Genesis of Communalism and Communal Violence

1.1 Introduction

IN INDIA, communalism and communal violence have created huge problem since long. Communal violence or communal clashes are behavioural manifestation of communalism. Communal violence or anti-minority violence has been a recurring feature in the history of this country.

The major form of communal violence in India has been seen with respect of the two communities, i.e., Hindus and Muslims. In India, communal violence has been witnessed because of religion, caste, language, regions, etc. Whatever may be the root cause, the result is always loss of life and property.

In India, communalism is in the form of fascism. Communalism is mainly born out of misuse of religious sentiments of one’s community. In India, the problem of communalism is of political origin largely. Communalism explodes in the shape of communal violence in almost all parts of the country. Today, communalism has become a menace to the unity of the Indian people as revealed in many states. Now it has become a nation-wide problem.

The Indian society has witnessed the Sikh massacre in 1984 after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, the Gujarat killings in 2002, destruction of churches, rape of Christian nuns and killing of priests. Minority communities are being harassed and terrorized, Dalits and Tribes being converted and reconverted. These are inhuman and barbaric manifestations of communal forces and a serious threat to secularism—a danger to peaceful co-existence of Indians.
The recent communal incidents have shown arising of nexus between religion and politics, and communalism has become a pernicious feature of our national life. The recent assaults on Christians in Madhya Pradesh (MP), Gujarat, Orissa, Uttrakhand, etc., wave a terror in the Christian community. It has begun to pervade the entire country. The communalism is certainly a major challenge to nation building.

1.2 Genesis of Communalism

Communalism is a negative term, harmful to the healthy growth of people and the nation. It creates enmity, hatred, violence and revenge, which hamper the growth and development. It develops at the cost of human values adversely affecting the property of the community. It broke India into two parts leaving behind memories and incalculable wounds and loss of property.

Communalism is generally seen in the context of acrimony and conflict between the two communities. In India, communalism has implied discord, tension and conflict between its prominent communities, i.e., Hindus, Muslims and Christians. It has resulted in violence, terror and discrimination against minority communities. It is the vital cause of Hindu-Muslim communal riots.

The meaning of communalism can be understood in a more intrinsic sense if we compare it with the concept of nationalism, which underlies the principle of complete fusion of all the class, caste, religious/regional identities towards a super ordained goal of an integrated and synergic system, where all the sub-groups, sub-systems work in perfect coordination and cohesion and the net holistic outcome is positive despite various entropies of the individual identities.¹

Since communalism is understood as implying hatred and enmity towards the other, it disturbs the peace, and it is also the cause of communal violence. It is, therefore, necessary to understand what communalism is. The word ‘communalism’ is derived from the word ‘communal’, which in itself has been derived from the word ‘commune’, and ‘community’.

According to Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary the meaning of the word, ‘communal’ is (i) “Of or relating to a community”; (ii) “Participated in, shared, or used in common by members of a group or community”; and (iii) “Of, relating to, or based on racial or cultural groups.” The same dictionary defines the word ‘community’ as “a feeling of group solidarity.”

The Random House Dictionary of English Language defines the term ‘community’ as “…a social group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists.”

G.D. Mitchell, defines the term ‘community’ as “…originally the term ‘community’ denoted a collectivity of people who occupied a geographical area; people who were together engaged in economic and political activities and who essentially constituted a self-governing social unit with some common values and experiencing feelings of belonging to one another.”

To be more specific term ‘community’ has been defined as “a concept used in sectarian, territorial and functional context about the persons who are in social interaction within a geographical area.”

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4 Id. at 25-26.
In the Indian context, Robert Hardgrave defines the term ‘community’ as “In India, community usually refers to a racial, caste, linguistic or religious group rather than a locality as in the United States.”  

Communalism means seeking of advantage in social rivalry by exploiting religious appeal. In the Concise Oxford Dictionary, ‘communalism’ is defined as “the antagonistic religious and social communities in a district.” The literal meaning of word ‘communalism’, according to Oxford Dictionary is, “of or for community, or antagonism between people of different races and religions.”  

Dumont in his essay on Nationalism and Communalism writes, “The opposition to each other of religious communities is commonly designated as communalism; communalism appears as a hybrid, or intermediary, perhaps a transitory phenomenon.”  

W.C. Smith took it as “that ideology which emphasized the social, political and economic unit, the group of adherents of each religion, and emphasizes the distinction, even the antagonism, between such groups.”  

