Communalism is the most intractable problem of culturally plural societies. The roots may be traced in the ancient past. Generally, the term 'communalism' refers to a conflict, between two rival communities. Richard Lambert sees it as "a community oriented outlook." In its widest sense, Zenab Banu defines, "Communalism in which a minority receives unequal treatment from the majority, on the basis of religion, culture and ethnic characteristics." It is a highly complex phenomenon, generally found in plural societies, something inevitable and dominating in different situations, in a multi-religious society. In western countries, it refers to a feeling of 'community'. Whereas in India, it is understood in a negative sense i.e. a community is put against one or more communities. In reality, it is linked with contradictions between major and minor communities. Under different circumstances, the feeling of a community occurs against the other communities. When people are attached with one's religion, and completely loyal to it, then their 'religiosity' is neither communal nor it encourages communalism. But when members of a community are negatively oriented, towards other communities, they are supposed to inflame community feelings. There are both positive as well as negative aspects of communalism. Communalism in India has accepted the widest currency, which is against the feelings of other communities. It disintegrates social fabric and disturbs peace and integrity. To speak in its positive sense, a community for the other community, have a feeling of unity, to achieve the objective. In other words, it may be called as, "the group solidarity." In case of religion, language and culture, generally the societies are homogeneous in its characteristics and this is the positive term for communalism, as a group solidarity, concerning the community. The definition of community, in such cases, is defined in space, a village, a town, a habitant or even a complete tribe, residing together at a specific region. But in different societies, the meaning of communalism is different.
Communalism: A Conceptual Framework

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, defines 'communal' as "of or for community." It should be classified in the above definition of the term 'communal', the emphasis is laid on 'community', which requires to be defined further.

The Random House Dictionary of English Language, defines the term 'community' as under:

.........a social group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself, as distinct in some respect from the larger society, within which it exists.

While G.D. Mitchell, elaborates the term community, from sociological point of view:

Originally the term 'community' denoted a collectivity of people, who occupied a geographical area; people who were together engaged in economic and political activities and who essentially constituted a self-governing social unit, with some common values and experiencing feeling of belonging to one another.

The referred definitions reveal positive aspect that people of a community are united, with a 'motif' to acquire their socio-economic requirements. While defining 'community' in the Indian context, Robert Hardgrave Jr., writes, “In India, community usually refers to a racial, caste, linguistic or religious group, rather than a locality, as in the United States.”

The sense of community, considering the vastness and diversity of India, is "fuzzy", because of overlapping of boundaries of caste, language and religious groupings. Thus communalism means harassment, discrimination of person or a group, on the basis of religion by majority. India is pluralistic and multi-religious adherent to six major world religions spread all over the country. Below is given the distribution of population of religious groups in the Censuses 1991 and 2001.
The table indicates Muslims are the second largest community in India, i.e. around 13% of total population. India, has more Muslims than Pakistan. Despite such a large population, the Muslim community is viewed as a minority vis-à-vis, the Hindus in percentage terms. The Hindu-Muslim, majority-minority consciousness, has proved a dominant factor in the growth of communalism. It was the British policy of "divide and rule", which resulted in the formation of communal identity. The language and ethnic insulations, made people divide, by their rulers. The 'epigenetic' seat of central power has a wider knowledge base, covering all sub-systems or peripheries. While peripheries were kept at a distance from each other, as if they were complete systems, by themselves, sharing little with one other and constantly afraid of others, otherwise they would loose their identity and their minority ethnic privileges.\textsuperscript{13} The process of democratic system with the start of electoral politics, further strengthened communal identity feelings and resulted in creating communal sentiments. Thus communalism has been described as an ideology, a false consciousness, a struggle for scarce resources, majority-minority
problem, struggle for power and political phenomenon, religious hostility, class conflict, colonial form of economy etc. At a general level, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, has defined it as,

the ideology which has emphasized the social, political and economic unit, the group of adherents of each religion and has emphasized distinctions, even the antagonism, between such groups.14

