Chapter 3

Political, Economic and Social undercurrents in Religious Violence

In the first two chapters, during our endeavour to understand the phenomenon of religious violence, it was found that it is rarely restricted to the religion only thereby making it very difficult to be fully explained purely in religious terms. In this chapter, effort will be made, on one hand, to ascertain as to what are the factors other than religious, which culminate into communal and sectarian strife and how and why the conflicts on account of the secular issues relating to political, social and economic factors get religious hues and on the other, how the religious conflicts can be explained in their political, social and economic dimensions? The matters get some times so twisted and entangled that it becomes very difficult to segregate the religious strands from the political, social and economic strands of a conflict. Efforts will also be made to find as to how the religious beliefs often spur the beginning, as well as the intensification, of conflict which otherwise turn to the political, economic and social factors. Thus, the first task is to define what is meant by “political”, “economic” and “social” factors as religious violence is not “all of a piece ... there are patterns of timing, targeting and location”\(^\text{1}\) which may be determined by such factors. Moreover, some times it appears that violence is both, a cause and an effect. Horowitz enlists some instances such as – the Sri Lankan riots of 1977, in which 100 lives were lost but 50,000 people were displaced from Sinhalese south, 1983 riots in that country left 471 deaths with creation of 1,00,000 refugees; the Northern Nigerian riots of 1966 which resulted in displacement of over ten

lac people; the religious violence during the India-Pakistan partition had resulted in deaths between one to two lack people and over one crore refugees; the Hindu-Muslim violence in Bombay-Bhiwandi in 1984 left 258 to 500 people dead.\(^2\) We can add two more incidences of large scale religious violence in which thousands lost lives and a large number became refugees – the 1984 anti-Sikh violence in the heart of the Indian capital and various other places through out the country and Post- Godhra anti-Muslim Gujarat riots in 2002.\(^3\) On surface, in all these instances violence caused violence – but was what happened instantaneous or something simmering over a period due to various factors had exploded finding an excuse?

Whatever surrounds us is a totality which includes all the nature’s bounties and human beings are part of this whole. Zizek says that it is only in his endeavour to understand his surroundings that man has been splitting it and making “dry abstract categories” so that reality is “torn asunder” to show as separate what belongs together.\(^4\) This process of making abstractions has been instrumental in the human progress, as human beings not only attempted to understand their surrounding but also to locate their place in those surroundings. These abstractions, the development of which was possible with the development of language and which got continuity from culture, were not “dry” as claimed by Zizek, as the concepts such as family, clan, tribe, nation, religion etc. could elicit such intense feelings of identification and distinctiveness that individuals get ready to sacrifice even their very beings for them. The word society which came into English in 14\(^{th}\) century from immediate forerunner word societe from old French word societas from

\(^2\) Ibid., 10-11.
Latin root *socius* meaning companion,\(^5\) on the one hand indicates totality of social relationships among human beings and on the other it indicates a group of human beings broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interests, participation in characteristic relationships, shared institutions, and a common culture.\(^6\)

If we go by Darwin’s theory of evolution, we find that human beings have developed from their animal ancestors over a very long period of time. However, with the passage of time, the original herd instincts developed into more complex structures of social relations and the human beings could not confine themselves to the basic necessities of subsistence i.e., food, clothing and shelter only. The expansion of necessities gave birth to such complex structures of societies where the social roles underwent drastic changes, which on one hand, led to interdependence and on the other clash of interests, and now the distinct social, political, economic aspects emerged along with ever present religious aspect of societies. But what this development and conceptualisation created were not separate and compartmentalised parts but a totality containing what was mutually intra-acting and overlapping. Even today, when more emphasis is put on the segregation of the different aspect of human life, its all encompassing nature can not be ignored. One example from an article by Anand Chakravarti appearing in “Mainstream” can make the matter more clear which says that social justice is not an goal inferior to the economic growth and political participation of the populace, though the things have not gone in the desired direction in Independent India and the indiscriminate and excessive exploitation of mines and forests, displacement of tribal people and destruction of their livelihood without providing them


alternate habitat and means of sustenance, moreover leaving least space for political participation by them has resulted in the unrest and turmoil in tribal areas.  

Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashtanta, in the same vein, says that justice in mere judicial sense is no justice if it is not in “the wider sense of economic, social and political justice.” Here the political, the economic and the social aspects come out of a single human milieu. Moreover, economics comes into fore when we have to study “how best to make use of scarce resources”, politics involves “the authoritative allocation of resources” and the sociologist has “to focus not primarily on liberty and equality, but on fraternity by reason of the need to deal with the problem of scarcity in a fair and harmonious fashion.” But, perhaps, the human beings lack ken to comprehend the totality, therefore, it is broken into parts and then the conceptual framework is assigned to those parts – this is how cognitive economy is fostered by introducing meaningful and manageable units.

**Conflict and Dispute**

It is not by choice that human societies have divisions and diversity; rather, these appear to be inevitable as no two human beings are same and beyond individuals there are naturally formed group identities such as family, kinship, caste, religion and other such ethnic identities in addition to groups such as political parties, guilds, associations, unions etc. with nation/nationality on the borderline as it all depends how we define or make out of these terms as we will discus in the ensuing pages. Individuals and all these collectivities have diverse interests which result into conflict. These group formations are

---

not monoliths as there may be intra-interest clash among the members. But we are concerned with the conflicts among various groups proclaiming diverse religious affiliations which will remain the major defining factor. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall define conflict as “the pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups.”\textsuperscript{11} They further extend their definition to include armed conflict as “a conflict where parties on both sides resort to the use of force” and violent or deadly conflict though being “similar to armed conflict … also includes one-sided violence such as genocide against unarmed civilians.”\textsuperscript{12} E. Wertheim, A. Love, C. Peck and L. Littlefield in their book \textit{Skills for Resolving Conflict} say that conflict occurs when there are real or perceived differences in interests (i.e. wants, needs, fears, concerns) that cannot be simultaneously satisfied whereas G. Tillet believes that conflict manifests when the needs and values of two or more parties are incompatible.\textsuperscript{13} Conflict has been defined more comprehensively as a violent and armed confrontation and struggle between groups, between the state and one or more groups, and between two or more states where some of those involved are injured and killed and which can last anything from six months to over twenty years.\textsuperscript{14} Similar to conflict is the concept of dispute and there is debate as to whether it is useful to distinguish between conflicts and disputes. A. Tidwell considers conflicts and disputes as part of the same continuum with the main differentiating factor being that conflicts tend to be of greater intensity than disputes and are less subject to negotiation but Tillet says that disputes occur due to the competing interests or goals whereas conflict has its origins

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 31.
in fundamental differences in human values and needs.\textsuperscript{15} Burton says that these have been differentiated on the basis of the means of settlement also as the scholars found that the “[d]isputes were those confrontations that could be settled by traditional means of negotiation or arbitration, while conflicts had to be resolved by analytical processes.”\textsuperscript{16}

Malitza says that conflicts generally break out when there is failure to build a society in which a minimum living standard is offered to its members, irrespective of their group affiliation, the energies of the members of society are not channelised constructively and the fruits of modernising reforms do not reach the various communities to enable them to interact peacefully in their own common interest.\textsuperscript{17} Malitza presents the picture of the whole mankind when he further says:

Mankind’s social map presents us with the most adequate background for the outbreak of conflict, and shows an overwhelming majority of people caught between uncontrolled population growth and the need to subsist, struggling with misery and poverty, ravaged by disease, malnutrition, homelessness, or crowded together in unsanitary agglomerations if they do not become refugees out of fear of extermination. Their desperate situation is blamed on others; a scapegoat, who must be destroyed as the cause of all their ills, appears or is presented, and is usually any outsider who enjoys better living conditions, no matter how small the difference.

The same impotent rage can also be found, even in a prosperous society, where the uprooted, the misfits, the underprivileged, once called the *lumpen*

\textsuperscript{15} Carolyn Manning, op. cit.


proletariat, can be mobilized by the slogans of various subcultures seeking to unbalance the larger society, even violently.¹⁸

Though, the above description summarises the human predicament leading to conflicts but the major thrust is on inequality, poverty and squalor but what is required is not mere explanation – what is needed is how to change it, to have human dignity, freedom and justice for all.¹⁹ There has not been unanimity in answering the question – as to why do people resort to violence in general and religious violence in particular? More so, when almost all the religions claim to spread peace. George Elwert, though talking about violence in general, says that while attempting to give answers to such questions, it may be disastrous to consider the declared intentions only and there is always need of what he calls “a distinction between façade and structure.”²⁰ Generally, something smouldering since long, flares up instantaneously after getting the smallest provocation. It is here that the political, economic and social aspects of the conflict seem to play their roles along with the religious factors which give façade to the whole structure of conflict. Then there are intractable or protracted conflicts “that continue to defy all efforts to settlement and transformation – often for years.”²¹ In the first chapter it was seen that violence is part of human societies since the prehistoric times. But there have been speculations about the original conditions of humanity. English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) said that the original or natural condition of humanity was “war of every man against every man ... [their lives were] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and

¹⁸ Ibid.
²¹ Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall (2011), op. cit. 61.
short.”\textsuperscript{22} Keeley says that though Hobbes never claimed that humans were innately cruel or violent and he rather ascribed the reasons for violence to the social conditions – “the logical consequence of human equality of needs, desires, and intelligence”, however, he considered the initial state of humanity to be war, not peace.\textsuperscript{23} Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) criticised Hobbes and proclaimed the “divinity” and innate pity or compassion which was “overwhelmed only when envy was created by the origins of marriage, property, education, social inequality, and “civil” society.”\textsuperscript{24} Here, if we accept Darwin’s evolutionary theory, we can not have a definite point in human history, which we may call the original or natural condition – it is all speculation. Ian Robertson says that human beings are said to be violent by nature and in the industrialized countries, mainly in the West, people are thought of being self-seeking, selfish, competitive and even aggressive but such behavioural traits are found to be absent in many of the so-called “primitive” people such as Arapesh of New Guinea, the pygmies of the Ituri forest in central Africa, the Shoshone of the western United States, the Lepchas of Sikkim in the Himalayas, or the Tasaday of the Philippines.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Theories of Violent Behaviour}

From the above instances we can say that the violent behaviour among human beings can not be ascribed to their nature alone but we have to examine the external factors leading to such behaviour. Studies have showed that even kittens do not have instinct to kill mice or rats but such predatory behaviour is learned through observation.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Lawrence H. Keeley. \textit{War Before Civilization}. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 6.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ian Robertson. \textit{Sociology}. New York: Worth Publishing Inc., 1977. 56.
\end{itemize}
There has been much study on violent behaviour among human beings and the social psychologists have developed many theories to explain violent behaviour for which they use the term – aggression which is defined as “any behaviour that the actor performs with an intent to do harm.”  

First of these theories is the frustration-aggression theory according to which frustration – interference in achieving goals, was cause of aggression which was naturally directed to the agent causing such hindrance and this led to violence; aggression acts as catharsis but when the hindrance is justified by societal mechanisms, frustration may not be expressed as aggression or may be displaced to a third party. 

The people at the lowest rung of caste hierarchy in India continued accepting their plight as natural due to social mechanism, though there were occasional outburst against this inhuman treatment by some saints in the past and these people themselves in recent past; in religious conflicts, minority generally perceives the dominating majority as hindrance in their development and well being whereas the under privileged section of the majority is fed on the idea that minority is usurping what was theirs – hence their predicament. Such ideas are propagated by the politically vested interests. Second theory is Arnold H. Buss’s theory of instrumental aggression in which he propounded that reinforcement of negative experience that persists over a period of time may motivate aggressive acts of vengeance. But it is not only the past that decides the antagonisms. Sometimes present or futuristic anticipations also decide the tactical manoeuvres on the part of leaders as in the case of Indian Punjab, the dominant rhetoric during the militancy in the last quarter of the previous century was that the Hindu majority was usurping what rightfully belonged to the minorities, in this case, the Sikhs, but the political alliance between the dominant

27 Ibid., 465.
28 Ibid., 460-61.
29 Ibid., 462.
party representing Sikh interests and a party representing Hindutva ideology for a substantially long period with efforts always to displace the aggression against the central government led by the Indian National Congress, is one such example. The third theory is Albert Bandura’s social learning theory who said that the aggressive behaviour is learned by individuals by observing persons (models) around behaving in aggressive ways wherein the observer observes the “cues, responses and outcome” of the “modeled event” in such a way that these are encoded in his or her psyche so that the “encoded cognitive process” is transformed into imitative responses which turn into action when “incentive conditions” are present. During the militancy period during 1980s and early 1990s in Punjab, the adolescents were attracted to militancy as they observed the gun trotting militants as the masters for a certain period, though other factors also had some effect. The fourth theory is B Leonard Berkowitz’s theory of emotional aggression in which he said that aversive stimuli produce negative affects in individuals, and the negative affects create a desire to hurt, which, in turn, instigates aggressive behaviour. It has been found that the aggressive behaviour is intensified by such factors as noise, air pollution, high population density and personal space invasion, viewing violent films, easy access to weapons. Anger is a parallel process which induces negative thoughts and feelings which may cause aggression and anger itself does not cause aggression. The above theories are based mostly on the studies of individuals and cater to the psychological aspects only which may be manifestation of some deep traumas and eccentricities. But we are concerned with why normal-common people professing different religions

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 464.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
become aggressive and turn into violent foes justifying such antagonism as well as the ensuing violence in the name of defending their respective religions.