When one community suffers from the antagonistic feelings towards the other, it inflames community feelings. Obviously, when antagonism amongst people is felt, the community is divided in a number of factions.  

Thus, the virus of communalism eats up the vitals of the society. After the gruesome happenings in Gujarat in 2002 and in Orissa in 2008 where the

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7 Supra note 3 at 25.
10 Supra note 3 at 26.
minority was targeted, both physically and economically, one may be worried about the future of minority communities in this country.

‘Communalism’ can also be defined as “the discrimination or protection of interests on a religious basis and is the outcome of conflicting religious practices”11 This implies that religious groups are homogeneous in nature and their members have common social, economic and political interests, which bind them together. In fact, it is this assumption, which is the basis of communal propaganda.

According to Prof. Bipin Chandra, “communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, its members have, as a result, common social, political and economic interests.”12

It is this belief that in India, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians form different and distinct communities which are independently and separately structured or consolidated and that the followers of a religion share not only a community of religious interests but also common secular interests—common political, social and cultural interests.

Bipin Chandra explores several possible meanings of communalism of which the prominent ones have been covered in his above-mentioned definition. He also believes that the respective religious communities have become the basis of the organization of modern Indian politics. Bipin Chandra further describes ‘communalism’ as “the product of a particular situation of a particular society, economy and polity, which creates problems. The people are keen to understand the causes of these problems.”13

11 Pradeep Mandhv, Communalism in India: A Paradigm Shift to Indian Politics 4 (Authors Press, Delhi, 2000).
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Asghar Ali Engineer links communalism to conflicts of the elites of community and to their class interests. Communalism is described as a tool to mobilize people for or against, by raising appeal on communal lines. According to him, “the threat to the privileges of the community is expressed through communal channels.”\(^\text{14}\)

Moin Shakir holds that communalism has its roots in the socio-economic order. He said, “If the economic and social policies of the system lead to concentration of power and deny equality of opportunity to an overwhelming majority of the people belonging to all communities, discord and disharmony are inevitable. In such a system, the ruling class has a vital interest in dividing the people along communal and religious lines.”\(^\text{15}\)

Shaheen Hussain describes the *software* of communalism as prejudices, in addition, the eruption of riots from such *software* as the *hardware* of communalism. He holds that “prejudices are practiced and propagated by the upper classes, i.e., the elite, whereas lower classes are driven to exercise the *hardware*, that is, eruption of communal violence.”\(^\text{16}\) Commenting on ‘communalism’, he writes, “If a person is deprived of his or her rights or privileges, just on the basis of his or her community, this would constitute communalism.”\(^\text{17}\)

Ghulam Rabbani remarks, “The process of communalism is a part of the imperialist intrigue carried on through imperialist agents.”\(^\text{18}\) Abdul Ahmed defines ‘communalism’ as “a social phenomenon characterized by the religion of the two communities, often leading to acrimony, tension and even rioting

\(^{14}\) *Id.* at 77.  
\(^{15}\) *Id.* at 78.  
\(^{16}\) *Ibid.*  
\(^{17}\) *Ibid.*  
between them.”

According to Prabha Dixit, “communalism was not the result of religious hostility between the Hindus and Muslims but was evolved as a political doctrine and was closely tied up with the struggle for power.”

According to Zainab Bano, “broadly speaking, ‘communalism’ in India is essentially a political phenomenon. The outcome of communalism in the form of group prejudices, communal contradictions, tensions and riots is due to the struggle for control over the resources of power. Its roots are economic power and political domination.”

Some scholars have tried to explain ‘communalism’ as a minority versus majority problem. According to Humayun Kabir, “the fact of minority consciousness has caused psychological cleavages and political rifts between several minority groups, more particularly between Hindus and Muslims in India.”

According to P. Patel, “communalism can be understood by general social, economic, political and cultural forces that shape and steer the growth of communalism.”

Anirban Kashyap reveals, “Much of the blame for the worsening communal situation may perhaps be attributed to the absence or presence of certain provisions in the Constitution, which act as grist to the mill of communalism.”

According to T.S. Lokhandwala, “communalism in India before independence had become an ideology which emphasized on the social,

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19 Ibid.
20 Id. at 79.
21 Id. at 79-80.
22 Id. at 80.
23 Id. at 81.
24 Supra note 6 at 15; see also Anirban Kashyap, Communalism and Constitution 226 (Lancers Books, New Delhi, 1988).
political and economic unit, the group of adherents of religion, and stressed on the distinction and even antagonism between such groups."

