript{31} It was also felt that Urdu should be the effective medium of learning.\textsuperscript{32}

The leading Hindu notables also helped the cause.\textsuperscript{33} Mahipatram Rupram became the secretary of a society set up to promote learning among Muslims, the ‘Taid-e-Rehman’.\textsuperscript{34} The activities of the ‘Anjuman-e-Islam’ have been detailed in the previous chapter. In 1885, an Urdu school and library was set up for boys. In 1887, an English medium girls school was opened. In Popatiyawadi, a densely populated Muslim area, another girl’s schools came up in 1893. Initially, there were only 40 girls but the number went up threefold – scholarships were issued and attendance increased in the society’s library and reading rooms.\textsuperscript{35}

Both Hindus and Muslims cooperated to raise funds for the society’s new school building at Pankar Naka in 1887. Labhshanker took over as the secretary after Mahipatram’s demise in 1891 and worked tirelessly to set up the Bhrannudin Madrasa. The Revenue Commissioner, Reid, the President of Anjuman, Mr. Frost, Municipality Chairman, Ranchodlal Chotalal, Millowner Jamnabhai Bhagabhai, Nagarsheth Mayabhai Premabhai, the Kazi-Naramiya Rehnumiya, and 200 gentle folk inaugurated it. In his inaugural address, Reid felicitated the Anjuman for its work and the cooperation of the Hindu brothers in the pioneering efforts to spread education among Muslims. It was necessary that such efforts should be emulated in other places too.\textsuperscript{36}

These institutionalised peace systems were a hallmark of Ahmedabadi civic society. The legacy of mutual cooperation was carried forward by Gandhian organisations like the Congress Party, labour unions,

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. April 1869, pp.80-82.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. March 1915.
\textsuperscript{33} Buddhiprakash, November 1899, p.32, on Ranchodlal Chotalal’s efforts in this field.
\textsuperscript{34} Buddhiprakash, January 1885, p.32.
\textsuperscript{35} Buddhiprakash, December 1897, pp.264-69.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. pp.265-67.
educational institutions etc. Though not under the scope of the present study its essential to dwell on such peace systems, the breakdown of which has turned Ahmedabad into the present landscape of despair. The space occupied by these institutions that believed in secular national agenda has been usurped by a strident right wing ideology which has communalised the city's socio, political, economic and cultural landscape.

Four big organizational pillars formed the contours of inter-community civic life in urban Gujarat in the twentieth century. As discussed in the preceding pages, Ahmedabad had a whole series of traditional caste and religious based organizations. But these were not built for intercommunal, inter caste engagement, rather the idea was to preserve group traditions and promote in-group interaction and cohesion.

The foremost was the Congress Party, which after the 1920s, brought people of all communities together and till the 1960s, continued to be a cadre-based party. In the 1920s, Gandhi directly led much of the Congress activities in Gujarat. Under Gandhi, the National Movement had two aims: political independence from the British and social transformation of India. Accordingly, myriad agencies came up, for women, tribals and untouchables welfare, education prohibition, khadi etc. In 1920 inspired by Gandhi, the Gujarat Vidyapith came up at Ahmedabad. It educated the youth, trained teachers for schools and ran secondary schools.

In the twentieth century, the guild tradition also underwent a change. Offices became elective, relying on codified norms. The basis of association was voluntarism rather than ascription. Finally, as the century progressed, labour unions, professional associations and cooperatives came up.

---

38 For details, see Gujarat State Gazetteers, Ahmedabad District, pp.70-96.
However, were the Muslims directly involved in all these activities? Was it possible to mobilise the Muslims on the development agenda of the Congress and related institutions? A brief review is presented below.

Ahmedabad had the unique distinction of two stalwarts of the national movement, operating from the city: Gandhi from 1915 to 1930 and Sardar Patel from 1913 to 1946. It was a highly effective combination. Gandhi formulated the grand ideological design, while Patel handled the organisational strategies. This made the Congress a very powerful organization, reaching all the way down to the neighbourhood level and during mass protests, to the street level.

What was the level of Muslim participation in these activities? The Congress was unable to mobilise Muslims, in larger numbers, compared to Hindus, in the state. But one should not conclude that Muslims were absent from Congress protests. As a basis of nation building, the Congress was ideologically committed to Hindu-Muslim unity and the Hindu cadres of the Congress would not flame passions. Rather, if tensions arose, they would try to contain it along with their Muslim colleagues.

The disciplined and ideologically committed Congress Party was able to broker peace in the city even with minimum levels of inter-communal engagement. Many other organisations, discussed below, also helped the process.