Smith's definition has been rather influential. Historians, journalists and social activists, have adopted and rephrased it in different ways. The unending revelation about concept of communalism have been made by scholars, social scientists and social activists. We pick up some observations of important social scientists regarding communalism, which will help us to clarify, our perspective in studying the communal problem in India. Some scholars have attempted to explain communalism as a concept, subjected to minority versus majority, in a plural and democratic society. Humayun Kabir, believed that "democracy is a necessary pre-condition for the emergence of minority problem".15 The democratic institutions created few centers of power, diversified and competition arose, among the elites of different communities, who tried to invoke communal consciousness16, and have caused psychological cleavages and political rifts between the Hindus and the Muslims17. It is a phenomenon, in which persons belonging to a certain community are either discriminated against or shown favour, regardless of their merits and demerits, just on the basis of their community. Favouring this view, A.B. Shah called the minorities, 'king makers' and commented that minority communities, are the 'king makers' in India, if they know the use of their voting strength together, in an effective level.18 Francis Robinson, reveals that the Muslim elites, organised themselves in order to secure power and protect its self interests, against the challenges, generated by British rule in India".19

Compared to other minority communities, the Muslims developed this consciousness more pronouncedly, because they received encouragement from British to get their rights. In fact, they were the ruling class, before the arrival of the British. They had the feeling of severe deprivations, politically and economically. The facts promoted
the feeling of communalism among Muslims, who were the minority in India. P.C. Joshi while discussing the causes, which led to Muslim separation, utilizes the model of "cumulative causation". For Indian Muslims, the British colonial impact, led to a setback in the economic and political sphere, vis-a-vis the majority community. And this engendered among them, the feeling of deprivation, which ultimately prepared the ground for secessionist demands. About the rise of insecure feeling in Muslim community, Zenab Bano, attributes the growth of Muslim consciousness, against the Hindu revivalist trend.

Hindu agitation for the adoption of Devnagri script was strongly opposed by the Muslims, who associated Hindi with Hindus, and likewise regarded Urdu, as the language of Muslims. Similarly, Hindu opposition to separate electorates for the Muslims, only made the latter more vocal opponents, of the Hindus, criticizing them as anti-Muslim.

Supporting this concept, A.M. Khusro, explained that economic opportunities to the Muslims in India, were much less. He asserts that "equal bias does unequal harm, and harm to a group increases in direct proportion, with degree of bias and universe relation to the minority's population percentage." According to Moin Shakir, the Indian Muslims felt sense of insecurity and their grievances being not redressed, created communal consciousness among them. These grievances impaired national unity and created problems of its own. Thus it cannot be ignored that minority consciousness grew up post-independent India, causing communal conflicts.

India, a pluralistic society, with a grand synthesis of cultures and religions, belonging to different castes, creeds and communities. The Indian history reveals that most of the communal riots occurred between majority and minority on religious festivals and religious issues (i.e. slaughtering of cow, music outside Mosques, Ramnaumi, Mohram etc.). Some of the scholars, have tried to explain communalism through cultural and religious hostility. They consider communalism as an outgrowth of religious and cultural differences, between the Hindus and the Muslims. These differences have created enmity and distrust between them. Rafiq Khan holds communalism as a form of
indifference, hatred, hostile and aggressive attitude, towards religious community, than one's own, based on a real or imaginary threat, from an individual or a group of that community.\textsuperscript{24} We observe from Ratna Naidu's views, that communalism, take place, where people of different religious faiths, live together geographically.\textsuperscript{25}

Nirad Chaudhri realised that highly educated Hindus and Muslims are not spared of religious hostility and communalism. Chaudhri holds that after independence, there was a tendency, to consolidate communities along religious lines: both the Hindus and the Muslims, found nothing wrong in their efforts, in the way of religious consolidation. Religious rigidities were over stressed by respective elites of two communities, even cutting across, effects of science and technology. The elites of both communities make use of religion to get political and economic benefits.\textsuperscript{26} The study of elections bring forth the picture that how candidates were nominated and elected. They appealed for votes, on the basis of religion. As a result after independence, large number of communal organisations and their popularity arose ahead.

Bipan Chandra explores several possible meanings of communalism. The main religious community becomes the basis. According to Chandra,

\begin{quote}
The communalist assumes that most meaningful distinction among the Indian people, on social, cultural, economic and political issues, is to be made, on the basis of such units, of 'religious communities'. The Indian people can exist and act socially and protect their collective or corporate or non individual interests, only as members of religion based communities. They never think, want, feel or act in any other manner or category, except as members of such homogeneous communities, whose interests, outlook, way of life etc. are the same.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