After analyzing of the above-mentioned definitions, the researcher find that Engineer, Shakir and Ahmad try to explain that ‘communalism’ is an ideology to propagate economic and political interests. They explain it in terms of a tool in the hands of the upper class to capture power by dividing people.

Shaheen Hussain has drawn a difference between communalism and the expression of communalism in terms of software and hardware. Software is seen in terms of prejudices. The prejudice has been used to explain the frame of mind, which subsequently affects the perception of an individual in all the spheres.

Prabha Dixit and Zainab Bano have identified ‘communalism’ as political force and a political doctrine. To them, communalism is a political phenomenon whose outcome is communal tension, group prejudices and communal riots.

In its common usage, the word ‘communalism’ refers to a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities. In academic investigations, more often, the term is applied to organized political movements based on proclaimed interests of a religious community, usually in response to a real or imagined threat from other religious communities.

Communalism can be divided as liberal or moderate communalism and extreme or fascist communalism. Liberal communalism is the belief that the secular interests of the followers of one religion are different from the secular interests of the followers of another religion. While extreme communalism is

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25 Supra note 13 at 81.
the belief, that not only the secular interests of different communities are different but they are also hostile towards each other.

Therefore, communalism is based on the assumption that people belonging to a particular faith have common social, economic and political interests and therefore, the interests of the believers in different religion are different. These differences are not irreconcilable, but hostile to each other. Communalism seeks the protection of the interests of one religious group at the cost of another. It highlights only those aspects of religion, which are antagonistic rather than those that are humanistic and universal. Now communalism is alive in everyday politics.

1.2.1 Features of Communalism

On the basis of above discussion, following may be the distinctive features of communalism:

1) It is an ideology based on prejudices.

2) It is an instrument in the hands of elite and people of higher classes.

3) It drives masses towards violence.

4) It is opposed to secularism and integration.

5) It negates the concept of pluralism.

6) It recognizes only its own religious community and not the nation or its welfare.

7) The implicit assumption of a communal identity explanation is that the interests of various groups identified as Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, etc., are conflicting and divergent.

8) It perceives other religious communities as enemies.
9) It is based on economic, political and social interests within whom it finds manifestation.

10) In Indian context, communalism has primarily come to mean the widespread feelings of fear, rivalry, suspicion, vengeance and violence that exist between different religious groups.

1.2.2 Causes of Communalism

Following may be identified as the causes of communalism:

1) The textbook in history written by different scholars also perpetuate communal hatred. A balanced view of history would certainly help bridging the present gulf between the communities.

2) The most important cause is an ultra-sensitive and intolerant attitude of each communal group towards the other.

3) The aggressive attitude of fundamentalists of majority community towards other communities creates a sense of fear and insecurity amongst the later.

4) Communal politics is an outcome of arrested and differential modernization.26

5) The politicians for their selfish ends shamelessly exploit the religious, caste and communal feelings of masses.27

6) Pakistan and other Muslim countries patronize the Muslim community of India, which is uncalled for. The occasional interference in favour of the Muslims certainly retards the process of their Indianisation and develops a sense of alienation among them.

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7) Some people do not properly understand religion. They believe in demonstrative and aggressive religiosity, which is effectively exploited for political purposes.

8) The unbalanced development of capitalism in India because of many reasons is also responsible for the communal disturbances in India.

For the phenomenon of communalism, the major responsibility lies with the present leadership both political and religious who should not exploit communal forces to gain political power. The ruling and opposition parties with a view to prevent the use of the communal card for selfish political ends must draw up some code.

1.3 Communal Violence: Its Meaning

Communal violence includes and encompasses violent acts, which may be defined as crimes in law, but there are many other acts not falling strictly under criminal activities. The devastating effect of communal violence is much more dangerous and alarming than if it were simply a riot/crime.