The fifth theory i.e., social interactionist theory departs from the traditional theories and in place of aggression “alternative language of coercive action is preferred” and it is considered that at the root of coercive action there are three basic motives – social control, justice and identity.\(^{34}\) The basic presumption in social control motivation is that people are reward seeking, punishment avoiders and aim to gain compliance from the target persons for control of resources; here, the value and scarcity of resources determines the amount of coercion to be used.\(^{35}\) When an injustice – what is perceived as an unfair distribution of positive or negative resources, privileges or responsibilities, or some set of procedures for making decisions that are perceived as unfair, or violation of norms of how people ought to treat one another – is perceived to have occurred to a victim or to others who are socially identifiable with the victim, emotion of anger is caused which gives rise to the motive for “restoring or imposing justice on the perpetrator” and in case the perpetrator does not explain his behaviour or tender apology, then to do so by causing equal degree of harm to him.\(^ {36}\) Identity motive involves the desire to assert or to protect identities, here assertion of identity is to herald control and dominance whereas protection is against perceived threats or attacks on the valued identities by the Other which is necessitated to save face – if nothing is done victim will look weak, ineffective and assenting to that has occurred inviting subsequent disrespect not only from the offender but by third parties also.\(^ {37}\) But the actual happening of

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 465.
\(^{35}\) Ibid., 466.
\(^{36}\) Ibid.
\(^{37}\) Ibid., 467.
violence may be an intricate interplay of these and other motives’ as sometimes even something started as persuasion may end up in violence. Religion is major matrix to provide identity not only to groups but to individuals also, the assertion of or retaliation for attack on this identity accompanied by the natural need and desire to control the resources whether, social, economic or political under the influence of the very same factors may cause fierce antagonism leading to worst kinds of violence.

**Ideology and Hegemony**

But before we take up these factors and their effect on the initiation, smouldering, triggering and escalation of religious violence, we need to define certain terms such as ideology and hegemony which will be used frequently in the ensuing discourse. The word Ideology appeared in English in 1796 as a direct translation of French word *ideologie* which was coined by Destutt de Tracy\(^38\) when he was in a prison cell during the Reign of Terror and he was of firm belief that “reason, not violence, was the key to social reconstruction. Reason must replace religion.”\(^39\) He used this word in the sense of philosophy of mind or “the science of ideas in order to distinguish it from the ancient metaphysics.”\(^40\) But Napoleon Bonaparte used this word to attack the principles of the Enlightenment\(^41\) and as he tightened his political control, the ideologues became his *bêtes noires* and he charged them to have substituted “a ‘diffuse metaphysics’ for a ‘knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history.’”\(^42\) Though, the French ideologues believed that there was a close interrelation between ideas and material circumstances,

---

\(^{39}\) Terry Eagleton (1998), op. cit. 229.
\(^{40}\) “Ideology.” Raymond Williams (1988) op. cit.154.
\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Terry Eagleton (1998), op. cit. 232.
yet they believed that the ideas were the very basis of social life.\textsuperscript{43} Hegel had the same notion about the primacy of ideas, and it was implied that to bring change in the conditions of life only requirement was to change the people’s minds, however, Marx and Engels reversed this notion and said that human consciousness is created by material conditions and it can be changed by changing those conditions,\textsuperscript{44} as they said, “Thus, morals, religion, metaphysics and other forms of ideology and the forms of consciousness corresponding to them no longer retain their apparent independence... It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.”\textsuperscript{45} For early Marx, ideology was a not only a political force but also a mere illusion, a set of ideas isolated from reality, however, in his later works of economic studies he finds this duality ingrained in the very nature of the capitalist society;\textsuperscript{46} in the same vein, for Lenin ideology of a class was the “system of ideas appropriate” to that class.\textsuperscript{47} Therefore, ideology is a set of ideas held in common by a group of people\textsuperscript{48} through which actions and attitudes are justified and this way it helps in the creation of a group and has socio-political function whereas, religion is supposed to have devotional-transcendental element. Affinity between religion and ideology is such that some religions act as ideologies and some ideologies are adhered to with vehemence found in religion only. Jeffner calls them as ideological religion or religious ideologies.\textsuperscript{49} Islam, especially Shai‘ism, Zionism in Judaism, Sikhism etc. are such religions where socio-political and
religious functions can not be segregated. Through ideologies, social interests are rationalised and rationalisation is defined by J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis as “a procedure whereby the subject attempts to present an explanation that is either logically consistent or ethically acceptable for attitudes, ideas, feelings, etc., whose true motives are not perceived.” Ideologies are not only rationalising but also “naturalising and universalising” they claim to be true for all times and all places despite the fact that such claim in itself is false. Eagleton says that for George Lukacs “[t]hought and reality are part of the same dialectical process; and if a particular social class is able to dominate others, it is because it has managed to impose its own peculiar consciousness or worldview upon them.” Religions are not different in this respect; the adherents of particular religions also make similar claims about their respective religions. Sometimes the very same religions gives credence to the opposite views as in South Africa, Christianity with its idea of God was used as source of strength both by the government imposing apartheid laws and the people struggling against it. This brings us to what is termed as hegemony.

Hegemony originated from Greek *egemonia* from *egemon* – leader, ruler, however, the term got currency mainly in the twentieth century through the works of Gramsci who described state as force plus consent and argued that in the modern conditions, a class maintains its dominance not merely by force but it is able to go beyond “its narrow, corporative interests” to assert a moral and intellectual leadership and compromises are made with a “variety of allies” who are unified in a social block.

50 Quoted in Terry Eagleton (1998), op. cit. 235.
51 Terry Eagleton (1998), op. cit. 236.
52 Ibid., 238.
53 Anders Jeffner (1988), op. cit. 46.
54 “Hegemony.” Raymond Williams (1988), op. cit. 144, 144-46.
which he calls “historical bloc.”\textsuperscript{55} Williams says that here the relation of economic base and a political and cultural superstructure, where change in base brings change in the superstructure, becomes irrelevant as hegemony and hegemonic include cultural as well as political and economic factors; as such, culture becomes a more potent political tool and the struggle for hegemony is “seen as a necessary or as the decisive factor in radical change of any kind, including many kinds of changes in the [economic] base.”\textsuperscript{56} So in the Gramscian sense, hegemony consists of the ideas, institutions and techniques whereby a dominant social group exercises and retains dominance over others.\textsuperscript{57} It is the hegemon who labels the opponent’s world view as nothing but “ideological fanaticism” and its own (similar views and acts) as “a matter of adapting realistically to the facts.”\textsuperscript{58} Hegemony is not primarily a function of coercion but (sometimes also) of guilt, low self-esteem, a misplaced sense of duty, feeling of powerlessness, fear of alienating the love and approval of others etc. for as long as human beings get some sort of gratification, however meagre it may be, they go along various kinds of misery but as soon as such fulfilment ceases, they rebel against such conditions.\textsuperscript{59} Who is tyrant and who is victim, who is Evil and who is Good, who is true and who is false – all this has become ideological and nothing can be claimed to be absolute as the happenings in the recent past have shown; in reaction to September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the U.S., Baudrillard wrote:

\textsuperscript{56} “Hegemony.” Raymond Williams (1988), op. cit.145-46.
\textsuperscript{58} Terry Eagleton (1998), op. cit. 244.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 244-45.
Terrorism is immoral. The occurrence at the World Trade Centre, this symbolic act of defiance, is immoral, but it was in response to globalization, which is itself immoral. We are therefore immoral ourselves, so if we hope to understand anything we will need to get beyond Good and Evil. The crucial point lies in precisely the opposite direction from the Enlightenment philosophy of Good and Evil. We naively believe in the progress of Good, that its ascendance in all domains (science, technology, democracy, human rights) corresponds to the defeat of Evil. No one seems to have understood that Good and Evil increase in power at the same time and in the same way.... We have gone well beyond ideology and politics. The energy that nourishes terror, no ideology, no cause, not even an Islamic one, can explain. The terrorists are not aiming simply to transform the world. Like the heretics of previous times, they aim to radicalize the world through sacrifice, whereas the system aims to convert it into money by force.60

It is another fact that immediately after the attack efforts were made to rule out any such link and Good versus Evil rhetoric got more currency, more so in the Western media.61 In the religious sphere, ideological commitments and claims create hegemonic relations which lead to conflicts. The Hindu outfits in India use the rhetoric of indigenous versus foreigner and slogans such as “Hindustan Hindu ka, nahi kisi ke baap ka” – India belongs to Hindus only and nobody else62 and have coined slogans such as “Bharat mein jo rahana hoga vande mataram kahana hoga”- if you want to live in India, you will have to hail/worship mother (India) – which is anathema to Muslims. Singing of national song

60 Quoted in David Hawkes (2007), op. cit. 188, 191-192.
61 David Hawkes (2007), op. cit. 192.
[Vande Mataram] was made compulsory in all Delhi state schools by the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party in 1993\textsuperscript{63} in an effort for establishing the Hindu hegemony over the other. Now we will turn to the social, political and economic factors which may cause, generate, escalate and perpetuate conflicts leading to religious violence.

**The Social Factors**

**Defining the “Social”:** To find out what are the social factors generating conflict, we have to first define what is “social” The word social has a very wide range of meanings, the Oxford Advance Lerner’s Dictionary gives the following two meanings in the sense of “connected with society”: “1[only before noun] connected with society and the way it is organized: social issues / problems / reforms. a call for social and economic change. 2[only before noun] connected with your position in society: social class / background. social advancement (= improving your position in society)”\textsuperscript{64} Random House Dictionary of English Language gives the following meanings in this sense: “5. of or pertaining to human society, esp. as a body divided into classes according to worldly status. 6. of or pertaining to the life, welfare, and relations of human beings in a community. 7. noting or pertaining to activities design to remedy or alleviate certain unfavourable conditions of life in a community, esp. among the poor.”\textsuperscript{65} Human beings are not born with instinctual behaviour like other animals; rather they have to learn everything, except some basic biological functions, from the culture of the society they are born in. The notion of culture is of modern origin.\textsuperscript{66} Today religion is considered part of culture, but in the pre-


\textsuperscript{64} “Social,” Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. 1452.

\textsuperscript{65} “Social,” The Random House Dictionary of English Language. 1350.

modern and theocratic societies culture consists of all the shared products of human society and such products are of two basic kinds, 1) material – all the artefacts or the physical objects human beings create – wheels, clothing, totem poles, places to live in, educational institutions, books, factories, space crafts, aeroplanes, weapons of destruction etc., and 2) nonmaterial culture – abstract creations like languages, ideas, beliefs, customs, rules, myths, skills, family patterns, political system, religion etc. Culture and society are closely linked, we can not separate them except by saying, “Culture consists of the shared products of society; society consists of interacting people who share a culture.”

The human beings are always after the control of scarce resources, be it territory, political power, natural resources or perceived due recognition in the social scale arisen out of the sharp specificity of group identity based on culturally recognised ethnic factors – common origins and shared cultural traditions. A sense of depravity is generated due to the actual or perceived presence of the “other” on the same social, economic or political space. John R. Bowen says that the intensity of brutality of violence in such cases is generated due to “‘deep-seated, ancient feelings of hatred’ handed down from generation to generation.” Why such feeling of hatred? Perhaps one reply was given by Karl Marx when he wrote:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that

---

67 Ian Robertson (1977), op. cit. 51.
68 Ibid.
70 Quoted in IHBVR P. 249
each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank.  

Marx has very aptly described the periods of relative peace, perhaps, the antagonisms remained in hibernation as instances are found where the members of different groups often lived in harmony and only became enemies in the course of ethnicisation of the political conflicts or getting more aware about their predicament due to increased coverage by the means of communication. However, all human societies have some sort of inequalities and also hierarchies of power and status by which people are divided into various strata. The basis of such stratification may be diverse and multiple in different societies which may include class, caste, race, ethnicity etc. Inequalities result into conflicts as all the members do not get equal opportunities and such situation gives rise to social movements. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani defined a social movement as “(1) informal networks based (2) on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize around (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest.”  

When Carl von Clausewitz asserted that “war is a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means;” he was locating violence within larger processes in societies which include social “negotiation, bargaining and exchange.” The communicative role of violence is very important in the social discourse and violence as discourse will be discussed in the next

---

chapter. Now we will examine how this social stratification escalates or contain religious violence and for that we will examine social factors such as caste, race and ethnicity.

Caste system

The caste system is present in many societies in Asia as, for example, the Japanese society is divided on casteist basis, with its own untouchables who are called “burakumin: those who are involved in contact with dead flesh (butchers, leatherworkers, gravediggers) and are sometimes even referred to as eta (‘much filth’).”\(^74\) In Rwanda (Africa), there is ranking of castes as the Tutsi have higher prestige than the Hutu, and the Hutu are above the Twa similarly Among the Nkole peoples of western Uganda, the Hima are above the Iru.\(^75\) But the caste system is most strikingly ingrained in the Hindu society in India and the pattern is different although there was similar division into occupational groups in ancient Iran also.\(^76\) The word caste was introduced by the European colonisers in and originated from a root meaning “pure”.\(^77\) Portuguese, the first European colonisers coming to India, had contact with the Hindu society in western and southwestern India and observed the vertical division of society into hereditary, endogamous occupational groups which practised mutual exclusion in the matters of eating and “presumably marrying”.\(^78\) This gave them an impression of purity of breed and they used word *Casta* (from Latin *castus*, “chaste”) in this sense probably since the

\(^{74}\) Slavoj Zizek (2007), op. cit. 189.  
middle 16th century and subsequently, cast, or caste, became established in English and major European languages (notably Dutch and French) in the same specific sense. 79

The Europeans had an outsider view of the caste system and believed it to be an ancient, abiding, and unique Indian institution upheld by a complex cultural ideology. However, Romila Thapar says that Megasthnes, a Greek visiting India in the fourth century BCE described seven broad divisions of the Indian society in his accounts without any association of purity. 80 The Indian society has always been a pluralistic society where along side majority Hindu community which itself perhaps has never been a monolith, there have been members of heterodox sects – the shramanas, tribal communities and members of other religious communities including three indigenous traditions i.e., Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism, Christianity, Islam etc., who are declared to be outside the pale of caste system. T.N. Madan says that it is essential to distinguish between large-scale and small-scale views of caste society, which may respectively be said to represent theory and practice, or ideology and the existing social reality. 81 The origin of caste system is ascribed to an oral tradition preserved in the Rigveda (dating from perhaps 1000 BCE) wherein hymn 90 of the tenth chapter describes creation of the entire animate and inanimate world from the sacrifice of the primordial Purusha. The relevant part of the same is as under:

When they divided Purusha how many portions did they make? What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet? The Brahman