In this way, a communal riot represents concentrated essence of this notion, when a killing of a stray individual, represents an attack upon his/her community and defence of the killer's religious community. All their choices are made, and all their benefits are enjoyed, being members of these religious communities. Bipan Chandra has mentioned three elements of communalism. \textit{First}, communalism is strong among people, who
follow the same religion, have common secular interests. **Second,** the secular interests of different religions are dissimilar or divergent from the followers of other religion. **Third,** these interests of different communities are not only different, but are also hostile to each other.\(^{28}\)

Harbans Mukhia elaborates that communalism, generally amounts to organise a religious group, the base of which is hostility to one or more. The people become more hostile when two or more groups have to live together and share common economic, political and other scarce resources.\(^{29}\) Mukhia views that, "communalism is the phenomenon of religious differences between groups, often leading to tension and even rioting between them."\(^{30}\) In the same vein, D.E. Smith considers communalism as the function of religious communities or organisations, claiming to represent them, in a way, generally considered detrimental to the interests of other groups or of the nation as a whole.\(^{31}\) In this connection, Gopal Krishan described communalism as peculiarly destructive Indian expression of religion in politics, which emphasizes religious identity of social groups and requires political society to be organized, as a confederation of religious communities.\(^{32}\)

In case of Hindu-Muslim communalism, there are two groups, generally, having different ideologies i.e. **traditional** and **moderns-secular minded.** The Hindu and Muslim tradition reject and resist forces of modernization, while the modern secular minded, generally show their attitude of adjustment upto a specific extent. The Muslims being minor in status endeavor to preserve their separate religious identities and this instinct is strong enough among them. Due to this reason, they make extra ordinary efforts to deepen their identity by way of extending communal distinctions in all spheres of life.\(^{33}\) By means of religion, they are also loyal to other Islamic countries, specifically Pakistan. This attitude of Muslims created questions in the minds of the Hindus, who allege their loyalty to Pakistan.

The above mentioned studies reveal religion is the root cause of communal sentiments. But the roots of communalism does not lie alone in religion as also economic and political factors are the basis of communal sentiments. Some social scientists consider communalism a political phenomenon and struggle for power. The main cause
behind Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India was the use of religion for political ends. Religion itself is not responsible for this wrath, but rather its misuse, by power hungry clerics and politicians. The harm of communalism lies in mixing political aims and religious identities, generating communal incidents. The New Grasham World Encyclopedia\textsuperscript{34} says that

Communal: the theory of Government, which advocates complete local autonomy for towns and other definable communities. The advance Republicans of France and elsewhere adopted this theory, especially in 1870-71. They held that every commune should be a kind of independent state in itself and France merely a federation of such states.

Here the emphasis, of communalism, is on power especially political power. Similarly, Zenab Banu, elaborated it, as a political phenomenon. Communalism exists in the form of group prejudices, creates contradictions, tensions and riots. It is due to struggle for control over resources of power, specifically economical power leads to domination.\textsuperscript{35} Prabha Dixit emphasis the fact that communalism is based upon political doctrine, making use of religious and cultural differences to achieve political purposes.\textsuperscript{36} Communalism was not the result of the religious hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims, but evolved as a political doctrine, i.e. struggle for power. She propounded an argument that identities of cultural differences are major basis for political demands.\textsuperscript{37}

Dastur explains communalism in terms of political developments which occurred in the beginning of 20th century, before independence, when Muslims demanded separate electorates and Agha Khan met Lord Minto in Shimla, 1906. Dastur discerned political interest in the expression of communalism.\textsuperscript{38} According to Pandav Nayak, communalism is a theme of ideology of a dominant class. This domination leads to communal contradictions, constructed at the political level, which mediates between ideological manifestation and its class basis.\textsuperscript{39} The thinkers agree that communalism as an ideology is to propagate economic and political interests and prevails, when two or more communities become, “negatively oriented” to each other.
G.R. Thursby, defines communalism in this sense. Thursby's analysis that adoption of different views by two different communities in history, to express their sense of loss and a feeling of being under threat. The Hindus feel that they are a "dying race" and the Muslims feel a sense of "backwardness". Survival instinct gives rise to such feelings. In order to preserve and protect their identity, they adopt confrontation towards other groups. During the freedom struggle, the two nation theory was propagated under this ideology. The Muslims wanted a separate nation and the Hindus had the natural provocation, due to this demand. Asghar Ali Engineer describes, communalism, a tool to get together people in favour or against, appealing on communal lines. The privileges of the elite of the community is expressed through communal channels. The Muslim elites of Uttar Pradesh, before partition, to defend their rights, began to support Muslim League. Engineer extends its meaning by calling it "ideologisation of interest," i.e. causing the 'product of transformation' of social and economic process into a religious one. In the same sense, according to Moin Shakir, the problem of communalism exists in terms of national unity, has its roots in socio-economic order. He warns division of people on the basis of religion and religious attacks on religious prejudices. Discord and disharmony are must, if the equality of opportunity are denied to different communities. The majority community or the ruling class has a large interest to divide people on religious as well as communal lines.