The terms ‘communal violence’ and ‘communal riots’ have not been defined in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1861 or Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC), 1973. The IPC merely defines ‘unlawful assembly’\(^{28}\) (section 141) and

\(^{28}\) Section 141 of IPC says, an assembly of five or more persons is designated an “unlawful assembly” if the common object of the persons composing that assembly is—

First.—To overawe by criminal force, or show of criminal force, the Central or any State Government or Parliament or the Legislature of any State, or any public servant in the exercise of the lawful power of such public servant; or

Secondly.—To resist the execution of any law, or of any legal process; or

Thirdly.—To commit any mischief or criminal trespass, or other offence; or

Fourthly.—By means of criminal force, or show of criminal force, to any person, to take or obtain possession of any property, or to deprive any person of the enjoyment of a right of way, or of the use of water or other incorporeal right of which he is in possession or enjoyment, or to enforce any right or supposed right; or

Fifthly.—By means of criminal force, or show of criminal force, to compel any person to do what he is not legally bound to do, or to omit to do what he is legally entitled to do.
‘riot’\textsuperscript{29} (section 146). The definition of ‘riot’ makes every member of an unlawful assembly guilty of rioting. It contains two essentials, namely:

1. Use of force or violence by any unlawful assembly or by any member thereof; and
2. Such force or violence should have been used in prosecution of the common object of such assembly.

The police use these sections of the IPC to deal with communal violence. The definition of unlawful assembly leaves room for interpretation as to whether when and how an assembly becomes ‘unlawful’ and whether or not a particular incident was a ‘communal riot’. Only those incidents of violence come under the purview of ‘rioting’ that constitute offence under the IPC. The police count as a ‘communal incident’ any violent incident in which the opposing parties happen to be members of the two communities, irrespective of the cause. This provides scope for police discretion.

In other words, communal violence means violence against a group or an individual targeted because of a communal identity. The target identification, in most of the cases, is guided by a strong belief that the interests of a community having common religion could be protected and furthered by causing injuries to the members of the other religious community.

Communal violence can never be explained in terms of religion alone. The religious factor is not the real one behind it, but it is exploited to suit one’s own end. When religious sentiments and cultural ethos are manipulated for selfish gains, the result is communal tension or communal violence.

\textit{Explanation.}—An assembly, which was not unlawful when it assembled, may subsequently become an unlawful assembly.

\textsuperscript{29} Section 146 of IPC says, whenever force or violence is used by an unlawful assembly, or by any member thereof, in prosecution of the common object of such assembly, every member of such assembly is guilty of the offence of rioting.
Violence may be divided into two broad categories:

(1) Individual violence; and

(2) Social violence.

‘Individual violence’ consists of heinous crime of murder and grievous hurt, including attempts at dacoity, robbery, wrongful confinement and serious assaults. The public is tolerant with crime against property but crime of violence generates fear, specially fear of strangers. The fear of strangers has affected social order, mobility, mutual distrust and withdrawal and finally the quality of life.

‘Individual violence’ is defined as “a behaviour that injures a person who does not want to be harmed.” Robert Baron has focused on four salient features of violence:30

(1) Behaviour;

(2) Intention to harm;

(3) Human being as a victim and aggressor; and

(4) Reluctance of the victim to be harmed.

M. Janowitz defined ‘social violence’ that includes both communal and commodity riots, as “communal violence refers to physical attacks against one group by another; commodity riots refer to violence against property including damage, destruction and looting of shops, houses and other establishments.”31

Therefore, social violence refers to violence against one group by another. It may be based on religious, sectarian, social or political differences. The above definition is applicable to group conflicts.

30 V. Kannu Pillai, Communal Violence: A Sociological Study of Gujarat 26 (Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2006).
31 Ibid.
In India, communal violence means those communal clashes in which Hindus and Muslims fight against each other making warring groups because of religion. Many times, there is a conflict between the state and one group of citizens. The identity of this group may apparently be religious but this clash would not come under the meaning of communal violence.

Violence against other communities such as the Sikhs and the Christians too has not been rare. There has also been violence against the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) as well, in several parts of India. Communal violence has been increasing because of increasing intolerance of another religious group, belief and discrimination based on religious group identities.

One cannot deny the fact that communal violence takes place in an atmosphere of religious prejudice, deep-hatred, deep-rooted passions, jealousies and negative attitudes against the opposite group. Communal violence may commence after the happening of a minor, petty, or serious incident and the subsequent hostility against that group of persons continues simply because the opposite group belongs to a different community.

Eruption of violence based on religion, community, region, caste, sex, etc., creates the law and order problem in the society. Religion and caste, by aligning with politics, tend to generate communal violence. The caste, community or religion based biases have been found to play a crucial role in augmenting communal violence.

