3.1 Introduction

IT WAS THOUGHT that partition of the country would resolve the problem of communal violence in India, and in the post-partition period, the people would be able to live without facing the ill-effects of the communal violence. However, it was a false hope and except the decade of fifty, people could not live in without communal violence.

In communal violence several causes and multiplicity of factors are involved which contribute to the generation and aggravation of communal riots. Each of these factors, individually and collectively, contributes to creating the communal passion in which even the mildest of provocations erupts into irrational violence. Besides the communal environment in most of the riots, there are precipitating factors, which engineer the fire of communal violence in any area.

It must be noted that in communal violence there are micro as well as macro factors involved. The macro factors are often of ideological in nature and have nation-wide sweep. The micro factors may be non-ideological and of local nature. Both are integrally connected with the process of socio-economic development in the country.

To fight communalism and stop communal violence, we ought to know what causes are behind the virus of communal violence. Therefore, it is necessary, to know the various causes of communal violence. This chapter will deal on those causes which are responsible for eruption of communal violence in the country.
The causes responsible for the communal violence may be discussed under the following heads:

- General Causes.
- Religious Causes.
- Trivial Causes.

3.2 General Causes

Communal violence takes place because of various factors. The process of communal violence is very complex one. The reason for the break out of communal violence, its continuance, ineffective policing and other efforts and delay in restoring normalcy are varied and interrelated. Therefore, it is necessary, to know the general causes behind the problem of communal violence.

The general causes responsible for the problem of communal violence in India may be discussed under the following heads:

3.2.1 Divide and Rule Policy

The history of Hindu-Muslim antagonism is the result of ‘divide and rule’ policy adopted by the British rulers, which left a wide impact on Hindu-Muslim relations. This policy had sown seeds of discord between the communities, who indulged in serious skirmishes posing threat to the security and very existence of the nation.

After the revolt of 1857, the British rulers started to divide different communities on communal lines, particularly Hindus and Muslims in India. It was one of the main reasons that the British rulers undertook the first census in Colonial India in the year 1872. The census of 1872 articulated the cleavages of minority and majority and created communal consciousness in the early 20th
century.\footnote{R.N.P. Singh, \textit{Riots and Wrongs, Islam and Religious Riots: A Case Study} 118 (India First Foundation, New Delhi, 2004).} The census exercises during Colonial rule instilled a geographical and demographic consciousness among the religious communities. The census data on religion also sparked off a communal debate on the size and growth of different religious communities.

The division of Bengal in 1905, based on religion was the unique example of fomenting communalism by the British policy of ‘divide and rule’. Communal perception was again perpetrated through the political instrument of \textit{separate electorates}, wherein religious minorities were given separate seats in the legislative bodies according to their proportion of population in the provinces. This widened the prevailing communal antagonism in the country.

Mahatma Gandhi struggled hard to bring back the spirit of brotherhood; apart from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. However, every move to unite the two communities failed miserably. Since then the relationship between Hindus and Muslims has become bitterer than ever before; hatred between them has grown manifold. The Indian ruling class continued the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British rulers in the post-partition period in relation to the masses of the two communities to keep them divided and always fighting.

\subsection*{3.2.2 Partition of Bengal and Swadeshi Movement}

The British policy of ‘divide and rule’ succeeded. The Hindu-Muslim antagonism started surfacing since the division of Bengal in 1905. The partition of Bengal and Swadeshi movement was another factor of creating gulf between two communities by the British rulers.

The British Government wanted to cut the very source of Indian nationalism and to divide the people of the region into two separate
communities, i.e., Eastern and Western Bengal. In Eastern Bengal, Muslims were in majority while in the Western Bengal, Hindus were in majority. The Colonial rulers were very eager to enlist the support of majority community against the minority community.

The majority community took hostile attitude towards the minority community and the Swadeshi movement sponsored by them. Nawab Salimullah of the Eastern Bengal actively helped the government in fighting the Swadeshi movement in the new province. The attitude encouraged by the Nawab culminated in a series of outbreaks at Comilla (now in Bangladesh) and Jamalpur in East Bengal and a growing alienation of relation between the two communities.

Gulf started appearing between Hindus and Muslims when the opposition against partition of Bengal and Swadeshi movement were on the peak, several riots took place in areas and places which later on became part of East Pakistan and now Bangladesh.