Rajni Kothari holds communalism is a structural phenomenon of society and is a strategy of the ruling class to divide masses, for gaining maximum advantages and of the vested interests to reap purely economic benefits. Like Kothari, Ahmed described communalism as a social phenomenon, characterized by religion of two communities, creating rioting, tension, acrimony between them. Its silent form amounts to create discrimination in the form of employment, education business, politics etc., is concerned leading to a sense of deprivation. The bourgeois class, support its development, as an ideology. It has both silence and violence. Silence is imperceptible enough to produce results. In this way, the ideology which emerges from socio-economic interests of different communities, leads to communalism.
There are some other scholars, who ascribe communalism to colonial form of economy, because free capitalist development was not allowed by colonial masters, and slow development, resulted in frustration amongst relatively deprived people. It provoked them to fight for their 'motifs'. This fact proved, a cause for communalism. Some scholar's regard communalism as development of a disproportionately 'high' loyalty to one's caste, tribe or religion, as against the normal requirement of pride and loyalty to the nation state, transcending narrow primordial loyalties.\textsuperscript{45} In the words of Randhir Singh, communalism is an aspect of politics of elites, with a massive feudal colonial inheritance, deep religious divisions and undergoing its own historically specific form of capitalist development.\textsuperscript{46} Louis Dumont consider, communalism, a product of interaction between tradition and modernity.\textsuperscript{47} Pradeep Nayak believed communalism should be perceived as a state of consciousness and a strategy of mobilization of a community for a political purpose, to form a political community out of religious issues.\textsuperscript{48}

Regarding the above analysis, we conclude that communalism is a multi-faceted phenomena. It can be understood generally in social, political, economic, religious and cultural forces, which shape and steer growth of communalism.\textsuperscript{49} K.N. Panikkar regards communalism both "as a state of consciousness in society and as an instrument of power, not purely for capturing state power, but for operating in political, social and economic domains and at almost all levels of social organization."\textsuperscript{50} Thus, Panikkar highlights the multi-dimensional perspective of communalism and its far reaching impact on the institutional society. Moreover, he illustrates the element of false consciousness for the genesis of communalism. Panikkar was more historical in highlighting the material gains, gathered by different religious groups, behind the inflammable communal pressure strategies.

T.S. Lokhandwala, considers that before independence, communalism was considered as an ideology, affecting social, political and economic units. It is a shifting and changing phenomenon. The modern communalism is different, than it had been during early years of independence, which led to the creation of Pakistan. The recent conflict between communities may have economic or some other background, but now it is considered, a conflict of religious differences.\textsuperscript{51} Numerous factors play significant role in present day communalism, closely related to each other.
Communalism: A Conceptual Framework

Fig. 1: Communalism is a multi-factoral phenomenon.

The figure above indicates the referred factors of communalism are interrelated. As each community has its own historical background, its members have their own overview, calculate the circumstances and the role of the rival community, from which they had suffered losses. They think about the past and present relations and the rivalries which caused them insecurity from antagonists. All these factors, inculcate among them, an idea to prepare a specific ideology, about the other communities. Then they propagate their own specific ideology, social identity as well as their need to keep them, self attached with their own community. They get together on the basis of religion and struggle to achieve political power. They have main objective to maintain their separate identity.

In the light of the above analysis and definitions, following features of communalism can be called out:
Communalism: A Conceptual Framework

i. Communalism consists of religious and cultural affiliation.

ii. Communalism is based upon economic, political and social interests within which it finds manifestation.

iii. It describes all movements which attempt to build a specific group consciousness and identification among a specific social group.

iv. Communalism is a tool or a weapon in the hands of strategic people or politicians.

v. It arises from a perception or even concocted threat of the rival religious community.

vi. It makes strong group solidarity by creating negative stereotypes about the other group.

vii. It intends violent tensions to hurt the other party, by rioting, arsoneing and attack on the other religious faith.

viii. It gets support from the followers of same faith, but belonging to other political regimes. Such outer support is not only emotional but also financial and in terms of arms, tends to internationalise the dispute and go beyond disrupting internal peace, by threatening integrity of the nation.

ix. It regards communal interests as above the national interests.