Communal violence occurs repeatedly in the same locality because the perpetrators of violence are hardly arrested and punished. The most communal clashes are usually pre-planned. The preparation for large-scale communal violence starts much before than its actual occurrence. It takes place in the area where there is a constant harassment of one group by another. Therefore,
people wait for an opportunity to attack each other during communal violence to ventilate physically their animal instincts.

Communal violence does not include incidents borne out of a personal vendetta such as individual quarrels. The internal as well as external and various in-built factors are responsible for communal violence, which heat up the sentiments of the communities.

Communal violence is continued due to communal politics, nexus between goondas and the politicians, and rumours. At present, the religious fundamentalism is on the increase in our country. Many a time, for petty reasons communal passions are whipped up, culminating in the communal violence/riots.

Some communal groups/parties and other secular parties have continued to play their role in provoking communalism and communal violence. Communal violence is largely a middle class problem but upper class people also who fight for their own economic and political ends exploit masses in the name of religion.

Communal violence has been an endemic problem throughout the post-independence period. In recent times, it has assumed very serious proportions particularly because of the politically motivated electoral calculations. It is surprising that in a nation where all faiths preach oneness of humanity, communal tensions overflow at the slightest pretext.

Thus, communal violence refers to both offences against persons as well as property. It includes both physical attacks and oral violence of threat and abuse. The communal violence has a religious garb over it, but in reality, those resorting to it are neither true Hindus nor true Muslims. No religion would justify intolerance and hatred. Religion does not preach enmity amongst us.
1.3.1 Features of Communal Violence

The following may be the features of communal violence:

1) One group initiates the action.

2) A swift violent reaction by the opposite group starts.

3) There is a chain reaction by both the groups and a large number of people are collected and moved in the affected areas.

4) In a short time, the news of violence spreads and other retaliatory physical assaults and attacks on property follow in other areas unconnected with the incident.

5) It has a tendency to force even secular persons to think temporarily in communal terms to provide for the safety of person and property and thus generates a vicious circle. In this way, communal violence has a psychological explanation too.

Communal violence is borne out of emotion, hatred, hostility and prejudice. It may be oral and physical violence against one religious group by another with intention to physically harm or destroy the property or both as they belong to a particular religious group.

1.4 Communal Tensions and Communal Incidents

Tension is generally interpreted in the form of mutual animosities between the two communities. Tension is produced by political use of religion and generally develops in a particular area on some local issues, which plays a key role in causing communal violence.

Communal tension arises out of frustration of one class against the other. All mutual relations between the communities are snapped, during the period, when and where communal tension prevails. An intense atmosphere is
generated and often, actual violence takes place. Communal tension develops over a period with the interaction of psychological, historical and economic factors. The situation gets further crucial if there exists an entrepreneurial class of one community competing with the monopoly of the businesspersons of other community. The tension flowing through many stages of conflict comes to a flash point where rumour is enough to trigger off communal violence.

A communal incident between two communities takes place mostly on petty matters, i.e., causing an accident on the road, use of loudspeakers, eve teasing, or similar instances often spark off the communal fire. Such an incident creates disturbance in that particular locality and creates tensions among the residents of that locality, and though mostly localized, often spreads to other areas of the town. News of the communal tension spreads to other areas of the entire town or village where both groups are staying. If both the groups start assaulting persons and attacking the property of one against another, it may be termed as communal incident as distinguished from the communal tension.

Presence of large population of the minority population in a town intensifies political rivalry between the elites of the two communities who try to mobilize the voters by appealing to their respective communal identities. The Meerut riot of 1982 is an example on this point. Disputes also arise where a public place is encroached by a particular community and the administration remains indifferent to it.

The commercial rivalry between Hindu and Muslim traders, keep an area in a state of such tension that the smallest incident can result in large-scale

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32 In Meerut riots (1982), a siege mentality was sought to be created among the Hindus through systematic propaganda in order to win their support for electoral purposes. A minor incident was most unscrupulously exploited by politicians for their own selfish ends and finally caused disaster to many families. The genesis of the riot shows it to be political rather than economic. The high percentage of Muslim population 49 percent makes them important. Their support along with the SCs & STs votes to any political party becomes crucial.
violence. The riots of Banaras (now renamed Varanasi) and Moradabad are the instances on this point. However, there is no co-relation between the immediate cause and general atmosphere of tension.