---

79 Ibid.
80 Romila Thapar (2002), op. cit. 62.
81 “caste.” Encyclopædia Britannica, op. cit.
was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made. His thighs became the Vaishya, from his feet the Shudra was produced.\textsuperscript{82}

This is the only passage in the Rigveda to mention the four castes and is the earliest literary source of caste system. There are numerous other subsequent sources where such mention is made but the most quoted is perhaps The Laws of Manu which is said to be recited by Manu (Lord Brahma) when requested by great sages to declare the sacred laws of each of the (four chief) varnas and of the intermediate ones,\textsuperscript{83} here the creation myth is repeated with certain drastic changes, however, regarding creation of four Varnas it is mentioned: “But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds He caused the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet.”\textsuperscript{84} Here The Brahman is called mouth of Purusha as he as priest had a special privilege of addressing Gods in prayer and through this myth the Brahanical view of caste system was not only propagated but established at a particular occasion in the time line, hence was unchangeable; the control over ritual not only made the Brahmans purest category but also gave them distinctiveness.\textsuperscript{85} Rajanya, who were later called Kshatriya were the warriors aristocrats, Vaishya were cultivators and traders and Shudra worked as labourers for others and there was pancham the fifth category which consisted of untouchables and hence out of the pale of this system.\textsuperscript{86}

---


\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 1.31, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{85} Romila Thapar (2002), op. cit. 63.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
The Sanskrit word *varna* found mention in the sense of colour in relation to caste in the *Atharva Veda*, though it has many connotations including description, selection, classification, and colour and one specific colour has been attributed to each of the four castes – white to the Brahman, red to the Kshatriya, yellow to the Vaishya and black to the Shudra, however, relation to colour was lost in the later period.87 Another concept used “equally frequently” for caste is Jati which is derived from a root meaning “birth”; the Jatis are known by their names but are too numerous to be counted easily and moreover, their hierarchy is also neither consistent nor uniform.88 Whereas, four varnas find their mention in the Vedic literature, Jatis are found only in the later sources, Romila Thapar says that this does not prove that Jatis were of later origin, as the same could have been born earlier, though, originating from clan before becoming caste.89 A society can become caste based if (1) it register social disparities; (2) various groups within it have unequal access to the economic resources and political power; and (3) an irreversible hierarchy claim based on supernatural power is imposed to legitimise the inequalities; the first two features are found to the minimal in many societies, but the third – the ideological factor derived from varna is characteristic of Hindu society – as the absolute purity of one group requires absolute impurity of another which in this case is the untouchable.90 Thapar says that pre-Vedic society of urban Harappan culture has not been investigated due to absence of easily readable evidences, however, the structure of urban society indicates the presence of a society which may well have been based on a hierarchy of Jatis and “the differentiation between those who produced and those who

87 “Varna” The Penguin Dictionary of Religion in India, op. cit. 495.
88 Romila Thapar (2002) op. cit. 63.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 63-64.
controlled was doubtless legitimized through an ideology, probably religious.” \(^9^1\) The varnas were the fixed categories, whereas, the interaction with new communities such as tribes from forests or migrants, new jatis were created to be assimilated into varna hierarchy, majority being assimilated into shudras which introduced variety of profession leading to accommodation of some existing practices in new varna identities of shudras. \(^9^2\) Specific marriage regulations, rules regarding access to occupation, social hierarchy and hereditary status were required to be observed. The first three varnas are *dvija*, twice born – “the second birth being initiation into the ritual status – whereas the *shudra* has only a single birth.” \(^9^3\) In the southern peninsula, the varna system developed in such a way that mainly *Brahmans* and *shudra* got prominence whereas *kshatriyas* and *vaishyas* got little mention. \(^9^4\) In the north, in the first quarter of the second millennia some castes which had been in *vaishya* varna so far, claimed new status in *kshatriya* varna through a genealogy or an appropriate marriage alliance and the shudras were divided into *sat*, true or pure *shudras*, and *asat* or unclean *shudras*. \(^9^5\) The above picture of the caste system in Indian society clearly shows that it is a system of discrimination which plays great role as the ideology to perpetuate the unjust distribution of even the basic human right of dignity, the others being corollary to it. Rawls said: “unjust social arrangements are themselves a kind of extortion, even violence, and consent to them does not bind. The reason for this condition is that the parties in original position would insist upon it.” \(^9^6\) Dr. Ambedkar gives instances when religious violence was caused by and justified by the Brahamanical

\(^9^1\) Ibid., 64.  
\(^9^2\) Ibid., 67.  
\(^9^3\) Ibid., 124.  
\(^9^4\) Ibid., 390.  
\(^9^5\) Ibid., 462-63.  
religion and said that the stringent caste system was invention of Brahmans to equate Buddhist Shramans with untouchables. He relates the murder of Buddhist Maurya king Brihadrath by his Brahman military commander Pushpmitra in 185 BCE and says that Manusmriti was written after this incident to work as canonical justification of the Brahman’s act of regicide which was otherwise illegal.  

The caste system has passed through many phases along with the Indian society. The Brahmans were always eulogized even if they had serious moral flaws but it was the shudra who was always suppressed and remained on the receiving end throughout, because the religious texts which supplied ideological basis for inflicting acute discrimination were written by Brahmans. In the final chapter (Book 7) i.e., the “Uttarakanda” of Valmiki Ramayana, an incidence of killing of a shudra called Shambuka is mentioned which shows the deep penetration of the caste system into the social structure. The story goes as follows:

(73) When Rama is reigning as a virtuous king, a humble aged Brahmin comes to him, weeping, with his dead son in his arms. He says that Rama must have committed some sin, or else his son would not have died. (74) The sage Narada explains to Rama that a Shudra is practicing penances, and this is the cause of the child’s death. (75) Rama goes on a tour of inspection in his flying chariot, and finds an ascetic doing austerities, and asks who he is. (76) Hearing the [inquiring] words of Rama of imperishable exploits, that ascetic, his head still hanging downwards [as part of his austerities] answered:— ‘O Rama, I was born

---

97 Bhim Rao Ambedkar. Acchut – kaun the aur ve acchut kaise ho gae? (Hindi) (Who were the Shudras and how they became Untouchables?). Jaipur: Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule Sahitya Academy, 2007. 140-141. Ambedkar Phule Series No. 4.
of a Shudra alliance and I am performing this rigorous penance in order to acquire the status of a God in this body. I am not telling a lie, O Rama, I wish to attain the Celestial Region. Know that I am a Shudra and my name is Shambuka.’ As he was yet speaking, Raghava [Rama], drawing his brilliant and stainless sword from its scabbard, cut off his head. The Shudra being slain, all the Gods and their leaders with Agni’s followers, cried out, ‘Well done! Well done!’ overwhelming Rama with praise, and a rain of celestial flowers of divine fragrance fell on all sides, scattered by Vayu. In their supreme satisfaction, the Gods said to that hero, Rama: — ‘Thou hast protected the interests of the Gods, O Highly Intelligent Prince, now ask a boon, O beloved Offspring of Raghu, Destroyer of Thy Foes. By thy grace, this Shudra will not be able to attain heaven!’

This shows the rigidity, the caste system had attained by the time of the Ramayana of Valmiki, moreover, this is an example of caste based religious violence. Though there have been religious movements which either rejected or opposed caste system – among them Jainism and Buddhism did so from without, Vaishnavism and Shavism did so from within, most of the Bakti saint transcended caste, Tantrism went beyond caste, in the nineteenth century, Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj worked for establishing casteless society. In the twentieth century, Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu has been an anti Brahamanism movement which was arisen a reaction to northern hegemony of religion and language. But all this could not rid Indian society of caste

system which in itself is nothing but a form of structural violence. At present there are four varnas but more than 3000 castes and more than 25000 sub-castes in India.  

Now we turn to some of the other major religions which have either originated in India or came to India from out side but have substantial following here, most of which have theologies that do not support caste system. Jainism could not remain aloof and has castes which are grouped into two broad categories of Visa and Dasa, the former being considered higher and consequently, there are very rare marriage alliances between the two. As jatis became primary step in making the caste society, it paved way for conversion to religions other than Hinduism. But after such conversions most of the times jati identities frequently continued in the religions that theoretically rejected caste, such as Islam and Christianity. Islam, though preaches an egalitarian society, still the South Asian Muslim society is mainly divided into the ashraf (Arabic, plural of sharif, “nobleman”), who are supposedly descendants of Muslim Arab immigrants, and the non-ashraf, who are local converts. The ashraf group is further divided into four subgroups: (1) Sayyids, originally a designation of descendants of Muhammad through his daughter Fatimah and son-in-law Ali, (2) Shaykhs (Arabic: “Chiefs”), mainly descendants of Arab or Persian immigrants but some converted Rajputs are also included, (3) Pashtuns, members of Pashto-speaking tribes in Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan, and (4) Mughals, persons of Turkish origin, who came into India with the Mughal armies; whereas, the non-ashraf Muslim have three levels of status: at the top, converts from high Hindu castes, mainly Rajputs, insofar as they have not been absorbed into the Shaykh

---

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Romila Thapar (2002), op. cit. 67.
castes; next, the artisan caste groups, such as the Julahas, originally weavers; and at the lowest rung remain the converted untouchables, who have continued their old occupations. Among the Indian Christian caste still persists in the shape of social stratification based upon caste membership at the time of an individual’s own or of an ancestor’s conversion.

Sikhism originating in the sixteenth century, is a unique religion based on equality of all human beings and no discrimination of any type is made in sangat (the congregation), langar (the community kitchen) and Pangat (un-stratified sitting arrangement). In principle, Sikhism is against caste system, still in practice there are castes, though with less rigidity and the Dalits are still to get equal place. The refusal of the priests of Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar to accept Karah Parshad (Sikh sacrament) from the Majhabi Sikhs (literally – religious devout, a name coined by Sikh reformers for low castes converted to Sikhism) and perform ardas on their behalf started what is called Gurudwara Reform Movement on 13th October 1920. Some incidents, such as one at Talhan village near Jallandhar in Doaba sub-region of Indian Punjab in June, 2003, show the existence of casteist tinge in the strained relations between landowning Jats and the Ad-Dharmis which surfaced due to row over management of a local shrine. Jodhka says that ideologically, caste is dead in contemporary Punjab but it “survives and thrives as a source of identity”, the Dalits are detaching themselves from the “patronage

103 “Islamic caste.” Encyclopedia Brittanica, op. cit.
106 “Caste” The Penguin Dictionary of Religion in India, op. cit. 102-03.
structures of jajmani relations” as the caste-occupation relation has almost gone; but once freed from the old structures, the Dalits are now asserting their individual dignity by demanding share in common resources of the village and have begun to demand equal rights vis-à-vis other caste communities, thus caste today is not about hierarchy but “about power and identity.”109 This assertion about power and identity does not go well with the dominant castes and ensuing conflict some times results into violence. One such example was killing of Dera Sachkhand Ballan deputy chief Sant Ramanad at Vienna (Austria) in June 2009 by the Sikh hardliners in protest to the dera’s “heresy” and violation of Sikh maryada (code of conduct) by living Guru tradition being followed by the sect against the Sikh traditions. The ensuing violence including burning of a train at Jalandhar had halted life in Punjab for many days.110 When the dera chief Niranjan Das who had survived bullet injuries returned to India and arrived at his dera on 1st February 2010, the age-old ties with Sikhism were severed and a separate “Ravidasia Dharam” (in replacing the term “Ad-Dharmis” referred to by Jodhka above) was created, the announcement for which had been made two days back on the 633rd birth anniversary of their patron saint. Guru Granth Sahib, which had a distinct place of honour, was to be replaced by “Amritbani Satguru Ravidas Mahraj-ji” in a phased manner; a new code of conduct, a new symbol with “Hari” and new greeting: “Jai Gurudev” was also adopted.111 Initially, the Sikhs leadership, apparently, ignored this incident as insignificant; as the only reaction reported in press was from Giani Talochan Singh, Jathedar Kesgarh Sahib who said that it had no influence on the people of Ravidasia community who have faith in

109 Ibid., 189.
the Guru Granth Sahib. However, after the SGPC Chief held meetings with different leaders of other deras of the Ravidassia community, a substantial segment declared the decision of a separate religion as null and void. But the damage had been done as clearly admitted by Tarlochan Singh subsequently. The rise of “derawad” in general is also ascribed to caste system as Jaspal Singh Sidhu wrote during the Dera Sirsa-Sikh confrontation (which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter):

Yes, the question is if the Gurudwaras are to remain under the control of politically sound, rich persons and dominant rural persons, how the Dalits, lower castes and economically shattered people will get proper respect there? Why will they not feel suffocated there? And how movements for social reforms germinate there? Remember! Sikh religion originated for the defence of the down trodden and the weak, but the continuation of the current Gurudwara (management) system will compel the suffering people to run towards dera and thus the influence and vote bank of dera will continue growing.

Reacting to the dera controversy, Dr. Jaspal Singh ascribed such developments to the increasing propensity in the Sikh mainstream to narrow down Sikhism by exclusion of the people from its domain who were its intrinsic part earlier, and the caste system; he made a very apt observation when he said, “But Sikh society itself is suffering from caste

---

based discrimination. So much so that even Gurudwaras are being built in the names of castes. Need of the hour is to bring the teachings of the Gurus in practice.”

As already said caste or caste like systems are forms of structural violence at the same time they help in deepening the religious based antagonisms also. For example on 9 November 2011 at the famous Ram Tirath Mandir, near Amritsar, the Hindu Mahantas had a fierce clash with the Valmiki Samaj people and four persons were injured. Direct violence and more so the religious violence is induced by conversion (in most cases) which is an attempt by the lowest in the caste hierarchy and down trodden to gain “emancipatory identity.” Caste is not mere social construction, rather its origin and base in Hinduism a dominant political section of which aspires for a Pan Indian singular civilization. Yoginder Sikand writes that the Arya Shuddhi (re-conversion of Muslim to Hinduism) and counter propagation of Islamic tenets by Muslim Tabligh which revolved around the low caste Hindus/Muslims resulted into drawing boundaries of both the communities more rigidly which perpetuated the subsequent fierce antagonism, mutual hatred and violence between followers of these two religions.