Gandhiji believed that India’s internal inadequacies, apart from military weakness, led to the British conquest of India. As a result myriad

---

40 For details refer, Narhari Parikh, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Vols.1&2, Ahmedabad, Navjeevan, 1953.
organisation came up, funded by charities in the social sector. A major site of the reformist agenda was education. The setting up of the Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad, also helped the process.

The establishment of Gujarat Vidyapith has been mentioned earlier. As chief of Ahmedabad’s Municipality, in 1921, Sardar Patel refused British government’s funds for primary and secondary schools. One of the major aims of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921 was educational restructuring. The government reacted by dismissing the Municipality. Undaunted, the municipal leaders set up a trust to run these schools. Once the Gandhians took over the schools, enrolment increased – from a meagre 5,200 students in 1922-23, to 4 times the number in the next 10 years and six times in the next 15 years.

By the 1930s, the Gandhians had successfully set up major institutions, the Public Library, Science and Arts colleges and College of Commerce. Gandhi’s championing of instruction in the mother tongue, Gujarati, led to the vernacularisation of education, which helped to disseminate nationalist ideas.

Two newspapers, started by Gandhi, Navjivan in Gujarati and Young India in English were published from Ahmedabad. Both reached out to the vernacular clientele as well as English speaking elite in the rest of the country. Political and cultural ideas were debated in these papers, the rationale of campaigns explained, questions and readers’ objections answered and strategies discussed. As a result, a formidable culture of

---

43 Entire list is given in the *Gujarat State Gazeteers, Ahmedabad Dist*, 1984, pp.881-93.
debate and discussion emerged in Gujarat in which large numbers of people participated.\textsuperscript{47}

Another prominent signifier of inter-communal harmony was the guild tradition.\textsuperscript{48} A large number of professions were traditionally intra-caste or intra communal. In the textile sector, for example, Muslims entered mostly as weavers, the lower castes as spinners, the \textit{Jains} or Hindu \textit{Vaishyas} as traders and manufacturers. The Muslims community in Ahmedabad had a dual economic structure. At the top were the Muslim aristocrats who were impoverished by the lack of royal patronage. On the other hand were the mass of poor Muslim artisans and weavers.\textsuperscript{49} There was no middle layer of Muslim business communities.\textsuperscript{50} In 1900, when the 26 textile mills in Ahmedabad became the centre of the city’s economic life, not a single mill was Muslim owned.\textsuperscript{51} Until 1900, when a Muslim started a match factory in 1895, there was only one Muslim industrialist in the city.\textsuperscript{52} Through the process of Manchesterisation (discussed earlier), the guilds transformed themselves into wide-reaching textile networks. The following statistics reveal the domination of both capital and labour (textile sector) in the civic life of the city.

In 1921, the textile mills employed 43,515 workers and the numbers rose to 76,357 workers in 1941. For these two years, the city’s population was 2,74,007 and 5,91,267 respectively.\textsuperscript{53} The industrialists were organized under the Ahmedabad Millowners Association (AMA). Formed in 1891, the AMA expanded when between 1914-1935, the number of textile mills rose from 49 to 84. Hindu banias and the \textit{Jains} controlled

\textsuperscript{47} Varshney, op.cit. p.227.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Gujarat State Gazetteers}, Ahmedabad, 1979, pp.293-94.
\textsuperscript{51} Makrand Mehta, \textit{The Ahmedabad Cotton Textile Industry}, Ahmedabad, 1982, See Appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{52} Ahmedabad Gazetteer, op.cit. 1961.
most of the mills. In 1912, a Muslim founded a textile mill but it collapsed in 1920.54

Though the AMA experienced very little direct Hindu-Muslim engagement, it had two indirect implications. One was that the pre-existing framework of conciliation and arbitration, influenced the AMA, which meant that confrontation and violence was not used as strategic tools of economic competition.55 The second was the tradition of charity, first to religious institutions and later to Gandhian social and educational organizations. This was an important reason why Gandhi chose Ahmedabad as his adopted home.56

Hence, the AMA indirectly contributed to harmonious intercommunal life. Especially in education, the leading business houses also nurtured many other institutions where Hindus and Muslims could establish civil contacts.57

A major site of Hindu-Muslim civic engagement was the Textile labour Association, a formidable mass based organisation, founded by Gandhi in 1920.58 The TLA attracted 35-40 percent of all textile workers between 1920 and 1939, and in the next decade, 60 percent of the workforce were its members. Not precisely a union, the TLA was a federation of unions organized around crafts. To illustrate, the spinners and weavers had their own unions, who in turn were TLA members, elected representatives to it and were subject to its supervision and control.59