Therefore, the communal incident always follows communal tension. During the communal incident, one group tries to show off its muscle power against another and tries to establish its superiority.

1.5 Difference between Communalism and Communal Violence

The communal violence may be traced back to the medieval period of history but communalism is a modern creation, one of the by-products of the Colonial economy. Communalism and communal violence may not be mistaken to be the same thing. At surface, communalism and communal violence may appear to be the same thing but both are distinguishable. Communalism is and above all an ideology. Communal violence is linked to communal ideology. Therefore, the outcome of communalism is communal riots and other forms of communal violence. It is possible for communal ideology to exist and pervade for years or even decades without communal violence taking place at all.

Communal violence is not necessary for existence of communal ideology. Punjab is a clear example of this silent communalism. It is an example how this ideology is born, how it grows and grips the minds of the people. The other examples of this close relationship between communal

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33 In Varanasi in 1977, a single stone convert the situation into a communal riot. The Varanasi riot was the instance in which a communalized situation was created in which Muslims were maneuvered into apparently throwing the first stone. While the Moradabad riot was started when a pig wandered in violating the Muslim sense of sacredness during the Prayer of ‘Eid’ at Idgah. These instances help us to know that when tension has developed high, any action by persons belonging to the either community, can lead to widespread communal violence.
violence and the prior spread of communal ideology are the riots of Bhiwandi, Aligarh, Moradabad, Meerut, Lucknow, Jaipur, Bhagalpur, Bangalore and Bombay (now renamed Mumbai). Similarly, Gujarat violence of 2002 was the consequence of the prior spread of communal ideology.

When communal violence occurs, on a large-scale then secular citizens get active but they remain passive in the period when communal ideology is spreading. This is what happened in the case of ‘Babri Masjid-Ramjanmbhoomi’ affair, which was brewing since 1983 but was completely ignored by secular citizens and forces until 1989.

Communalism breeds communal politics whereas communal violence is the clear manifestation of communal tension. Communal ideology leads in many cases to communal violence and riots. However, the former is primary and the cause, the later i.e., violence is secondary and the effect. Rioting, looting, killing and other forms of communal violence are contingent or conjectural forms of communal thinking.

It is much easier for communal forces to engineer communal violence, if communal ideologies become stronger in the society. Spread of communalism is a necessary condition for communal violence. To engineer communal violence, communal atmosphere need to be generated. A communal riot hits the headlines and compels us to pay attention. However, it is outcome of the prior spread of communal ideology.

The difference between communal ideology and communal violence is crucial because the two have to be dealt with differently and have different relation with the state. Eradication of communal ideology is a long-term process. Communal violence requires an immediate action and effective use of law enforcement agencies at the disposal of the state.
Therefore, communal ideology can prevail without violence but communal violence cannot take place without prior spread of communal ideology. No doubt, communal violence acts as a means of spreading communal ideology.

Even after 65 years of our independence, the evil of communalism has certainly not stopped spinning and the disease of communalism persists. It is a very complex phenomenon. There are various factors involved—religious, political, economic, social and psychological of which political factor is predominant in India. The psychology of communalism promotes ideological fundamentalism, intolerance, narrow mindedness and favoritism.

It is not only communal forces that exaggerate the cruelty of the other community in order to provoke their own community to violence but even the relatively liberal intellectual class tries to justify the violent acts of its own community. In India, Hindu and Muslim communlists can witness this attempt.

In the pre-partition days, communalism was exploited by leaders for a share of power at the centre, which eventually culminated in the partition of the country. After independence, ironically enough, the communists for secular ends have exploited communalism. Communalism and communal propaganda became greatly aggravated during 1980s in India. In 1980s, the ‘Assam Students Movement’ and ‘Khalistan Movement’ assumed serious proportion in India. Than the ‘Shah Bano’ case, assumed great importance and large number of Muslims demanded overturning of the Apex Court judgment.34

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34 *Mohammed Ahmed v. Shah Bano Begum*, AIR 1985 SC 945. (The SC judgement raised a storm of protest among the Muslims. There were huge demonstrations by the Muslims throughout India, as the judgment was perceived as interference by the judiciary in their personal law. The political leaders seized this opportunity to arouse Muslims sentiments for their own political ends. They (Muslims) were made to believe that their identity was in great danger if the SC judgement was not nullified).
The Indian Muslims carried out a massive protest against the misinterpretation of *Shariah* in the ‘Shah Bano’ case and realizing its constitutional duty the Central Government corrected the wrong done to the Muslims. It was against this backdrop that a certain political party took a strong exception to the government move. Therefore, the gates of Babri Masjid were opened as a temple for Hindus only a few months after passing of ‘Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986’ in order to placate the same political section. Obviously, it led to further deterioration of situation and things came to such a pass in which we find ourselves today.\(^{35}\)