Racism

The word race came into English language from French word race and Italian word razza in 16th century; in 1787, working on physical anthropology, Blumenbach

---

118 John C.B. Webster (2003), op. cit. 373.
traced broad differential groups among humans based on the measurement of skulls – the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the Malayan, the Ethiopian, and the American (Indian) and the skin colours – white, yellow, brown, black, red. Racism was put as a justification for slavery and authority cited was from the Bible – after the Great flood, when Noah became a husbandman and grew vineyard; one day while after being drunken, he was lying senseless and naked in tent where his son Ham saw him and did not cover him, and he was covered by his other two sons. On gaining sense, he curses Ham’s son Canaan to be in servitude of the descendents of his other two sons. The name of Ham is derived from Hebrew Ch’m which is associated with being black and burnt and the story is ascribed to the origin of Africans to justify their enslavement.

Walter D. Mignolo says that initially, “Race” was a concept used for lineage of horses as horse breeding had a distinct place in history of the Arabs, whereas it was unknown to the Europeans; with the conquest of Spain by the Arabs, this fact was introduces there which is evident from the fact that in Spanish dictionaries horses became the primary example of lineage — “and still today, “pure blood” is an expression applied to horses with distinction that invaded the vocabulary in English and Spanish (pura sangre inglesa, pura sangre espanola)—is telling about the fact that animals were classified by “race” and people by “ethnicity”.

He further says that when Spanish Christians defined ““race” on the example of horses and added the slippage toward the human (“Race in [human] lineages is understood pejoratively, as having some Moorish or Jewish race…”), they planted the

---

122 Genesis 9:20-27
seed for the historical foundation of racism.” He says that this proves that racism, is not a question of blood or skin colour but of “a discursive classification entrenched in the foundation of modern/colonial (and capitalist) imperial management” and is not biological at all.

To show the white superiority over all others, the Frenchman Count Arthur de Gobineau, in his “Essay on the Inequality of Human Races”, published in 1854, proposed idea of an “Aryan race” taking cue from the meaning – noble, for Sanskrit word Aryan being used for Indo-European family of languages in comparative linguistics; similarly applying Darwinism to human society, a term “Social Darwinism” was coined to apply the theory of evolution with competitive struggle for existence and survival of the fittest was applied to social and political conflict within one species, the human. This led to notion of inherent racial inequalities and it was further reinforced by Francis Galton in 1883 when he introduced term “eugenics” with Greek roots in the sense “the production of fine offspring” which led to wide propagation of ideas of “both class and racial superiority.” The notion of “pure racial stock” and of inherited culturally acquired characteristics through blood and race got firm roots and was exploited to establish political dominance by the imperialist powers. In France, the revolution of 1789 had introduces the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity and the French “enjoyed membership of community by virtue of their residence in the national territory, irrespective of ethnic origin or religion.” However, anti-Semitism (being descendents of Noah’s son Shem, people originating from Middle-East were called Semitic but the tag

---

125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ali Rattansi (2007), op. cit. 36.
stuck to Jews) remained a potent force, so much so in the last years of the nineteenth century, France was rocked by what was called the Dreyfus affair in which Captain Alfred Dreyfus, one of the few Jews on the General Staff, was arrested on false spying charges;\(^\text{130}\) people were divided. The extreme views such as “The Jew was created by God to act the traitor everywhere” found expression in Roman Jesuit publications.\(^\text{131}\) In the white Britain and America even the Irish found themselves much discriminated and the same was the position of the Italians,\(^\text{132}\) here the hegemonic relations, especially in the case of the British colonizers vis-à-vis the Irish, the colonized were clearly visible. In America, vigilante groups – most notoriously the Klu Klux Klan – sprang up in the Southern states in the 1860s to police sexual intercourse between white and black.\(^\text{133}\) Though slavery was abolished with the end of the Civil War in 1865, discrimination with blacks continued right upto recent times.\(^\text{134}\) But in 1911, an American cultural anthropologist, Franz Boas, proved with scientific accuracy that there was no fundamental difference between the minds of “primitive” and the “civilized”; that the shape of the skulls changed due to the environment and was not function of racial differentiations and surprisingly, IQ tests conducted by his students showed that the Northern blacks had out performed the Southern whites.\(^\text{135}\) Not withstanding these tests and findings, the biggest racial play was enacted in Germany in 1930s when the Jews were eliminated in large numbers in cold blooded manner in the concentration camps under the rule of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party or,
**German Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP)** political party of the mass movement known as the Nazi party under the leadership of Adolf Hitler.\(^\text{136}\)

For the Nazis, Jews were a “subhuman” race and not a religious group, as the religious anti-Semitism could be resolved by conversion and the political anti-Semitism by expulsion, however, the logic of Nazi racial anti-Semitism led to annihilation of the Jews. The word Holocaust, which is used to denote the systematic and state sponsored extermination of about sixty lac Jews, is derived from the Greek *holokauston*, a translation of the Hebrew word ‘*olah*, meaning a burnt sacrifice offered whole to God.\(^\text{137}\) This word is very old and was used in the Greek translation of the Bible and the word was used in secular sense of a “disaster, in the sense of all-consuming fire.”\(^\text{138}\) It was chosen to represent the extermination of because in the ultimate manifestation of the Nazi killing program—the extermination camps—the bodies of the victims were consumed whole in crematoria and open fires.\(^\text{139}\) Though the figure of people killed is contested especially by the German scholars who try to challenge it logically and analytically and reduce it to much less.\(^\text{140}\) But even if such claims are accepted, the horror of the atrocities and brutal killings on racial basis still remain there in such number to make it one of the most horrible genocides.

European countries colonised most of the parts of Africa and Asia, but the entry of the people from former colonies to the European countries is no more liked. That is why there are racial discrimination, and in the name of secularisation, many restrictions

\(^{137}\) “Holocaust.” Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007. op. cit.
\(^{138}\) Peter Longerich. “Holocaust.” Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan (Ed.) (2003), op. cit. 139, 139-169.
\(^{139}\) “Holocaust.” Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007. op. cit.
are imposed as has been the case in France – the Hijab was banned in March 2004 and in 2010, the Parliament banned the Niqab,\textsuperscript{141} so much so that women wearing such dresses are penalised irrespective of the fact that it is not only their traditional attire but religiously sanctioned also. Even the Arabs from North Africa, the former colonies, are termed as racist in Europe.\textsuperscript{142} As the definition of race has blurred, there is new “cultural racism” where some modes of dress or manners become anathema and xenophobic treatment of people of such ethnic groups is gaining grounds. The dominating cultures make hegemonic demand of assimilation from all the immigrants but one can not deceive his physical characteristics.

Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote some forty years ago, “It would not be proper for an ethnologist to say what race is or is not, since specialists in physical anthropology, who have been discussing this question for nearly two centuries, have never been able to agree about it, and there is nothing to suggest that they are nearer to reaching agreement today than in the past.”\textsuperscript{143} Lévi-Strauss tells about the belief among the anthropologists and not about any concrete evidence. There is much confusion and Western scholars playing role of hegemon classify whatever they want as race. In 2001 United Nations organised the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Tolerance (WCAR) in Durban from August 31 to September 2 and surprisingly, caste system of India was included in it. Andre Beteille, a social anthropologist from India, reacted to it and said, “Treating caste as a form of race is politically mischievous; what is


\textsuperscript{142} Ali Rattansi (2007), op. cit.104.

\textsuperscript{143} Claude Lévi-Strauss. Race and culture International Social Science Journal. XXIII, 4 (1971) <unesdoc.unesco.org>
worse, it is scientifically nonsensical.” 144 Not only the Indian government protested but Beteille also registered his protest by resigning from the National Committee on World Conference against Racism. 145

Islamophobia: Islamophobia is a new form of racism which is prevalent in most of the non-Islamic countries, especially in Europe and America to such an alarming extent that Kofi Annan the then Secretary General of the United Nations had the following to say about Islamophobia at a UN meeting in New York in 2004: “[W]hen the world is compelled to coin a new term to take account of increasingly widespread bigotry, that is a sad and troubling development. Such is the case with Islamophobia”. 146 Generally it is considered an after effect of the attack on twin towers in New York on 11 September, 2001, the recent recorded usage in print is said to be in the American periodical, Insight, in 1991, though the first usage was in France by Etienne Dinet and Slima Ben Ibrahim, in 1925, though not in its current semantic sense. 147 This term was included in the Britain’s the Runnymede Trust report, A Very Light Sleeper: the Persistence and Dangers of Anti-Semitism which focused solely on Islamophobia, the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI) – which worked not only for defining the term but also to ensure that Islamophobia was afforded public and political recognition and the definition given in March 1997 was: the “shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike all or most Muslims”. 148 Rabbi Reuven refers to a 2007 article in Journal of Sociology in which Islamophobia was defined as anti-Muslim racism and a

148 Ibid., 19.
continuation of anti-Asian and anti-Arab racism.\textsuperscript{149} Allen says that the phenomenon of Islamophobia is neither consistent nor uniform, it may have a historical legacy, but its nature and outcomes are “shaped by the contemporary national, cultural, geographical and socio-economic conditions.”\textsuperscript{150} There has been dramatic increase in the physical attacks on Muslims individuals and mosques in Europe in the last ten years; there have been various legislations to either force assimilation in the dominant culture of the respective host countries or thwart entry of immigrants by making the legislations more stringent.\textsuperscript{151}

Ram Puniyani says that in the contemporary India also, there are misconceptions about Muslims which have continued due to \textit{communal historiography}, which was a way of looking at history through the prism of religion, a British Raj’s legacy which resulted in the formation of the Muslim League (in 1906) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925\textsuperscript{152} who “picked up the communal historiography narrative, using painful episodes from the past to develop a narrative of targeting the ‘other.’”\textsuperscript{153} Whereas, V.D. Savarkar claimed that the Christians and the Muslims of India were not part of the Indian nation as “… they do not look upon India as their holyland,”\textsuperscript{154} Golwalkar stressed the racial factor for which he was impressed by Hitler’s ideology as he wrote: “To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic Races – the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures,

\textsuperscript{149} Rabbi Reuven Firestone (2010) op. cit. 42-43.
\textsuperscript{150} Dr Chris Allen (2010) op. cit. 15.
\textsuperscript{151} Ali Rattansi (2007) op. cit. 108.
\textsuperscript{153} Ram Puniyani. Situating Anti-Muslim Hatred in Contemporary Indian Society. \textit{Arches Quarterly}. 4.7 (Winter 2010), op. cit. 102, 102-05. <thecordobafoundation.com> 21 May 2011.
\textsuperscript{154} Quoted in Christophe Jaffrelot (1999) op. cit. 31.
having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good
lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.”\textsuperscript{155} The RSS and its allied parties
propagate the past in such a way that the hatred for the past Muslim kings is transferred
to the Muslims of today and from 1990 onwards, and more so after 9/11 the demonisation
myth has been intensified with the popularisation of such phrases as the “Islamic terror”
and that the Muslims are terrorists and Islam a faith of violence.\textsuperscript{156}

Ali Rattansi refers to a case filed by parents of a British Sikh boy, Gurinder Singh
Mandla in 1978 under the Race Relation Act, 1976 against Park Grove, a private school
in Birmingham as the boy had been refused admission due to his turban as it contravened
the school uniform rules; after much litigation the case went in favour of the plaintiff in
the House of Lords.\textsuperscript{157} Here some important observations were made and the definition of
race was made very flexible as this ruling deemed that “Sikhs were \textit{racial} group because
they had a long shared history; cultural traditions of their own; a common geographical
origin (or descent from a small number of common ancestors); a common language; a
common literature; a common religion; and they were a minority or a majority within a
larger community.”\textsuperscript{158} In this ruling it was argued that a person was a member of a racial
group if he or she regarded himself or herself as a member and was accepted as such.\textsuperscript{159}

Though, Sikhs have claimed to be a separate \textit{Quam} which can be translated as nation as
well as community\textsuperscript{160} and not a separate race (\textit{Nasal}).\textsuperscript{161} As the ruling used cultural

\textsuperscript{155} Quoted in ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{156} Ram Punniyani (2010) op. cit. 102.
\textsuperscript{157} Ali Rattansi (2007) op. cit. 87.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} Harjinder Singh Dilgeer. \textit{Sikh Twarikh ’Ch Akal Takhat Sahib Da Role} (Punjabi). Waremme (Belgium):
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Quam” [Punjabi University Punjabi English Dictionary. 223.}
\textsuperscript{161} Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha. \textit{Sikhs – We are not Hindus}. Trans. Jarnail Singh. Amritsar: Singh Brothers,
2010. 1, 36, 38, 132-33, 136.
criterion to define a racial group and not the phenotypical features such as skin colour which confuses the issue with ethnicity. As we find above, though there is little evidence to show the existence of “races” among human beings however, racism is very much present and is tagged with religious identities which results in prejudices and fixed identities of the religious “Other” – causing mutual hatred and much strife among religious groups.

**Ethnocentrism**

The term Ethnocentrism was first coined by W.G. Sumner in 1906. W.G. Sumner’s classic definition of ethnocentrism refers to “the view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled with reference to it…Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and looks with contempt on outsiders.” Dalmas Taylor defines ethnocentrism as “strong identification with an “in-group” and a sympathetic attitude for hostility directed toward an “out-group”, which is seen as a menace to ingroup solidarity. Or more generally, ethnocentrism refers to acceptance of the culturally “alike” and rejection of the “unlike.” It is the tendency or practice by which the ethnic groups perceived as other are interpreted, evaluated and judged by the standards of one’s own ethnic group where the group judging the other considers their own standards as higher and as well as capable of defining the norms.