Seen in this perspective, communalism is dangerous and undesirable, it can be understood as a result of mistrust between the Hindus and the Muslims in India. These two major communities of India, instead of being two monoliths, were divided into several distinct groups, on the basis of caste, occupation and race. The tendencies of communalism are seen in lower levels, different sects, within one religious community also, as the Harijan-Adivasi and Shia-Suni conflicts. Sometimes personal conflicts between the two individuals or two families, transformed a conflict of communal colour, when they belong to different communities. The transformation of the individual conflict on communal lines, depends upon the nature of conflict and the political environment of that place where it occurs. Actually it is possible to speak of the Hindus and the Muslims distinct, not just by religion but also a variety of socio-economic and cultural factors.

India adopted a secular political structure, mainly due to the pluralistic composition. Secularism has two aspects i.e. positive and negative. Positive secularism means freedom of adoption of any religion. But negative secularism is to prohibit any
Communalism: A Conceptual Framework

religion. The conception of secularism, as embodied in our constitution, is not a negative conception. Communalism has come to mean non-secular. It is clearly mentioned in the Indian constitution, which allow freedom of religion. The constitution of India declares it a secular state and provides fundamental rights to its citizens for cultural development of their religions. The secular state of India does not allow differences, favour or rivalry, among its citizens, on the basis of their faith, religiosity, social status or family and tribal background. The state provides protection to each religious group without discrimination.\textsuperscript{53} Indian constitution is free from communalism. It does not make any discrimination based on caste, creed, sex or residence. It can be said that constitution is not bad, but humans are bad. It is the political parties, which have distorted the constitution. Thus secularism does not mean separation of state from church, mosque, temple or gurdwara. It seeks to provide equal religious freedom to its citizens, individually as well as corporate, level to profess, practice and propagate religion, in a politically organised society. However, secular principles were never adhered in practice. Principles of secularism were violated and religious and communal identities got reinforced. The weaknesses of secular forces and simultaneously reinforcement of communal forces, embedded deeply in democratic infrastructure of Indian society. Some scholars hold each religious activity as anti-secularistic but this concept is vogue. In the sense, adherence to religion and observance of customs and festivals cannot be regarded as communal. Broadly speaking phenomenon of communalism has come to be associated with the strategy of political mobilisation, generally perpetuated by the elites of various political parties, in their quest for political power. Some parties (e.g. Bharatiya Janata Party) have proceeded to a greater extent in using this strategy for political mobilisation and acquired good influence in public in a short time, whereas, other (e.g. Congress Party)\textsuperscript{54} have used communal tactics for perpetuation of their political power.
ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

1 According to old records, there was communal disharmony between followers of Buddha and Hindu Dharma, during the period of Pushyamitra Shungha. In medieval times, the Muslim rulers adopted communal approach against the Hindus. They imposed "Jazia" and persuaded them to conversion into Islam. After the downfall of Mughal Empire, the Britishers followed communalism and Pakistan is the by-product of their communal politics, see V.D. Mahajan, *Ancient India*, New Delhi : S. Chand & Company, 1981 and Dr. Agya Ram Shakya, "Typology of Communalism in India", *Third Concept*, September 2007, p.33.


*Census of India*, 2001, Jayant Kumar Banthia (Registrar General & Census Commissioner) India, 2A, Mansingh Road, New Delhi-11 00 11, p.XXVII.


Ibid, p. 20.


Banu, n. 4, pp. 30-31.


Gopal, Krishan, "Communalism Issues Revisited", *Times of India*, 10 October 1974


Ibid, p. 2.

A. Dastur, "Communalism as Viewed by a Political Scientist," in Engineer and Shakir, n. 35, p. 73.

Pandav Nayak, "Relationship between the Political and the Communal Forces - A Materialist Critique," in Engineer and Shakir, n. 35, p. 28.


Moin Shakir, "Notes on National Integration," in Engineer and Shakir, n. 35, p. 54.


Pandey, n. 11, p. 3.


Priyavandan Patel, "Recent History and Politics of Communalism and Communal Riots in Gujarat", in Engineer and Shakir, n 35, pp. 106-07.


T.S. Lokhandwala, "Islam and Communalism", in Engineer and Shakir, n. 35, p. 2