The movement for the construction of the ‘Ram Temple’ was another powerful religious symbol for mobilizing the Hindu masses. These symbols created mass psychology in favour of one political party. It was collective psychology of hatred against Muslims that led to demolition of ‘Babri Masjid’. In Gujarat, the train-burning incident was cleverly used to create mass hysteria among Hindus of Gujarat. In Gujarat, the political party carried on hate propaganda against Muslims and used Gujarat as the Hindutva Laboratory. In 2007, this method was again used to win assembly elections of 2007.

In India, communalism grew stronger, mainly because the Indian establishment failed to remain a prejudice-free entity. Communalism had acquired a most dangerous form and an alarming proportion, which endanger India’s nationalistic identity. In some places, the communal psychology is so deeply rooted that petty matters instigate mutual clashes between the two communities. Therefore, we may say that interest plays a major role in promoting conflict and violence and religion or ideology play merely an instrumental role.

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1.6 Communal Violence and State Machinery

Communalism has also made serious inroads into the state machineries. Many officials openly compromise with supported communal forces and remain largely ineffective in the presence of operational realities. The increasing communalization of state machineries has been causing concern to all democratic minded citizens.

The inactivity of state machinery in dealing with communal violence has been largely observed in the massacre of over 4,000 Muslims in Nellie (Assam) in February 1983; the massacre of more than 3,000 Sikhs after the assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 30, 1984; and brutal killing of more than 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat after the Godhra incident in 2002.

Many officials of state machinery betray communal tendencies and encourage communal forces directly or indirectly. For examples, the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in Moradabad (1980) and Meerut riots (1987) and the police in Bombay (now renamed Mumbai (1992-93) and Gujarat riots (2002), directly participated against the minorities. In other places, as in Punjab (after 1981), Delhi (1984) and in Bhagalpur riots (1989), they remained passive spectators of communal burning, looting and killings.36

The evolving political culture and ‘selective performance’ of government agencies has further aggravated the problem. If Chief Ministers (CM) and the Governors had shown strong resolve in throttling the genocide in Bhagalpur, Meerut, Ahmedabad, etc., it would certainly have had a strong impact on the psyche of the police force and the administrative agencies.37

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The violation of institutional neutrality is quite apparent at not only the level of the Central Government but also State Government, municipal, district and sub-division levels. Discrimination is perpetrated and religious hatred is practiced not only by various religious communities against each other but also by the state through its agencies.

Almost all religious communities have experienced discrimination in various forms from certain sections of the Hindu majority. The Report of the ‘Special Rapporteur of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981)’ confirms it.\footnote{Id. at 151-52.}

The inactivity of state dealing with communal violence has played a major role in the spread of communal riots in the country. The state machinery has been growing lax in their treatment of communal riots. The states alone possess the instruments in successfully counter the communal violence.

**1.7 Concluding Remarks**

Communalism is the negation of secularism and democracy. It is largely a political phenomenon. Its genesis is in politics, not in religion. While it is the product of a particular social situation, to overcome that situation it has to be opposed and eradicated, otherwise the situation cannot be transformed. The problem of communalism is a long-term problem, which requires intense and complex struggle on the political front and in the front of ideas. Thus, secularism is an effective antidote to communalism.

Communalism as an ideology is the ultimate source of communal violence. Though it is important to combat communal organizations and
communal politics, it is equally vital to counter communal ideology. Communalism cannot be defeated without taking up the caste issue, without working to unite the oppressed castes and the Muslims at the political and social level against the system of caste-class oppression of which they are the common victims. All communalisms whether majority or minority must be opposed simultaneously.

Communal violence is the consequence of the prior spread of communal thinking. It is a challenge to India’s secularism, composite culture and unity in diversity and it poses a threat to the unity and integrity of our country. National integration is the basis for India’s survival. If communalism and communal ideology remains active communal violence can be incited whenever needed.

Thus, the penetration of communalism and communal ideology has to be checked and eliminated. We must try to reduce the frequency and intensity of communalism and communal violence.

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