Steve Fenton starts his book “Ethnicity” with these words: “For a term which only comes to be widely used in the 1970s, ‘ethnicity’ now plays an important part in the

---

163 Quoted in Ibid.
sociological imagination, and in politics and political discourses.”

Ethnic and ethnicity derive from Latin *ethnicus* which comes from Greek *ethnikos* from *ethnos* which means a band of people living together, it was used in the sense of nation when Hebrew *goyim* was translated into *ta ethne* (in the sense of non-Israeli nation) in Septuagint Bible. In later period, its meaning was – foreign, barbarous nations; non Athenians (biblical Greek), non-Jews, Gentiles, class of men, caste, tribe. Ethnic is used with reference to the native and subordinate tradition in dress, music and food. Ethnicity is used in relation to “minorities and other non-hegemonic groups” as people usually call themselves simply people if by not some flattering names or terms whereas others are called with less respectable names if not with derogatory ones. Barker says, “The concept of ethnicity is connected to the concept of race but is more cultural in its connotations. As such, ethnicity is centred on the commonality of cultural beliefs and practices. The formation of ‘ethnic groups’ relies on shared cultural signifiers that have developed under specific historical, social and political contexts and which encourage a sense of belonging based, at least in part, on a common mythological ancestry.”

Though the significance of the concept of ethnicity lies in its acknowledgment of the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, however, it is mostly used with reference to the other which is or perceived to be at the lower rung in the power relations. Barker says that some writers use the concept of “racialization” even though no biological or cultural absolutes are there; the reason for

---

168 “Ethnic.” Raymond Williams (1988) op. cit. 120.
such usage is ascribed to the connotation and reference to “issues of power”, so much so that the “discourses of ethnic centrality and marginality are commonly articulated with those of nationality so that history is littered with examples of how one ethnic group has been defined as central and superior to a marginal ‘other’.”

Here we find that even before ethnocentrism enters the scene, ethnicity itself connotes a hegemonic relationship.

Ethnicity, like other categories discussed above, is mainly a matter of drawing boundaries around the zones of belonging and non-belonging and it assumes a high level of “coherence and solidarity among a group of people who have a conception of common origin, shared culture and experiences, common interests, and participate in some shared activities.”

The ethnic consciousness is a source of identity as people sometimes assert their ethnic identities even before asserting their nationalistic identities. But what are or which is the common cultural attribute(s) and shared activities – how important is common language or common religion and which is more important for ethnicity as there are religions which have sects and no single language is confined to followers of any one religion, here it needs to be clarified that though there may be a single canonical language as Punjabi in case of Sikhism and Arabic in case of Islam, but the adherents may have different languages for their secular affairs. Therefore, the ethnic identity is situational and contextual.

The fear of being marginalised on the peripheries of the social system creates such identities of the in-group and out-groups that it becomes easy to vent hate and doing so on religious lines is much easier as religion being one of the oldest factors in determining

171 Ibid.
identity of a person and a group. Mark Juergensmeyer gives example of white Protestant males who drawing inferences from statistical data presumed that American society was moving in such direction where they will slide to periphery whereas the “Asian and Hispanic immigrants” will dominate. Fuelled by such presumptions Kerry Noble, one of the leaders of the Christian Identity described blacks as “‘beasts of the field’ mentioned in the Bible”, the Jews as products of sexual intercourse between Eve and Satan and ascribed all the problems of America to these groups.\textsuperscript{174} Here the “other” is being demonised by creating stereotypes through what Hobsbawm calls “the relative colour-blindness”\textsuperscript{175} to classify all the non-whites as “black” and beastly and the Jews as the offspring of the Satan, beyond redemption. Referring to Punjab in the last decades of twentieth century Juergensmeyer says that the majority of youths in militant movement were from “privileged class, the agrarian Jats ... (who) feared that the social and economic status they regarded as their birth right was slipping away” as due to industrialization and urbanization, the social status as well prosperity shifted to the urbanite groups of Khatris and Aroras, the merchant and administrative castes in both Hindus and Sikhs (and more so to the Hindu Bania and Brahmin), and “the young Jats were desperate to reassert the primacy of their caste – and themselves;” and to substantiate, he quotes Dilawar Singh, the human bomb who killed Beant Singh, the then Chief Minister of Punjab in 1995 as saying “Today I will make the Jats feel proud.”\textsuperscript{176} The support by overseas Sikhs for the militant movement can be understood as an


\textsuperscript{176} Mark Juergensmeyer (2002) op. cit. 193.
opportunity to “display their commitment and prove their importance to the community” and here ethnicity in dispersion is displayed.

Wimmer and Schetter say that once thinking on ethnic lines has become firmly established, then “‘Ethnic cleansing’ in the form of mass shootings, systematic rapes or massacres on a genocidal scale is considered the quintessence of terror and a prime symbol of the ‘new world disorder’... [in such situation] a murder victim will always be seen as a Catholic or Protestant, Serb or Croat, Tamil or Singhalese.” Ethnocentrism generally refers to the process by which values and ways of seeing the world that are founded in one culture are used to comprehend and judge another. Ethnocentrism therefore asserts the centrality and implied superiority of a particular cultural identity over others. Here the concept describes how subjects constitute the ‘Other’ as alien and impose a worldview upon them. Edward Said used the concept of Orientalism and wrote:

The development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity – for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us”. Each age and society re-creates its “Others”. Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of “other” is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and

177 Ibid.
178 Adreas Wimmer and Conrad Schetter (2003), op. cit. 247.
political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies.\textsuperscript{180}

Ethnic groups are never permanent, the group boundaries change, some ethnic groups die and others are born and there is competition between advantages ethnic affiliations possess over other affiliations.\textsuperscript{181} The origin of ethnicity lies in the need of individuals to belong to groups as the cooperation needed by individuals is provided by groups but in the process “members of ethnic groups partake of all of these tendencies to cleave, to compare, to specify inventories of putative collective qualities to seek favourable evaluation, to manifest ingroup bias, to exaggerate contrasts without groups, and to sacrifice for collective interests.”\textsuperscript{182} This process helps the members to transcend egocentrism only to enter ethnocentrism and sacrifice thereby broadening the concept of self and self interest.\textsuperscript{183} The change in location and time may change ethnic loyalties, for example, because of more deep caste antagonism in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, The Hindu-Muslim antagonism is rarely visible even though incited by some vested interests.\textsuperscript{184} Without invoking terms like caste or race, the Other is conceived as inferior for which the criteria may be cultural differences such as language, religion, social institutions, geographical location, historical back-ground etc. Barker says that the writings of Derrida, Rorty and some others advocate that knowledge is inherently ethnocentric; for Derrida, ethnocentrism, understood as a culture-centred perspective, is inevitable and inescapable.\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{181} Donald L. Horowitz. (2003), op. cit. 44.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 51.
There were riots in Kandhamal, Oidisha in December, 2007 and August, 2008 against “conversion” by Christians but the basic issue was not conversion but how to translate the Tribal population into Hindu votes and how to keep the people in the caste system to maintain hegemony of upper castes not only in social order but on the scarce natural resources including land. Peter van der Veer says, “the Muslim presence in India is either ignored or marginalized,” whereas the fact is that nationalist discourse is composite consisting of a historical process in which Hindu and Muslim societies developed, the presence of the dominant culture does not mitigate the presence of minority cultures. He goes to the extremes and says that there in “no such thing as “Hinduism” or “Islam.” Instead, there are Hindu and Muslim religious discourses that try to establish their authority in changing societal configurations.” When the other is distinctly identifiable by some outer signs and there is least chance of confusion to damage the self, the hatred is let loose by ethnicisation as the Sikhs were brutally murdered in various parts of India in the post Indira Gandhi assassination violence in 1984.

**The Political Factors**

**Defining the “Political”:** The word political is an adjective for which we find one of the most exhaustive ranges of its meanings in the Random House Dictionary of English Language: 1. of, pertaining to, or concerned with the science or art of politics. 2. of, pertaining to or connected with a political party. 3. exercising or seeking power in the governmental or public affairs of a state, municipality, etc. 4. of, or pertaining to the state

---

188 Ibid., 197.
or its government. 5. affecting or involving the state or government. 6. engaged in or
connected with civil administration. 7. having a definite policy or system of government.
8. of or pertaining to citizens: *political rights*. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary
gives the following meanings: 1. connected with the state, government or public affairs.
2. connected with the different groups working in politics, especially their policies and
the competition between them. 3. (of people) interested in or active in politics. 4.
concerned with power, status, etc. within an organization, rather than with matters of
principle. We find that it is mainly concerned with politics, state, governance and
concerned with who dominates or rules. It also has a meaning connected with seeking of
power or status and another with the citizens. It is derived from the word politic which
has etymological roots in Middle English word *politik* derived from Middle French
*politique* derived from Latin *politic(us)* derived from Greek *politikos* from polit(es)
citizens (of Greek Polis – city state) + ikos ic. From the above, it is found that whereas
most of the dictionary meanings are related to the rulers/governance etc. the etymology
relates this word to the citizens. In the Greek city states the citizen had rights but there
were other categories also such as slaves and foreigners who did not have any rights.
Before discussing the Greek question further, let us discuss some definitions given by
scholars.

Carl Schmitt who later tried to defend the acts of the Nazi regime in Germany, in
his book “The Concept of the Political” (1923) said that the Church was a cultural and
political source of the differentiation between enemies and friends and defined political in
terms of decisive struggle between friend and enemy, and asserted that without such a

---

190 “Political.” in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. 1166.
struggle authentic values could not be protected or sustained. This definition propounds that Church is the fountainhead which in the name of defending the “authentic values” divides the people around into two categories friends or foes, George Bush was reverberating this when he said that in the fight against terrorism, those who were not with the U.S.A. were with the terrorists. “Political” claims to have, what Zizek calls, “authentic popular longing for a true community and social solidarity against fierce competition and exploitation”, and also with the sole motive to legitimize the continuation of the relations of social domination and exploitation, it distorts the expression of this longing. In such definitions, in place of acceptance of differences and variety of interests, society is presented as a monolith and the other is defined in such a way that rapid action can be taken in place of long bureaucratic procedures, hence the Fascist tendencies are quite visible.

Quentin Skinner said that the traditional liberal meaning of the term “political” is “restricted to a specific sphere of reaching decisions which concern the administration of public affairs – not only intimate (sexual) interests, but also art, science, even the economy, are outside its scope. For the Marxist radical, of course, the political pervades every sphere of our lives, from the social to the most intimate, and the very perception of something as ‘apolitical’, ‘private’, and so on, is grounded in a disavowed political decision.” These two extreme views show that the “political” is to be either very narrow or all inclusive, but our endeavour is to know what it actually consists of or to

---

195 Georg Elwert (2003), op. cit. 282.
know what can be the universal “political”? The question itself is hegemonic i.e., which definition is to be accepted and which to be rejected or ignored, for we may never have the universal which is full with no capacity for any addition, but every universal in itself is empty and devoid of positive content, and when different particular contents strive to fill this gap, they do this at the cost of others as such every particular that succeeds in “exerting the hegemonic function remains a temporary and contingent stand-in that is forever split between its particular content and universality it represents.”

Now returning to the Greek scenario, the Greek political life did not extend beyond the boundaries of the polis, the city state, therefore, outside the realm of politics, says Thucydides, “the strong did what they could, and the weak suffered what they must.” Further, we have Ranciere who says that the phenomenon of politics proper occurred when the members of “demos- district, land (those with no firmly determined place in the hierarchical social edifice)” not only demanded their voice to be heard against those in power and who exerted social control to get equal footing but also represented themselves as the representatives of the Whole of Society, “for the true universality (‘we – the “nothing”, not counted in the order – are the people, we are All against others who stand only for their particular interest’).” Zizek says that the political conflict designates the tension between the structured social body in which each part has its place “and ‘the part of no part’ which unsettles this order on account of the empty principle of universality,” as the injustice to “the part of no part” is elevated to the ultimate test of universality. This assertion to be heard and to be treated as equal part of

---

197 Ibid., 184.
200 Ibid., 188.
the total system on the part of the suppressed as well as what the dominant group (whether majority or minority)/ exploiter does to retain the hegemonic (power) position constitute the “Political.” Conflict generating collective struggle for power and domination brings political violence to the fore.  

The goal is to find the best solution which in this case is catching hold of the political power. The underlying factor is ideologies of inequality which are central to the political options available and demonstration of power – the superiority of one’s own group and inferiority of the opponent’s leading to “depersonalization and dehumanization of other groups and their members.” The self image and even self awareness of the opponents is destroyed so that they are prevented from living free of fear and this is done by attacks on “cultural and religious symbols” and objects such as religious places, cemeteries, and other memorials of the hostile and unequal opponents, for which ideological justifications are sought in “iconoclastic vandalism.” In May, 2001, the Taliban government in war-torn, impoverished Afghanistan, using rockets, mortars and tank shells and other equipments, destroyed two huge statues of Buddha hewed from solid rocks, 53 and 38 metres high situated at Bamiyan on the ancient Silk Road for 1500 years as the same were considered physical enemies of Islam which is deadly against idolatry. The same year twine towers of the World Trade Centre, a symbol of American dominance in world trade were smashed to ground by hijackers of two aeroplanes and here the stronger party had been attacked by the weaker who “expressed dismay and anger about U.S. support for harsh authoritarian states and the barriers that

202 Ibid., 401.  
203 Ibid.  
204 David Hawkes (2007), op. cit. 15.
Washington places against independent development and political democracy by its policies of “propping up oppressive regimes”.... Among the great mass of poor and suffering people, similar sentiments are much bitter.”\textsuperscript{205} The attack on the Buddha statues was an endeavour to mitigate even the symbolic presence of the “other.”