The organizational structure of the TLA shaped Hindu-Muslim relations. Through hereditary expertise, majority of the Muslim workers were weavers. Both interacted closely in the weaver’s union, linked to other crafts union under the TLA umbrella. Needless to say, influenced by Gandhi, Hindu Muslim unity was the operative principle of the union.\textsuperscript{60}

The political creed of the TLA was based around conciliation and non-violence. If problems cropped up between workers and management, attempts were made to reach a negotiated settlement, failing which arbitration by a board was an acceptable solution. Gandhi used his influence to persuade the mill-owners for arbitration. The last options were strikes and lockouts. The work atmosphere was peaceful.\textsuperscript{61}

Wedded to the idea of ‘total transformation’, the TLA set up various institutions in the 1920s and 1930s to deal with virtually all aspects of the worker’s life,\textsuperscript{62} such as adult literacy, primary education, scholarships, reading rooms, dormitories for girls, women welfare centres, training to enhance skills, housing, credit and cooperative societies, social and cultural centres in the neighbourhoods. The TLA staff was in charge of such activities and thousands of workers’ families were covered.

In 1937, when the Congress won the provincial elections, and formed the Government in Bombay province, the TLA got major benefits. The concept of ‘representative union’ was legalised, i.e. any union to which at least 25 percent of the workforce in an industry subscribed, would be a representative union. Though there were other unions, only a

\textsuperscript{61} This was according to the Gandhian idea of trusteeship. Also see, “Speech at Meetings of Mill hands, Ahmedabad”, February 25, 1920, 17, pp.47-50; “Millowners of Ahmedabad”, April 6, 1930, 43, Gandhi’s Collected Works, pp. 196-98;
representative union could officially negotiate with the owners or state agents on behalf of workers.63

The organizational links of the TLA helped to forge Hindu-Muslim unity. Apart from Gandhian legacy, the TLA's activities in the field of education, credit and disaster relief, made it very pragmatic for the Muslims to remain with the TLA.

Between the 1920s and 1940s, communal relations in India remained very turbulent. However, the Gandhian civic institutions in Ahmedabad, helped to resist such shocks. Attempts were made to disrupt peace in the city during the civil disobedience movements in the 1920s and 1930s, the Pakistan Resolution of 1940, the Quit India Movement of 1942 and the Partition in 1947.64 The Congress cadres effectively controlled violence from engulfing larger areas, even risking their own lives.65 During partition, the TLA succeeded in keeping the large body of workers united. “The TLA's broader outlook and its practice in day-to-day activity is responsible to a large extent for keeping peace among the working class when the communal sentiments are high in the country. Ahmedabad's working class has been saved from the communal fury even when the city was afflicted by this diseases more than once”.66

The rationale for fomenting riots in Ahmedabad was simple. If Hindus and Muslims could not live in peace in Gandhi's home, then a united India is a myth and Gandhi’s experiment a failure.

Unfortunately, the later years witnessed the breakdown of civic institutions, so assiduously nurtured by Gandhi and his supporters. The peace systems were unable to ward off attacks by forces representing

63 Ibid. pp.126-36.
64 See, Hardiman, "Quit India Movement", op.cit. p.92.
65 See Gandhi’s Collected Works, 84, p.4.
communal right wing ideology with the state remaining a mute bystander. A somewhat detailed discussion of how the long standing communal peace in Ahmedabad gradually broke down in later years will illuminate better the impact of the processes which maintained communal amity and peace in the period of our study.

Ahmedabad, Breakdown of Civic Order and the Narratives of Violence

After enjoying a long period of remarkable peace, the riots in 1969, in Ahmedabad, took everyone by surprise. Since then, the city has known endemic Hindu-Muslim polarisation, boasting of institutionalised riot systems. The worst scenario was in March 2002 till date, when mobs were on a rampage and the state was helpless in preventing the violence. Indeed, it was a state sponsored violence, which led to severe national and international condemnation.

There is a need to study the 1969 riots, a watershed, since peace was shattered for the first time since independence. This is necessary since civil society has disappeared, fear and distrust rule the city streets and all the sites of urban life, housing, education, employment, press etc. have been segregated, as if the 15 percent Muslim population has vanished from the public space. Increasingly, the vacuum created by declining Gandhian institutions has been occupied by strident politics of hate and exclusion; in other words, the state it seems has turned into a laboratory of Hindutva.67

The Narratives of Violence

"The first recorded communal riot in modern India occurred in Ahmedabad in 1713".68 The Nagarsheth Kapurchand Bhansali led a

---

delegation to Delhi after clashes in 1713, to appraise the imperial authorities of the details. The *Mirat-I-Ahmedi* mentions an incident on the day of *Holi* in 1713. When a group of Hindus playing with colours accidentally splashed colours on a Muslim, who complained to the *Kazi*. Since business was affected by flared tempers, the *Nagarsheth* intervened to cool matters. Kenneth Gillian too cites the author of the *Mirat* on ‘communal rioting’ during the days of Ahmedabad’s political decline. Unfortunately, this kind of selective reading and interpretation of the past leads to many discrepancies and justifies present violence. How does one situate and identify Hindus and Muslims, when such labels are colonial constructs? Pre-modern identities operated on a small scale and people rarely interacted beyond their own environment. When conflict emerged, it was managed locally. We need only to refer to the basic work on history writing in India, by eminent scholars, to realise the pitfalls of such generalisation.

Such a vision of the past, serves to perpetuate the myth that Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad were riot prone. As a premier trading centre of the west coast, Ahmedabad has always attracted migrants who gradually meshed into the social mosaic of the city. One incident in 1713 and till 1947, the city was peaceful, i.e. no Hindu Muslim tensions despite the struggles of the Mughals, Marathas and the British to gain control of the city. Hence, it would be interesting to analyse the growth of such historiography, however, it’s beyond the scope of the present study.

But such myths help rightist elements to play havoc with the civil society. Past wrongs are propagated and assiduously used to justify a reign

---

72 Refer Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History*, PPH, 1972.
of terror. Not surprisingly, Ahmedabad suffers from this curse even in the new century. To illustrate, after the Sabarmati Express was burnt on February 27, 2002 and violence broke out in Ahmedabad, a meeting was organised in JNU on 1 March 2002, to make sense of the mayhem. One shocking response was the acceptance of the violence, as setting right perceived wrongs of the past, such as the loot of Somnath. A single sentence says it all.... "This always happens in Ahmedabad".

Let us analyse why the Manchester of the East has embedded itself on the nation's consciousness as a battle zone.

In 1969, peace was shattered in the city by communal violence, the first time since independence. The violence and hate campaigns unleashed by the RSS and VHP paid rich dividends. Together they gave a kick-start to the process of ghettoisation of the Muslims and growth in the power of mafia like bodies in both the communities, always itching for a fight and acting like protectors of the Hindus and Muslims during riots.

Understandably, the growth of this criminal section was disproportionately high among the young, unemployed Muslims. However, since the 1990s, it is more visible among the rightist elements of the majority community. The existing social distance between the two communities had already acquired dangerous tones. Facing discrimination in job situations and housing, many among the unemployed Muslim youth began to take to professions in which slum youth everywhere in the world specialise: illicit distillation, drug pushing, protection rackets and petty crimes. And they always seemed ready for street violence. The situation worsened once Ahmedabad's famed textile industry collapsed. The changing political culture of the city ensured that this collapse, too,
affected the Muslims more.\textsuperscript{74} The 1969 riots were followed by communal violence in 1971, 1972 and 1973.\textsuperscript{75} After 1973, the Nav Nirman Movement to cleanse public life led to a lull in violence. With alarming frequency riots commenced in the 1980s-January 1982, March 1984, March-July, 1985, January, March, July 1986, January, February and November 1987, April, October, November and December 1990, January, March and April 1991 and January and July 1992.\textsuperscript{76} The dragon seeds sown by the 1969 riots have sprouted over the years. Gujarat’s annual regular harvest began to include gory communal clashes and mob violence. These riots marked the demise of the \textit{Mahajan} culture as the old city elite among both the Hindus and Muslims was unable to contain the violence. Another feature of these riots was the beginning of the partisan role of the state and the emerging nexus between political leaders and criminals.\textsuperscript{77} Gradually, riots were becoming brutal and barbaric with women and children legitimate targets of atrocities.\textsuperscript{78}

As discussed before, the building blocks of civil society in Ahmedabad were the Congress Party, Gandhian social institutions, labour unions and business associations. The gradual deterioration of these led to a paradigmatic shift in the city.

Gandhiji had hoped that the Congress would be a social organisation, rather than clamour for the spoils of office. His words were very prophetic. The decline of the party as a civic body accompanied its rise in power.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{74} Ashish Nandy, \textit{Seminar} May, 2002, p.16.
\textsuperscript{75} For further details see Ghanshyam Shah, “Anatomy of Urban Riots: Ahmedabad 1973”, \textit{EPW}, Annual Number, February 1974.
\textsuperscript{76} See various issues of \textit{the Times of India}. Also see Justice V.S. Dave, \textit{The Report of the Commission of Enquiry}, Ahmedabad, Govt. of Gujarat, 1990, Vol.2.
\textsuperscript{79} Varshney, op.cit. p.267.
Once the generation of leaders committed to the national movement passed away and given the nature of subsequent electoral strategies, little ideological motivation was left for cadres to work at the grassroots. In the vacuum created by the rudderless Congress, the right wing elements stepped in with its sister organisations, its cadres and ideological commitment.