The political violence may be escalated by the ideological syndromes such as racism i.e., the natural superiority of own group based on biological differences; anti-Semitism i.e., denigration of people of Jewish origin/faith; ethnocentrism i.e., “self-aggrandizement by laying claim to cultural and economic achievements”; xenophobia i.e., undue fear or contempt of members of other ethnic groups; heterophobia i.e., fear and denigration from the “norm” and hence rejection of “difference” such as deviation sexual preferences (homosexual or lesbian) or (in some European countries where religious pluralism is at its nascent stage) Muslims; and rights of precedence i.e., claim of spatial or temporal precedence over “newcomers”.\textsuperscript{206} The term newcomers is also subjective and relative as in the case of India, the Muslims are still considered outsiders by Hindutva forces, even though, most of them are descendents of the local converts. Some scholars consider India as a country of immigrants for thousands of years as the great Urdu poet Firaq Gorakhpuri expressed in verse:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Sar Zamin-e-hind par aqwaam-e-alam ke firaq kafele guzarte gae Hindustan banta gaya”}
\end{quote}

Which means - “In the land of Hind, the Caravans of the peoples of the world kept coming in and India kept getting formed.”\textsuperscript{207}

\textsuperscript{205} Noam Chomsky (2002), op. cit. 11-13.
\textsuperscript{206} Wilhelm Heitmeyer (2003), op. cit. 402.
Even there may be ethno-political conflicts and separatist violence which, being political in nature, are of enormous importance as is evident from the data which shows that civilian deaths constituted only 14 percent of all deaths in World War I, the figure rose to 67 percent in World War II, but in the 1990s, “where most wars were within rather than between states, civilian deaths totalled 90 percent of all deaths.” Most of these deaths have been for what is called nation which is one of the groups which have been formed in human history to distinguish “us” from “them”.

Nationalism

Humans have been forming large territorial distinct societies as recorded in historical accounts of Sumerians, Egyptians, Chinese, Indian, Semitic, Greek and many other traditions. Nations emerge over a period of time due to numerous historical processes which can not be located to a particular moment in history as such they are function of memories also which are conveyed through myths, stories and history and may not necessarily be accurate but make the “our” past distinct from those of others. This aspect of time “when an understanding of the past forms part of the present – is characteristic of the nation and is called ‘temporal depth’.” These memories become part of the self conception of the members living in the same geographical area, speaking a common language and/or sharing other aspects of the culture, evolving “collective consciousness” which is not a “group mind or combination of biological instincts” but a social relation of each member “as a consequence of those individuals participating in the

210 Ibid., 7-8.
same evolving [cultural] tradition” and they also understand themselves as being different from “those who do not.”\textsuperscript{211}

Steven Grosby defines nation in these words: “The nation is a territorial relation of collective self-consciousness of actual or imagined duration.”\textsuperscript{212} The word nation, originating from French word \textit{nation} which originated from Latin word \textit{nationem} meaning breed or race, is in use in English language since the 13\textsuperscript{th} century “with primary sense of a racial group rather than a political organized grouping.”\textsuperscript{213} By the end of 17\textsuperscript{th} century, though words – realm, kingdom and country were more common, the word nation was being started to be used to mean “the whole people of a country,” but when we talk of nationalism, it is generally alleged that such claim by a group is racial;\textsuperscript{214} however, nationalism has been a political movement in countries like India considered to be a conglomerate of people of many racial origins and languages as well as in the countries, provinces or regions “where the distinction is a specific language, religion or supposed racial origin.”\textsuperscript{215} Here, kinship also plays a vital role as birth is the most accepted criterion for membership. Kinship can be defined as the recognised traceable lines or relationships of biological descent.\textsuperscript{216} One is not only born into a nation only, but in a family which may be part of a (supposed) race, tribe or caste or ethnic group, religious/sectarian group, linguistically homogenous group not to mention the smaller political (administrative) units such as village, colony, municipality etc. If we leave the basic unit i.e., family apart, the other groups may remain part of the nation until these

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 11-12.
\item \textsuperscript{213} “Nationalist.” Raymond Williams (1988), op. cit. 213, 213-14.
\item \textsuperscript{214} ibid
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 214.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Steven Grosby (2005), op. cit.13.
\end{itemize}
identities are claimed to be the very basis for making a nation. One’s love for one’s nation is natural and is called patriotism – the individuals transcending their self interests for their nations are not rare in history. Problem arises when patriotism takes shape of nationalism which works as an ideology which “divides the world into two irreconcilable and warring camps – one’s own nation in opposition to all other nations – where the latter are viewed as one’s implacable enemies, ... Nationalism repudiates civility and differences that it tolerates by attempting to eliminate all differing views and interests for the sake of one vision of what the nation has been and should be.”\(^\text{217}\) Here nationalism becomes the basis of cohesion (voluntary or otherwise as who does not follow the ideology is labeled as a traitor – an outcaste) of the members of the in-group. Further, the division of the world into us and others who are termed as necessarily as foes is dualistic approach of the Occident which can be helpful only at the conceptual level as the reality may not always be in black/white, pure/impure, insider/outsider.

The membership of a nation is only one layer of the multi-layered self-consciousness, but this membership may or may not coincide with the citizenship of a state.\(^\text{218}\) In case they do not coincide, the assertion or claim for a state corresponding to the territory of the nation may lead to dispute and in the present world there are many such disputes as they have been in history. State can be defined as “a structure that, through institutions, exercises sovereignty over a territory using laws that relate the individual within that territory to one another as members of the state.”\(^\text{219}\) We rarely find in history one nation to have a state and for one state to have a nation and many states are

\(^{217}\) Ibid., 17.
\(^{218}\) Ibid., 20.
\(^{219}\) Ibid., 22.
divided into regions which appear to be “proto-nations”\textsuperscript{220} which may have their distinct cultural history, language, religion or sect. Further, there have been empires having dominance over many nations, such as the British Empire, Roman Empire etc. which always face claims for self determination from such nations as India got independence in 1947 after a long fight for that asserted right but at the cost of creating two nations but the extension of the concept of self-determination to others so called “proto-nations” generates disputes such as those occurring in Northern Ireland, the Kashmir, Macedonia, and Eastern Turkmenistan etc. which take religious hues.\textsuperscript{221} The Punjab Problem of 1980s and early 1990s can be understood in such dimensions. For example, when the separatist leaders like Jagjit Singh Chauhan appealed to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale for support, he said, “I have always expressed myself in favor of mobilising the entire Sikh world under one flag ... even if it demands sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{222} Juergensmeyer says that though, Bhindranwale never explicitly supported Khalistan and said, “We are not in favour of Khalistan nor are we against it, we wish to live in India” but in case Sikhs did not get “just respect” he was not averse to it.\textsuperscript{223}

As we have stated above memory plays a vital role in the formation of nation which, Steven Grosby referring to Delmer Brown says, involves “making myths more historical and making actual events more mythical.”\textsuperscript{224} For example the Lankan chronicles say that Buddha visited the island to get it freed from Yakkhas and subsequently, Buddhist warrior-king Dutthagamani (161-137 BCE) conquered Hindu

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{224} Steven Grosby (2005), op. cit. 60.
Tamils to establish a Buddhist territorial order throughout the island and it is felt that the myth of Buddha’s subduing the Yakkhas was invented to give legitimacy to the actual conquest over Hindu Tamil and also to justify the warfare by the followers of the originally non-violent Buddhism. But matter is complicated when the other sources prove that there remained a Tamil kingdom in the island throughout this period. In the case of Hebrew Bible, we find that nations were formed by the families of the sons of Noah after the great flood. But land was promised to the posterity of Abraham, Ishmael, a son born to Abraham through Hagar, an Egyptian maid of his wife, was circumcised as precondition of the renewed covenant (but so were all the slaves in the house of Abraham). Though Ishmael was also blessed with posterity and becoming a “great nation” however, he was left out from the next covenant for which a son, Isaac had to be born to Abraham and his wife Sara, perhaps to keep the lineage pure as the twelve tribes of Israel started from the twelve sons of Jacob (whose other name was Israel), the son of Isaac. However, despite prohibition of exogamy, the Israelites have been admitting foreigners who agreed to undergo circumcision and follow the Hebrew way of life and religion. This story in the Bible perhaps explains the superiority of the descendents of Jacob and their development into the nation of Israel. The inferior place for all others before this nation is explored and justified. Ishmael, a son born to Abraham through Hagar, a maid is not given equal status in the Judeo-Christian tradition. But in

---

225 Ibid., 61.
227 Steven Grosby (2005), op. cit. 62.
228 Genesis 10:32
229 Genesis 12:7,13:15, 15:18, 17:8
230 Genesis 17:26-27
231 Genesis 20:12
232 Steven Grosby (2005), op. cit. 71.
Islam, Ishmael is not only legitimate son but the one who was offered to God as sacrifice and subsequently replaced by a lamb by the angel of God. Thus the antagonism among these traditions is discernible from the very beginning and the reasons are political also.

**Parochialism**

Common language, law and religion sometimes give birth to regionalism which may lead to conflicts for the formation of new nations such as Slovakia and Czech Republic in Europe, Scotland in Great Britain, Euzkadi and Catalan in Spain, and demand for Khalistan in Punjab by certain groups, mostly in diaspora, in 1980s and early 1990s in India. Further, war has been another factor in the formation of distinctive culture as the entire populace is mobilized in such situation, for example, in the case of Sinhalese, the conflict was not only with the local Tamil Hindus but with the “Hindu forces from southern India” also. Appeal to past is another factor for assertion of nationhood, but it is some times dangerous as in India, the idea of Hindutva (Hinduness) and in Japan that of Kokutai (a national essence) have been propagated ignoring that in India, Muslims are the second largest religious community, the other major communities being Sikhs and Christians contradict a vision of a Hindu India, and in Japan “a more than 1400-year-long history of Buddhism ... contradicts a vision of Japan as free from foreign influence.” The above examples of Sri Lanka, India and Japan are of pluralistic societies i.e., where there is no single religion, no single language, no single ethnic origin, in other words where in place of monoculture, multiculturalism is in existence. Then how can the national affiliation be decided? Is it to be achieved through the dissolution of all the

---

234 Steven Grosby (2005), op. cit. 65.
235 Ibid., 69.
236 Ibid., 76
differences into a homogenous unity; if so how to redress the injustice to which the minorities have been historically subjected? How the problem of social exclusion of the disadvantaged groups is to be solved? Even the question of historiography takes precedence as how to adjust the subaltern in that discourse.\(^{237}\) The dominant group may be so proud of its culture that it wants the endorsement of the same from the state and willing assimilation to it by the minorities.\(^{238}\) But the word culture itself brings in politics as is evinced from what Herder wrote in his unfinished “Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind” (1784-91), “Men of the quarters of the globe, who have perished over the ages, you have not lived solely to manure the earth with your ashes, so that at the end of time your posterity should be made happy by European culture. The very thought of a superior European culture is a blatant insult to the majesty of Nature.”\(^{239}\) In the same vein Rabindranath Tagore termed the political civilisation developed in Europe as “carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future.”\(^{240}\) This is done by propagating of not only the claim of superiority of the European civilization but also that of Christianity also along with its universality and exclusiveness. These feelings and their propagation assisted by conversion to the fold of Christ has created conflicts which turn into religious violence in different parts of the world.

**The Religious and the Political**

Religion and national consciousness are closely related and the same is demonstrated at the periods of nationalistic effervescences. Israel with Judaism in

\(^{238}\) Ibid., 39.
\(^{239}\) Quoted in “Culture.” Raymond Williams (1988), op. cit., 89, 87-93.
contrast to Palestine with Islam are the most conspicuous examples, the others being Ireland with Catholicism, Arab countries with Islam, and even the U.S.A., the most vociferous claimant of secularism has been following such policies in its foreign policy which are guided by the ethos of Christianity, to quote only a few examples. The American policy in the Middle-East especially since Ronald Regan era, “proclaimed that a new task of the United States was no longer only to advocate what was morally right, but to enforce this militarily in the international arena.”241 Kuldip Nayar writes that the Congress party, the claimed secular face on Indian political arena was at the helm of affairs when idols were placed stealthily in the Babri Mosque on 23 December 1949 though miraculous appearance was proclaimed; Shilanyas of Ram-mandir was allowed to be laid on 10 November 1989 by Rajiv Gandhi, and Narsimha Rao, the then Prime Minister of India remained at a private puja (worship) while the Mosque was being demolished on 6 December 1992.242 Why religious sentiments are let loose to play havoc when restraint is most needed? Hobsbawm explains this when he says that religion is an “ancient and well-tried method of establishing communion through common practice and a sort of brotherhood between people who otherwise have nothing much in common.”243 This is the reason why even the so called secularist politicians invoke religious sentiments by their omissions and commissions. Anthony Smith says that with nationalism, ethnic community does not remain a purely cultural and social entity but gets economic and political dimensions and as such comes out of its private closet into public sphere, because ethnic movements can succeed only by putting their claims in

243 E. J. Hobsbawm (1997), op. cit. 68.
political and economic terms in addition to the cultural ones. He further says, “Even dominant ethnic group must turn a latent, private sense of ethnicity into a public manifest one, if any, to ensure the national loyalty of their members against the claims of other groups,” and ascribes creation of nationalism not only to self-consciousness and legitimacy but also a fighting spirit and political direction among the ethnic groups.244

Nigeria has been facing menace of religious violence since 2001 when the riots left around 1000 dead. Whereas the Muslims make almost half of its population, around 40 percent of its population belongs to various Christian denominations. During the last week of November, 2008 there were violent clashes which left at least 300 people dead and thousands displaced in the central Nigerian city of Jos. “The state commissioner for information, Nuhu Gagara, admitted that local politicians and businessmen had paid youths to stir up violence, even buying weapons, including firearms for them. This tactic, called “godfathering,” is familiar in Nigeria around election time when such godfathers instigate and mobilise people not only on party lines but on communal and religious lines also. This fact gets confirmation in when Nankin Bagudu, a local human rights activist, said,: “I think it was instigated by influential people who used these youths and religion to inflict maximum effect and chaos in the streets.”245 Here we find that the political and economic interests were mixed to instigate violence and religious sentiments were aroused and used very conveniently for vested political interests.