This is evident when we observe that six mass mobilization campaigns were launched in the state, between 1983 and 1992 for Ramjanmabhoomi. One report compares the numbers mobilized in Ahmedabad during 1989-90, to Gandhi's historic Salt March of 1930. The Congress failed to launch a counter mobilization to safeguard secular nationalism.

The success of the Hindutva forces also reveals another aspect. The Congress worked to integrate all sections of the society, while the former has succeeded in building bridges only across the various castes of Hindu society. From a Hindu-Muslim perspective, the civic activity of Hindu nationalists is disruptive. Their aim is Hindu unity across the various castes, not Hindu-Muslim unity.

Unlike in south India, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, neither lower caste parties, nor any other kind of third force has emerged in Gujarat or even in Ahmedabad to challenge the master narrative of religious communalism in mass politics.

---

80 For details on the efficacy of such strategies, see Ghanshyam Shah, “Strategies of Social Engineering: Reservation and Mobility of Backward Communities of Gujarat”; (ed.), Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics, R. Roy and R. Sisson, Sage, Delhi, 1990.
84 Varshney, op.cit. p.245.
Prior to independence, though Muslims in large numbers did not flock to Gandhian civic institutions, the underlying ideology of Hindu-Muslim unity helped to forge bonds among the communities. Sadly, today Gandhi’s Sabarmati Ashram is a tourist attraction. When Ahmedabad was engulfed by violence in March 2002 and an uneasy clam still prevails, the Ashram did not act as a voice of sanity. The press set up by Gandhi, an effective tool to educate millions for political action through newspapers, is now engaged in publishing Gandhian literature. Nor have Gandhi’s educational institutions survived in the job market. The government patronage is the chief source of funds for these institutions. They no longer need to conduct campaigns to create awareness for their work and solicit funds.

The space has been occupied by NGOs and rightist organisations. The NGOs focus more on rural development and urban peace is not their priority. And the latter have no use for Hindu Muslim unity.

Gandhi’s campaign for prohibition meant that Gujarat imposed prohibition by law. However, the results have been contradictory. There is evidence to show that a bootlegger is able to build up a social and economic position for himself in his area of operation, by utilizing part of his income in catering to the economic and social needs of the locality and contributing to charities, maintenance of widows, orphans, the decrepit, the old and infirm. Even the law enforcement agencies have connived with such elements. A close nexus developed between the politician and the bootlegger, who invoked the former’s help during crisis. Gradually, they donned the mantle of politicians. Also, they have succeeded in building a

86 Ibid. p.65.
87 Ibid. vol.II, p.35.
political base for themselves by giving aid to schools, hospitals, religious organisations sponsoring public functions etc.\(^8\)

Such elements are not conducive for peace since they have no ideology, no agenda for social change and no committed cadres. The bootleggers will also provoke violence if it suits their interests. They emerged in the forefront of the city’s social, cultural and political life.

Increasingly, the social context of the Congress has been usurped by the BJP and its allied organisations, with special emphasis on the scheduled castes, tribals and women.\(^9\) This policy helped them to reap rich dividends during the riots of 2002 when the tribals acted as cannon fodder.\(^9^0\) Moreover, the divisive ideology has also penetrated the regional press, playing a contradictory to \textit{Buddhiprakash} or \textit{Prajabandhu} of pre-independence days, when the press was an agent of social transformation. The per capita circulation of newspapers in Gujarat is second only to that in Kerala.\(^9^1\) The regional press has fanned the flames of communal passion.\(^9^2\)

The lifeblood of Ahmedabad were the textile mills. In the 1950s, the mills accounted for 70 to 80 percent of the total amount of cloth produced in India, and the power looms and handlooms, 20 to 30 percent. The trend was reversed in the 1980s. In 1981, the mill sector was manufacturing a mere more 25 to 28 percent of the total cloth produced and the small

\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) To illustrate – the Durga Vahini for women, the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad for students, the Samajik Samrasta March, Bharat Sevashram, Hindu Milan Mandir, amongst the backward castes.
\(^9^0\) See Report in \textit{the Times of India}, “BJP will Miss its Foot Soldiers in Dahod”, Wednesday, 27-11-2002 (regarding elections in Godhra District).
sector—more than 70 percent. A sizable retrenchment of workers took place.

This state accounts for about a seventh of India’s industrial output and around a fifth of its industrial investment. The Planning Commission has projected it as one of the fastest growing states in the 10th Plan.

**STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN GUJARAT:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Growth/Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long term manufacturing growth (%Annual)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing SDP Growth 93/94-98/99 (% Annual in 1992 prices)</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Of work force engaged in agriculture (Cultivators and agricultural labourers) 1971</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gujarat’s non-agricultural growth is fairly widespread. Before the state was divided into smaller districts, apart from the forest area of the Dangs, every district had more than 20,000 industrial workers. Now, apart from the Dangs, every district has at least 10,000 industrial workers. Then there is a city like Surat where employment has grown between 6 to 7% every year for the last 3 decades, which makes it an unusual phenomenon.

83 Varshney, op.cit. p.249.
of growth on a global plane. There are more than double the industrial workers in Surat from Orissa as compared to that state as a whole.96

The paradigmatic shift in the nature of the state’s economy has led to massive capital intensive hi-tech projects which generate high income but little employment. While the GDP rises, employment stagnates. Petrochemicals, fertilizers etc. cannot compensate for labour intensive textiles. Neither Asia’s biggest refinery at Jamnagar nor the privatisation of IPCL can mask the grim state of Ahmedabad’s shuttered mills. In the new economic system, there is little space for the underclass. It is from this restless army of those rendered unemployed by the march of ‘progress’ that the foot soldiers of communal propaganda are created.97

Whether these new business conglomerates can contribute to communal peace essentially depends on how interlinked they are with Muslims in their respective business and how much of the city’s population they cover through such networks.98 The Muslim participation in business associations was a more 4 percent. Even in the case of professional associations of lawyers, chartered accountants, it ranged from 1 to 2 percent.99 On the contrary, in Surat, the textile business associations are intercommunally integrated. In the 4 biggest association Muslims account for 10 to 15 percent of members.100 To illustrate, in a study of the richest Muslim business community in the city, the Memoms, 65 percent of the Memom businessmen reported membership in intercommunal business organizations.101 Muslims are also involved in the industry as financiers, transporters, yarn brokers etc. “Millions worth of our goods, are

96 Alagh, op.cit.
98 In Surat, business interests insulated the city against violence; see The Times of India, Wednesday, 9-10-2002.
100 Ibid.
in (Hindu) processing houses; millions worth of their goods in our shops". The question is with the minority community’s capital base and housing stock targeted and destroyed, and the better off amongst them out-migrating, who will take over the leadership of those who remain? Thus, a stage is set for a continuous social conflict, a danger that becomes even more acute if there is little faith in the impartiality of the state apparatus and the majority community remains recalcitrant about reforming its behaviour. It is significant that while there is some talk about compensation for property loss, there is no move toward setting up a reconstruction commission.

The decline of textile mills in Ahmedabad had another grave consequence. It weakened a major organizational site of interaction between Hindu and Muslim masses – the TLA. Around 1,25,000 to 1,35,000 workers were employed in the mills at its peak in the 1950s and 1960s, and the TLA had more than lakh members. In the late 1990s, about 30,000 to 35,000 workers are employed in the mills and the TLA membership has declined to 25,000 to 28,000.

The mill industry underwent a crisis in the early 1980s. 17 mills closed down in 1983-84 and 15 mills between 1984 and 1990. Within just two years, 1983-84, an estimated 40,000 workers were laid off. And the numbers have only risen. The retrenched workers became part of the informal sector or did part-time work. The government was unable to take over and run the mills, despite the attempts of the TLA. With the mills closing down, the TLA’s influence over the workers has diminished.

102 Comment of a leading Muslim Businessman, ibid. p.315.
Muslims and scheduled caste Hindus formed two-thirds of the retrenched workforce. Unable to find work, they drifted to the flourishing underworld, driven by prohibition.\textsuperscript{109} This was reflected when the workers’ neighbourhoods were affected in the riots of 1984-85.\textsuperscript{110} The TLA has lost its moderating influence to keep the workers free from communal violence. Since then, riots have repeatedly broken out in working-class areas.\textsuperscript{111} Unfortunately, the trend has continued, unabated.\textsuperscript{112}

The above arguments focus on civil society, but what about the role of the state? In the colonial era, it was easy to blame the ‘Divide and Rule’ policy, but the present state in its own partisan interests connive with the rioters, thereby creating a siege mentality.\textsuperscript{113} This leads to a fear psychosis among the people. This is also reflected in the role of the law enforcement agencies. One report suggests that 97 Muslims out of 100 regard the civil police as their enemy during communal riots, while the similar figure for Hindus is 29 out of 100.\textsuperscript{114} Thus, if the state were ethnically neutral or conscientious enough to perform basic duties such as maintenance of law and order and protect the lives of its citizens there would be no large-scale communal violence in the first place.