The Punjab problem had its roots in the pre-partition history of the country. Narain Singh in his book Kiyon Keeto Vesah gives instances wherein the Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru had promised a dignified place for Sikhs

244 Quoted in Steve Fenton (2010), op. cit. 21-22.
in the Independent India and Gandhi had said, “More over the Sikhs are a brave people. They know how to safeguard their rights by the exercise of arms, if it should ever come to that.” He further refers to the resolutions such as “The rights of the Sikhs in Punjab should not be jeopardized. ... In the divided Indian Punjab special constitutional measures are imperative to meet the just aspirations and rights of the Sikhs.” etc.247 But in the independent India they had to fight to get their rights such as reorganization of Punjab state on linguistic basis what the others had got as a policy matter, a capital for that state, distribution of water from rivers of Punjab etc.248 Narain Singh describes the agitations from the Punjabi-Suba demand in 1960s under the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh to Dharam Yudh Morcha under the leadership of Sant Longowal in early 1980s and ultimately the operation Blue Star; and he says that the treatment meted to the Sikhs during mid-1980s was so partisan that Jagjit Singh Arora a former General of Indian army was forced to say, “As a Sikh today, I have this horrible feeling of being regarded as an unreliable and undesirable citizen.”249 In nutshell the root cause of the problem was ascribed to the unfulfilled political and economic aspirations of the Sikhs as well as severe damage to their self respect and their being continuously demonised.250

On Gandhi Jayanti, 2011 Uttrakhand state saw first communal riots between Hindu and Muslim communities in Rudrapur a bustling industrial town of Udham Singh Nagar district and the riots continued for three days. The triggering cause was that some miscreants had thrown meat/pork wrapped in the torn pages of the holy Qur’an in a certain locality on the nights of 29 September and 1st October. When complained, the

247 Ibid., 12.
248 Ibid., 36-37.
249 Quoted in Ibid., 95.
250 Ibid.
police took no action which infuriated the Muslims and as the mob grew angry, anticipating trouble, the concerned police station called the surrounding Hindu people for help instead of calling PAC located only three kilometres away. Both the communities had been living in peace and surprisingly, there were no riots even after the Babri Musjid demolition in 1992 and after Mumbai blasts in 1993. Muslims were targeted selectively, the reason? The Assembly elections were due next year, the ruling BJP wanted to strengthen its Hindu vote bank by creating sharp differentiation and what could be more powerful means for this purpose than sharpening the antagonism between the two communities?. Here the political greed spoiled the communal harmony and tranquillity of a peaceful town.

In the February-March 2002, what is called Gujrat Pogrom, after Godhra episode, claimed more than three thousand lives and the timing was perhaps by no accident just before Assembly elections. Surprisingly, most of the Muslim killings and burning of property had happened in those areas where Indian National Congress had been in strong position and the results showed that despite so much condemnation of the state administration in media and public in the country as a whole, BJP won 52 out of 65 seats in these area. George Simmel had observed and analysed such behaviour to conclude: “Within certain groups, it may even be a piece of political wisdom to see to it that there be some enemies in order for unity of the members to be effective and for the group to remain conscious of this unity as its vital interest.” This feeling is expressed mostly in

---

252 Ibid., 41.
254 Quoted in E. J. Hobsbawm (1997) op. cit. 175.
the rhetoric of attack on the culture by the leaders. The political agenda is not necessarily always a declared one, as Muhammad Yasin Malik, chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, commenting on wide spread violence in the second week of September, 2012 in many Muslim nations (mostly targeted against the U.S.) in the wake of release of an anti-Islam film “The Innocence of Islam” writes, “[i]n essence, the film is neither about free speech nor values but pure and sheer mischief. The aim and agenda ... is to deepen the differences between Islam and the West and render them estranged and hostile to each other. This is then a political agenda.”

The Economic Factors

Defining the “Economic”: Human beings are not only social beings but are economic beings also as they have economic interests. As a class, social groups, and as individuals they participate in social productions and distribution as well. The word economic is an adjective and has a variety of meanings in dictionaries; for which we first take the Random House where its meanings are: 1. pertaining to the production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, and commodities. 2. of or pertaining to the science of economics. 3. pertaining to an economy, or system of organization or operation esp. of the process of production. 4. pertaining to one’s personal resources of money. 5. pertaining to use in human economy: economic entomology; economic botany. 6. affecting or apt to affect the welfare of material resources. Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary gives the following two meanings:1[only before noun] connected with the trade, industry and development of wealth of a country, an area or a society: social, economic and political issues. economic growth / cooperation / development / reform. the government’s

economic policy. economic history. the current economic climate. 2(of a process, a business or an activity) producing enough profit to continue.\textsuperscript{257} Etymological origin of the word Economic is in Latin \textit{oeconomic(us)} from Greek \textit{oikonomikos} relating to household management from \textit{oikonom(os)} steward (\textit{oiko(s)} house + \textit{nomos} manager) + \textit{ikos} –ic.\textsuperscript{258} Therefore, the word economic covers various activities related to sustenance of human life by using the available resources, exploration of new resources and their utilisation, distribution of the resources, and the gross social product among individuals, groups and classes to increase their well being. But the question is how it is all done? The answer was given by Frederick Engels when he said that the “economic relations of a given society present themselves in the first place as interests.”\textsuperscript{259} Human resources with various skills and qualifications, man-made means of production, land, depletable resources such as minerals, fossil fuels – coal and petroleum, rare metals, and capital are all economic factors. Their possession and distribution has always been contentious issues. The economic needs except the basic needs of food, shelter etc. are not absolute but are determined by the cultural values, a tribal may put more value to his forest habitat that the life of a metropolis. But development leads to more complex needs and wants, here wants “relate to those goods and services that one lacks; needs imply a more socialized phenomenon: needs are the more widely sanctioned wants.”\textsuperscript{260} Here needs are those “conditions or opportunities” which an individual necessarily requires to be a functioning and cooperative member of society in the given value environment of the

\textsuperscript{258} “Economic.” \textit{The Random house Dictionary of English Language}. 452.
\textsuperscript{259} Quoted in “Economic Interest.” \textit{A Dictionary of Political Economy}. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985. 106.
\textsuperscript{260} John Burton (1979), op. cit. 59.
society so that society or group as a whole is able to develop and survive. The above definitions bring out the distribution of resources among individuals, communities, nations and states as the principle function of the economic activity which may or may not be equitable – what we see around is poverty and squalor and not affluence despite availability of resources enough for needs of all – this leads to poverty and fight for resources.

**Poverty and Deprivation**

Defining poverty has been a contentious issue as the authorities and power elites usually relate it to the number of minimum calories required for sustenance of an individual but the man does not live by bread only. Therefore, without going into technical intricacies, we take the following definition given by J. Bett and P. Kimuyu:

Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. It is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom. It is inability to exercise democratic rights and being unable to voice concerns.

Some facts and figures given by Hannah Brock about poverty are very astonishing and these are:

1. The richest 20 per cent of the global population gets 83 per cent of the global income, with the bottom 20 per cent earning just 1 per cent of the global income.

---

261 Ibid.
2. The last thirty years have seen the gap between rich and poor continually increase, making a reversal of the trend more and more difficult despite recent progress.

3. A recent UNICEF report estimated that it would take more than 800 years for the bottom billion to achieve ten per cent of global income under the current rate of change.265

The above figures clearly show that economic development and globalization have failed to deliver economic justice to the downtrodden whose condition has further deteriorated. Poverty and violence are closely related as poverty itself is a form of structural violence. However, by just limiting violence to its physical manifestation only, counting poverty as an independent variable, we have to find if there is any co-relation between these two variables. It is found that people living in poverty may more frequently engage in violence “as a consequence of conditions they are subjected to,” and/or they may also be subjected to violence to maintain the status quo.264 But scholars are not of uniform view in this regard as some find an inverse relation between them; for example Robert K. Merton in his anomie theory advocated this view and said that the blockage of opportunities due to poverty generate frustration which results into violence.265 But some scholars who studied stray cases of delinquent behaviour in individuals arrived at the opposite conclusions but could not withstand the test of objectivity.266 Absolute poverty (which in very rare in the world today as no community lives on a secluded island and moreover, the means of communication are in easy access

263 Hannah Brock(2011), op. cit.
265 Ibid., 70.
266 Ibid., 70-71
of the poor even) may not cause that much violence however, the relative depravity may cause more frustration. As per disorganisation theory, developed by the University of Chicago sociologist Robert E. Park on the basis of writings of Durkheim propounds that inadequate resources result into mobile population, disrupted families, and weak institutions and all this lead to deviant behaviour due to “breakdown of behavioural norms and social control”\(^\text{267}\) which most of the time culminates into violence.

Amartya Sen says that global poverty and inequality are considered as the causes of political strife and turmoil and it is claimed that by eradicating poverty and inequality, strife will also end.\(^\text{268}\) But he is sceptical about the influence of destitution in raising political rebellions or civil strife or inter-group warfare and says that there are instances where the periods of destitution were rather peaceful and to support his thesis he cites two examples of the Ireland famine of 1840s and the Bengal famine of 1943. However, destitution can lead to defiance of established laws, the memory of destitution and devastation tends to linger “and can be invoked and utilized to generate rebellion and violence.”\(^\text{269}\) Sen says that the division of world into haves and have-nots cultivates discontent and “opening up the possibilities of recruitment in the cause of what is often seen as “retaliatory violence.”\(^\text{270}\) It may not immediately breed terrorism or influence its leaders but can “help to create rich recruiting grounds for the foot soldiers of the terrorist camps.”\(^\text{271}\) Therefore, we cannot out rightly say that poverty and violence are not related. Poverty may not be the only cause, but it may generate discontent leading to frustration and violence when some pricking is done during the politicisation of the situation.

\(^{267}\) Ibid., 75.


\(^{269}\) Ibid., 142-43

\(^{270}\) Ibid., 144

\(^{271}\) Ibid., 145
In India, an anti-landlord movement was started in 1967 in a village called Naxalbari, but today it has become most widely spread movement, covering 200 districts in 18 Indian states; it is based on the Maoist ideology of seeking power through armed resistance and has origin in acute economic disparity so much so that Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India and renowned economist in 2006 admitted that this problem as “the biggest security challenge ever faced by our country” and subsequently said that it was “directly linked to problems of underdevelopment, exploitation, lack of access to resources, underdeveloped agriculture, lack of employment opportunities, and other factors.”

Though, we can not relate it to religious violence, being based on Maoist ideology, however, the role of poverty and destitution in forcing people to resort to violence to safeguard “their needs, rights and interests” and the government can not solve this problem merely as a law and order problem without redressing socio-economic issues.

The radical Islamist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan present a very grim picture on economic front; though, most of the time they are labelled as Islamic hard-liners but A.Q. Suleri says that in fact most of the people joining Talibans are those who are “outraged by chronic hunger, endemic corruption, unfair courts, and the government’s inability to supply basic education or other services.”

**Fight for the Scarce Resources**

Most of the protracted conflicts, which generally are most conveniently tagged as law and order problems by the local government as well as the international community, turn out to be the expressions of problems related to acquisition and distribution of the

---

272 Quoted in Hannah Brock (2011), op. cit. 8-9.
273 Ibid., 9.
274 Quoted in ibid., 10.
scarce resources. In the capitalist mode of production, values are mostly skewed to the advantage of the influential and powerful irrespective of the destructive consequences in the long run.\textsuperscript{275} The economic interests made the Europeans to expand their tentacles on most parts of Asia and Africa and subjugate the natives to exploit the valuable resources, get control over geographically and political strategic regions, and a vast pool of cheap native labour.\textsuperscript{276} Edward Said says, “It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that before the sudden OPEC price rises in early 1974, “Islam” as such scarcely figured either in culture or media. One saw and heard of Arabs and Iranians, of Pakistanis and Turks, rarely of Muslims.\textsuperscript{277} Before leaving Palestine, the British colonial regime had paved way for establishment of Israel, a Jewish homeland in Palestine, through Balfour declaration in 1948. Noam Chomsky highlights that their economic interests were paramount as is evident from what Lord Balfour stated: “I do not care under what system we keep the oil, but I am clear that it is all-important that this oil should be available.”\textsuperscript{278} During and after, World War II, “the United States took over the dominant role in controlling these resources” twenty five years later that the U.S. Secretary of State expressed the similar views when he emphasise that “there should be full realization of the fact that oil of Saudi Arabia constitutes one of the world’s greatest prizes.”\textsuperscript{279} Atwan says that realizing the depletion in their domestic oil resources since 1920s, the U.S. has been on a spree to control oil reserves world-over and after its Standard Oil Corporation signed a deal with the Saudis in 1933, getting full rights for oil exploration and development, there has been continuous and dominant presence of the U.S. in the West-

\textsuperscript{275} John Burton (1979), op. cit. 61.
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 3.
Asia. Chomsky says that the central concern of the U.S. policy is to keep Saudi Arabia a loyal ally who is dependent on the U.S. for armaments and economic development and for all this pursued even if it cause certain tension in the region as that serves their interest better. The black gold (crude oil) brought quick prosperity to Saudi Arabia but that prosperity was not distributed among the common Saudi populace as the ruling Saud princes controlled much of the profits, and huge amounts were spent on the spread of Wahhabi doctrine of the state religion. Though there is no poverty in Saudi Arabia as is seen in Africa and some Asian countries but the feeling of relative depravity among the Saudis has resulted into 70 per cent of Al-Qa’ida’s recruitment being of Saudi origin and out of nineteen hijackers in the 11 September, 2001 attacks, fifteen were Saudis.

The Soviet-Afghan war of 1979-1989 in which the Soviets were said to be defeated by three factors they could not effectively equal or counter: “American technology, Saudi money, and Muslim demographics and zeal;” it is also claimed as beginning of successful self assertion of the Islamic world. When Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait in 1991, the American intervention was resented by most of the Muslim world and surprisingly the countries where freedom of expression was more, resentment against America was more which showed that the people had started seeing and describing the true face of the West which was self-interest centric and instead of its love

281 Noam Chomsky (2003), op. cit. 29.
282 Abdel Bari Atwan (2007), op. cit. 149-50. Wahhabism was founded by the Sunni Scholar Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahab (1703-92) in the Nejd area of what later came to be known as Saudi Arabia and it swept across the Arabian Peninsula in a short period. In 1745, Abdul-Wahab and Muhammad bin Saud, the then ruler of Dir’iyyah – a desert oasis swore together to establish Wahhabi-based kingdom, a dream which was finally fulfilled in 1932.
283 Ibid., 149.
285 Ibid., 248.
for ethical values, its greed for scarce natural resources like petroleum was exposed. Huntington says that the American intervention in aggression against oil-rich Kuwait and its total neglect of the resourceless Bosnia speaks volumes about the American values and stand. It is now open that toppling and assassination of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi was result of the American desire to control Libyan oil reserve and same was true in the case of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Mark Juergensmeyer says that the anxieties of daily life if not answered by the social system may lead to frustration which culminates into religious violence and militancy because without employment, one can not marry and without marriage can not have sex in the traditional societies. In case of Palestine where almost the fifty percent of young men in their late teens and early twenties were unemployed, the Hamas movement “provided a way of venting the resulting frustration in a community that supplies a family and an ideology that explains the source of their problems and gives them hope;” similarly the Islamic resistance in Algeria also had its source in “20 percent inflation rate (and) a 25 percent unemployment rate.”