The trajectory of violence in Ahmedabad is indeed grim. And this brings us to the question – can civil links be forged? The social and political transformation, an integral part of the independence movement shaped the contours of Hindu-Muslim interaction and communally integrated associations. They were linked to Gandhi’s ideology, which placed great emphasis on voluntary associations and on the general

\textsuperscript{109} Varshney, op.cit. p.252.
\textsuperscript{110} Achyut Yagnik, “Hindutva as Savarna Purana”, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{112} Genocide in Gujarat, op.cit. pp.20 to 43.
\textsuperscript{114} Anoop Babani, Human Scape, March 2002, p.50.
importance of non-state, civic spaces of public life. To bring about social and political transformations, the ideology relied more on civic action and capacity than on state policy.

An alternative to the rightist ideology is to widen the scope of secular space in the state. There is no left tradition or the Dalit movement here like in Maharashtra or a tribal movement like in Jharkhand. After the Nav Nirman movement of 1974, the state has not seen any people’s movement. Anti-reservation was a negative movement a ghettoisation of the mind. People were fighting against their own people. Every seventh Gujarati is a tribal, but there is no movement for their rights. A vocal and powerful middle class is attracted to the VHP and BJP.\textsuperscript{115}

Gradually, an alternative narrative of peace is also struggling to enter the public sphere. But it’s a long haul. A striking example is Bhiwandi, a town near Bombay, notorious for its Hindu Muslim riots in the 1970s and 1980s. It is a centre for small textile manufacturing, with sprawling hutments, crowded streets, and segregated areas. In the late 1980s, the local police took the initiative to create a dialogue around mutual concerns. Between 1988 and 1993, when communal passions ran high and also post-Babri, when Bombay burnt, Bhiwandi kept its peace.\textsuperscript{116} Such alternative spaces are present in Ahmedabad, only its discourse has to be part of the mainstream.\textsuperscript{117}

A lot of introspection is going on within the two communities to revive the ethos of business pragmatism and collaboration.\textsuperscript{118} The Muslims were among the first traders to settle and prosper in what became one of


\textsuperscript{117} See, Reports on Ram-Rahim Nagar, Times of India, November 28, 29 and 30, 2002.

\textsuperscript{118} Shiraz Tirmizi, Rediff Interviews April 17, 2002. Also see Ghanshyam Shah, Ibid. May 2, 2002.
the country’s best entrepreneurial states. And yet it is their very success that has made them so vulnerable to mob carnage.\(^{119}\)

The ethos of multi-cultural links is being neglected. To illustrate, when Gandhi was in school in Rajkot, his best friend in class was a Muslim, and the headmaster, a Parsi. The Nawab of Junagadh donated Rs.63,000 for the school building. When he was awarded a scholarship, it was in the name of two Kathiawari nobles – one Hindu and one Muslim.\(^{120}\) If barriers were broken in the 19th century, two centuries later they are being constructed in the name of an exclusive nationalism.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the rising Gujarati entrepreneurial class along with the middle class expanded and consolidated their economic and social control, deriving meaning and direction from two ideals: independence and nation building. After Independence, the pace of their expansion became more marked as they grew both in number and in their control over the modern economic, educational and political apparatus. With the weakening of the mercantile and Gandhian ethos, degeneration within the Congress and the diminishing of the focus provided by the nation-building project, this class became devoid of moorings in any value system.

Despite outward modernisation and institution building, modern values of equality, fraternity, justice and secularism remained weak. In the ensuing vacuum, Hindutva provided both an identity beyond caste and community as well as sanction to pursue their own agenda of greater political, economic and social control. Also, Hindutva as an ideology scarcely raises any ethical questions for its supporters. In the case of Gujarat, this aspect made it more attractive for the entrepreneurial middle class that wants to perpetuate its hegemony.

Even prior to the events of February- March- April, 2002, the aftermath of the earthquake provided a glimpse of the future that lies ahead for Gujarat. In the immediate relief phase we saw discrimination against Muslim and other backward communities by both the state machinery and volunteers of the Sangh Parivar. Indeed the demarcation between the two was hardly visible. In the rehabilitation phase, discrimination was extended to Dalits, Kolis(OBC Community) and pastoralists whose damaged property was neither surveyed nor were compensation amounts fixed in a just manner. Though many of them continue to struggle on these issues the middle class has hardly raised any voice of protest.

When villages had to be shifted to new sites, the dominant communities of Patidars and Darbars ensured that Dalits, Muslims and other backward communities were allotted separate venues away from their village. In many cases, two villages were formed, thereby revealing the upper caste sense of exclusiveness as also their shrinking horizons.