In Punjab, a state which has agriculture based economy, the socio-economic issues which were expressed in the religious idiom during the last two decades of the twentieth century were not result of any fantasy of some fanatic but “pertained to the material reality.” The Green revolution had brought affluence, but it could not sustain for the small and marginal farmers as the noted economist Sucha Singh Gill wrote, with the rise of development crisis in agriculture, the small and marginal farmers are finding it

\[\text{286} \quad \text{Ibid., 184.}\]
\[\text{287} \quad \text{John Cherian. “Oil imperialism.” Frontline. July 16-29, 2011. 21, 21-24.}\]
\[\text{288} \quad \text{Mark Juergensmeyer (2002), op. cit. 191.}\]
\[\text{289} \quad \text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{290} \quad \text{Birinder Pal Singh. Violence as Political Discourse. Shimla: IIAAS, 2002. 181.}\]
difficult to survive. Between 1970-71 and 1980-81 large number of such holdings have disappeared. Emerging contradictions have provided an objective basis of the current crisis in Punjab. These contradictions are the product of capitalist development in the specific situation of the regional economy of the state. *In the absence of this objective basis, present crisis was not possible.* The role of external factors is secondary to the situation”\(^{291}\) (emphasis added). As the prices of the agriculture produce is administered whereas the prices of other consumer items are market-determined, there was a drainage of resources to the extent of “Rs. 2280 crores during 1980-81 to 1991-92 [leaving the year 1981-82]”\(^{292}\) Vandana Shiva located the Punjab crisis in the failure of Green Revolution and “[in] its social and ecological costs hidden hitherto unnoticed. ... The most “successful” experiments in economic growth and development have become in less than two decades, crucible of violence and civil war.”\(^{293}\) Locating origin of the movement in economic unrest Joyce Pettigrew wrote:

> The story of the rise and fall of the guerrilla movement is essentially and materially a story of what happened to a community of farmers as they experienced the effects of a process of economic change known as the Green Revolution...Sant Bhindranwale had wished religious values to be placed at the centre of life in a rapidly changing society...His primary objective was to undercut the spread of consumerism in family life. There was no one to whom this appealed more than the small farmers who were struggling hard under the impact of Green Revolution.\(^{294}\)

\(^{291}\) Quoted in ibid., 182.
\(^{292}\) Quoted in ibid., 185.
\(^{293}\) Quoted in ibid., 186.
\(^{294}\) Quoted in ibid.
The Green Revolution had fast-forwarded the resource exploitation whereas, the gains had started diminishing especially for the small and marginal farmers, and it is not surprising that more than 80 percent of the militants were Jat (Jutt), a major land holding community, and majority of them were from families with less than five acres land holdings. Pettigrew writes about the skewed industrial development in the state and says “... its nature and character is such that it absorbs largely migratory labour. In fact wages are very low and working conditions so unattractive....Thus the cultivators being released by the capitalist development in agriculture are being absorbed outside it and are experiencing redundancy.” The “grain bowl” of India had been exploiting its water resources at a very fast pace as the “hybrid varieties are water thirsty crops” And if someone writes to the President of India portraying the economic depravity of Punjab in the following words: “You want to see us standing as beggars at your door. There is hardly any Agro-Industry in Punjab. Heavy industry is totally non-existent. We want to keep our capital safe for our development, but you are exploiting us as if we were your colony...Violating all the international norms, the Punjab was deprived of its proprietorship of natural resources. Distribution of water is an evidence of this injustice,” we can gauge not only the anguish but substantial part of the picture of the “plain reality” as embedded on the minds of the Punjabi youth of that period.

From the above discussion so far, we find that what was conceptualized as clash of civilizations though has to do with cultural identities but it is more of an escape route to avoid explanation as the “difference conditioned by political inequality or economic

295 Ibid., 59.
296 Quoted in ibid., 187.
297 Ibid., 189.
298 Sukha and Jinda as quoted in ibid., 190.
exploitation – are naturalised and neutralised into “cultural differences”, that is, into different “ways of life” which are something given, something that cannot be overcome.”

Let us now examine in brief some cases in recent incidents of religious violence and where they indicate as to the underlying reasons thereof.

In November, 1984, after Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Indian Prime Minister was assassinated by her Sikh body guards, there were wide spread anti Sikh riots all over the country in which thousands of Sikhs children, women and men were brutally murdered, and their properties was burnt or looted. The government remained hibernated for quite some time, for police either helped the miscreants or remained inactive and even army was deployed late and that too in phased manner with a result, mass killings continued unabated till the evening of 3 November. The Sikh scholars usually, interpret these riots in Hindu government versus Sikh subjects who were to be taught lesson making inferences to past, especially pre and past partition period, but envy to the affluence of Sikhs due to their hard work and to destroy the almost monopoly of Sikhs on goods transport and dominance in many other businesses can also be not ruled out. During the disturbance in Punjab, there were some riots between Hindus and Sikhs, and the first such riot occurred at Patiala, the root cause of which is analysed as the business rivalry between two trading communities namely bhapas (Sikhs) and banias (Hindus) in the walled city. M.J. Akbar says that the economic rivalry between the Sikh and Hindu trading classes sharpened the overall antagonism between them.

Religious beliefs and misinterpretations thereof have increasingly fuelled conflict in African Traditional Religion and today it may be central to many disputes such as those in Nigeria where violence between Christians and Muslims (all Nigerians) has taken a great toll so far, but the occupation of the scarce resources, mainly oil is the primary factor causing violence there. Kasomo Daniel says that the African situation clearly shows that the manipulation of religious beliefs by certain vested groups often spurs the beginning, as well as the intensification, of conflict.  

Religion’s own Scarcities: Hector Avalos says that religions creates its own scarcities which he enumerates as: “(1) access to divine communication, particularly through inscripturation; (2) sacred space; (3) group privileging; and (4) salvation.” If we look at Hindu religion through its “caste” prism we find all of the four scarcities in diminishing scale as one rides the caste hierarchy up. The Shudra or the untouchable could not read or listen the recital of the Vedas by the time of Manu, his entry to the sacred space was prohibited, the privileges of the other three twice born (dwija) castes including salvation were not for him whereas, the Brahman had all the four. Disputes over sacred space are not uncommon – Hindus believe that in Ayodhya, the place where Babri Masjid stood before its destruction in December, 1992 mark the exact birth place of Lord Rama, the city itself is among the seven most sacred cities of Hinduism. The first Jain Tirthankar, Rishabha was born in this city, Buddha had also stayed here for some time. The real question behind all this is hegemonic claims by the Hindutuva forces to dominate the minorities. Jerusalem is another city which is sacred to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

---

and being “as an object of desire and conquest by all three religions, holy sites ... [are] burgeoning reifications of conflict.”

**Conclusion**

The social, economic and political factors we have discussed above often lead to political radicalisation which ends in violence. There is no society or region in the world which can be said immune to such radicalization and violence is not the end result only, it can be consciously employed as escalation strategy and create the very conflicts which seem to be cause of the phenomenon of violence. Violence is employed to achieve the goals which are perceived to be not achievable through other means but some time violence is used to give ethno-religious imprint to a conflict and the established actors are forced to take a stand leading to ethnicisation of the total discourse; democratization does not guarantee non violent ways as ethnicisation on religious lines gives rise to an environment where antagonism is created in society and violence is used to reinforce such antagonism and intimidate the minorities. In Gujarat, the post Godhra pogrom in February-March, 2002, represent such violence as the Hindu right was successful in retaining power in the assembly elections in December that year. But when “political subordination of minorities is cemented” and they are not integrated into the mainstream, they find violence as the only way left to bring change in the status quo, however, it is a fact that the political modernity has brought the extreme violence to the fore by giving “legitimacy to ethno-nationally definitions of friends and enemies.”

---

308 Andreas Wimmer and Conrad Schetter (2003), op. cit. 253.
309 Ibid., 253-54.
310 Ibid., 252.
incapability to tolerate ambivalence”\textsuperscript{311} has given rise to the programs of extermination. But there is some pattern. Some groups have propensity to violence because of the vulnerable situation they find themselves placed in and the propensity grows due to increasing fear and mistrust with the political representatives of the opponent group and the state “as the holder of the monopoly on the legitimate use of force and protector from arbitrary violence.”\textsuperscript{312} Rumors and biased means of mass communication play a catalytic role in spreading fear and mistrust which cause misinterpretation of information resulting into loss of credibility of the other ethnic groups and gives birth to a deep feeling that the other group is capable of causing the worst atrocities; there generates a vicious cycle of fear, mistrust and misinterpretation and each of the factor is perpetuated and supported by the one another, and ultimately relations break off or every likelihood of this to happen is felt so acutely that the situation culminates “in conviction that discrimination, repression, or even destruction can be avoided by taking recourse to armed offensives before the enemy does so.”\textsuperscript{313} Here one’s own culture is stylised as “the only acceptable for form of human existence” and history is idealised in terms of past sufferings or magnificence, whereas the opponent group is demonised as “a horde of faceless creatures.”\textsuperscript{314} Such use of abusive language to denigrate and dehumanise the other group makes the use of violence against its members appear as “legitimate and even desirable.”\textsuperscript{315} The other wise divergent groups are perceived as monoliths and attack on one individual by one or more individuals of the other group, which may not be linked

\textsuperscript{311} Ibid., 253.
\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 255.
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{314} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{315} Ibid., 256.
with the conflict, is taken as an attack on the group as a whole and is sometimes used as an alibi to attack the other group.

Throughout this chapter so far, examples have been given to explain the different factors, but in many cases it is not any single factor that leads to religious violence among various groups in the long run, however, the triggering event may be outcome of any of such factors or any other trivial factor. For example, one of the many riots between Hindu-Sikh in Batala (Punjab) during 1984-86 started when a rickshaw in which a Sikh was travelling collided with a scooter, the scooter-driver and the rickshaw-puller, both were Hindus but in the ensuing scuffle the Hindu shopkeepers turned against the Sikh who had to take shelter in the adjoining Gurudwara. At the heart of the problem was the economic gain, as the shopkeepers were having their business in the shops owned by the Gurudwara and were paying nominal rent since long, the Gurudwara authorities wanted to get them vacated.\textsuperscript{316} The Tamil problem in Sri Lanka which we discussed above is a complex politico-religious problem having various dimensions – struggle over land and natural resources dominating the whole issue.\textsuperscript{317} The Israel-Palestine presents one of the most complex issues of the modern world. The origin of this problem is not in the biblical promise of land to the Jews, but rather the persecution of the Jews for a long period and the literal interpretation of the Biblical promise by the Zionists and moreso, the identification of the said land with Plaestine. The Zionist Jews started settling in the area in the nineteenth century as in the words of Walter Laqueur “Zionists believed ... that without a country ... [Jews] were bound to remain the bastards of humanity.”\textsuperscript{318} From the Arab point of view, they were not responsible for the Jews’ persecution in Europe and

\textsuperscript{316} M.J. Akbar (2007), op. cit. 123-24
\textsuperscript{318} Quoted in Sumantra Bose (2007), op. cit. 212.
Zionism was an aggressive movement in which the immigrting Jews were like invaders, as Said had aptly remarked that the the Arabs were “the victims of the victims.”\textsuperscript{319} But the problem was not only political, the economic aspects such as control of large and best arable tracts of land, and coastal palins by Jews left the Arab population devastated.\textsuperscript{320} The politics of settlements by Israel in the new areas and tacit approval of the U.S. and the Western countries for such acts give a clear and loud message – “the Palestestinians have no right to the land.”\textsuperscript{321} The settlers make only 12 percent of the population whereas they/Israel occupy 50 to 60 percent of the land, in the occupied territory 500 million cubic meters of water is used and only 100 million cubic meters of water is given to the Palestinians; a large number of roads have been laid but the Palestinians have no access to them.\textsuperscript{322} When such is the situation position can be described as a “coexistence within conflict” and for Hamas (an Arabic word meaning zeal – abbreviation of \textit{Harkat al muqawama al-Islamiyya}) no genuine peace can be imagined with Israel except in a truce.\textsuperscript{323}

From the above discussion, we can say that no single factor alone can lead to complex conflicts resulting into religious violence. Moreover, the causes may be real as well as perceived, memory plays a vital role and some times memory is also constructed as in the case of past history when the parties in conflict may tell and interpret it as it suits best to serve their purpose. We can not become too regressive to ignore the religious factors and motivations. It is true that all actions by religious actors, especially the actions involving violence against the “Other” are perpetrated in the back-drop of socio-politco-

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid., 213.  
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid., 221  
\textsuperscript{321} Hans G. Kippenberg (2011), op. cit. 105.  
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid., 109.  
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid., 139.
economic cultural milieu, therefore, religious violence is a complex admixture of the above factors, some times so entangled that the reality becomes illusive to the human ken. Marc Gopin gives gist of the whole matter when he asserts that there is no protracted and intractable conflict that can be termed purely religious and in the same breath, he expresses a possibility that there is no non-religious conflict either. He further says:

All protracted conflict embraces the inner lives and cultures of all human beings involved. Therefore, it is safe to say that these conflicts are inherently complex and always caused by multiple factors. These factors include power distribution, distribution of scarce resources, class issues, inherited meaning systems and worldviews, psychological conditions, the burdens of history, the state of fulfilment of basic human needs, and many other factors.324

As such, the discussion so far, clearly shows that there can not be any single cause for violent conflicts and there are almost always, multiple causations for religious violence.