If the “violence” around the post earthquake relief and rehabilitation was “invisible”, the violence in the communal conflagration is there for everyone to see. The Sangh Parivar and the state apparatus have once again coalesced, this time to loot, burn and murder, and then shield each other. Citing the Godhra carnage, the entrepreneur class and burgeoning Hindu middle class found no difficulty in justifying open violence, including state lawlessness.

Gujarat was being prepared for such an exorcism for a very long time. It is a state that has seen thirty-three years of continuous rioting interrupted with periods of tense, uncomfortable peace. During these years, a sizeable section of Gujarat’s urban underclass has begun to see communalism as a means of livelihood, quick profit, choice entertainment, and as a way of life. Riots have, in addition, ensured temporary status
gains for this underclass: they are considered heroes in their respective communities during riots- an important reward for persons at the margins of society.

Predominantly, rioting everywhere is an urban disease. Experts from Asghar Ali Engineer to Ashutosh Varshney have shown that this is the case especially in Gujarat. The urban middle class in Gujarat is the most communalised in the country; it has become the active abettor and motivator of communal violence.

Urbanity is a crucial presence in Gujarat’s political life and the cancer of communalism has spared no city. The result is that Gujarat is now a classic instance of the urban- industrial vision, decomposing and spitting out in a blatant form the violence that the vision has always hidden in its belly. The state has not only been riot- prone but at war with itself. There is only a temporary truce. Tension and hatred persists and both sides will remain prepared for the next round. Gujarat will continue to be an arena of civil war for years to come.121

One should keep in mind what the famous poet and social historian, Narmadashanker Lalshanker (died 1886) said in his famous poem, ‘Jay Jay Garvi Gujarat’. Here in, he celebrated all those cultural icons, which provide a sense of identity to all that lived in Gujarat. In asking “who does Gujarat belong to?” he listed all the castes, communities, religions, sects; then says, not just these, because Gujarat does not belong to any particular group; he continues, that Gujarat belongs to all those who speak Gujarati; and then not satisfied, goes on to say that Gujarat also belong to non-Hindus, the Parsis, Muslims, and the non “sa-varna” communities. Narmad believed passionately that, around such a cultural imagination – truly

121 For details see Ashish Nandy, Seminar, May 2002, pp.15-16.
secular in spirit – a sense of belonging could be forged for the Gujarati people.\textsuperscript{122}

A new paradigm has to be evolved which looks beyond the exigencies of vote-bank policies and help usher in peace in the city.\textsuperscript{123} An uneasy calm prevails over Ahmedabad. The post independence civic institutions and patterns of Hindu-Muslim interaction were put in place between the 1920s and 1940s, during India’s independence movement. The origins of communally integrated associations were thus part of the great social and political transformations brought about by the movement. They were linked to Mahatma Gandhi’s ideology, which placed great emphasis on voluntary associations and on the general importance of non-state civic spaces of human life. To bring about social and political transformation, the ideology relied more on civic action and capacity than on state policy.

However, such great transformative movements do not come about everyday.

One needs to focus on smaller movements to forge intercommunal civic networks in

Cities like Ahmedabad where associations and everyday life continue to be highly segregated. Smaller acts of human agency thus matter. Many non-state actors such as NGOs, wherein both Muslims and Hindus are a part of the workforce, the understanding routinely created during work act as an integrative force at the time of communal tensions. To illustrate, SEWA, an organisation of poor Hindu and Muslim women who fight for their economic rights. The association’s women may not have been able to reverse the communal trend in the entire city, but in the neighbourhoods where they lived, they managed to ensure peace.

\textsuperscript{122} Genocide in Gujarat, op.cit. p.101.
\textsuperscript{123} Report in the \textit{Times of India}, December 7, 2002, regarding Ticket distribution to Muslim candidates.
Another example is of Bhiwandi (discussed earlier), where the state initiated attempts to create understanding between the communities, instead of fire fighting when actual communal violence takes place. In Ahmedabad, the locality of Ram Rahim Nagar (also mentioned earlier) was able to preserve peace under extreme provocation.

Thus, there is no adversarial relationship between the state and civil society. When civic linkages are forged on the initiatives of the local state organs, there are fruitful possibilities of a state-civil society synergy for stemming endemic violence. With a strong civic edifice in place, the state can easily prevent riots. Without building such an edifice, even the ablest state officials may not be able to prevent violence.

“In former days we’d both agree
That you were me and I was you.
What has now happened to us two
That you are you, and I am me?”

- Bhartrahari (5th Century A.D.)