### 3.2.3 Partition of the Country

Partition of the country also created a great deal of bitterness and communalized political processes in post-Independent India. Partition itself was greater disaster for the country. Before partition, all were Indians, but after partition Muslims became a minority in India while Hindus and Sikhs became minority in Pakistan. Allegations of persecution of minorities in both the countries had been made from time to time. The seeds of distrust and disharmony have gradually taken shape of big trees and communal termite is slowly eating into the age-old roots of our peace.

\(^2\) *Id.* at 119-20.
3.2.4 Struggle for Identity or Class Conflicts

The theories of class conflict, viz., class stratification coinciding with religious cleavages or the dominant property group trying to raise bogie of majority communalism in order to mute or deflect the rising demands of the minority. In India, communal identity and division has always pervaded Indian society but communalism is one of the by-products of Colonial under development of the Indian economy. The rise of modern politics and social classes occurred in the same period and the crises of Colonial economy began to be largely felt. Colonial economy, underdevelopment and economic stagnation produced conditions conducive to the growth of internal divisions and antagonism within society.³

The internal divisions promoted communal violence and social tension at the mass level. Some scholars argue that all classes in the society behave differently according to their economic needs, which when triggered off by a religious issue, lead to communal violence. They attribute class struggle as the root cause behind several communal disturbances, not religion. Some scholars believe that after partition of the country, Indian Muslim developed the psychology of being the deprived group. Thus, an incident, which may be trivial in nature, leads to a chain reaction ending in violence.⁴

3.2.5 Communal Conflicts and Conflicts of Interest

Hindus and Muslims cannot be treated as entirely homogenous communities. There are besides religious conflicts, conflicts of interests too. On occasion, these interests sharpen religious conflict. Religion is often used to provide legitimacy to conflicts of interests and thus what appears to be a

³ Id. at 112-13.
religious conflict may in fact be a cover-up for a conflict of interests. This is, of course, not to suggest that there has been no religious conflict between the two communities. Communal conflicts are a means for communities to assert their communal identities and to demand their share in economic, educational and job opportunities.

The simplistic explanation of communal conflict in pre-independence period was in terms of the imperialist conspiracy of ‘divide and rule’. At a more sophisticated level, communal conflict is sought to be explained by Marxists as an inevitable consequence of the contemporary capitalist order.\footnote{Gopal Krishna, “Communal Violence in India” in S.I. Wilkinson (ed.), Religious Politics and Communal Violence 151 (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005).}

Communal conflict/communal of interest does not seem to originate in the ignorance of ‘true religion’ but in the struggle for autonomy on the part of one or more groups and there is an inescapable conflict between their drive for autonomy and the cohesion of the state in a multi-religious society. Politicization of religion, conditions of extreme scarcity and a particularly divisive style of politics aggravate the problem, which appears to be basic to heterogeneous societies.\footnote{Id. at 152-53.}

There remain casual continuity between the pre and post-partition periods as far as super-structural causes of communal conflicts like religio-cultural prejudices, the memory of Muslim rule over India, emotional commitment to the cause of Pakistan, etc., were concerned.

However, now there emerged a variety of local factors, which came to play an ever-greater role in pushing communal conflict to the threshold of violence. It must be considered as a significant development.
3.2.6 Political Factor

The communal politics cannot be let down without an attack on communal ideology and the socio-economic structure of the society which sustain it. In most cases the communal violence is politically motivated. There is a growing tendency to maximize political gains by adopting short cuts in terms of usage of ancient identities, money and muscle power, communal slogans, doctrinaire issue, etc.

The major cause of communal conflict before partition was the struggle between the Hindu and the Muslim elite for political power as well as control of economic resources at the national level. Zenab Bano believes that “the outcome of communalism in the form of group prejudices, communal contradictions, tensions and communal violence is due to the struggle for control over the resources of power. Communalism’s roots are deep in economic power and domination.” Prabha Dixit also regards communalism as “a political doctrine that makes use of religious and cultural differences in achieving political gains.”

Some believe that communalism and communal conflicts are means of political assertion. Politics in general is a process of conflict resolution. In trying to resolve this conflict, each of the participating and contending group and community seek to gain terms advantageous and favourable to it so far as possible. Therefore, the effort of each of the groups is to acquire as much political power as possible and with it the political advantage as a means to enhance the community or caste interests.

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7 Supra note 1 at 115.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
The 1980s decade witnessed the highest degree of communalization of politics. The ‘Minakshipuram conversion’ episode was alleged to have been exploited by the then Prime Minister to mobilize the upper and middle caste Hindu support for retaining political power. Due to the political issues communal riots occurred in Hyderabad (1983), Bombay (now renamed Mumbai)-Bhiwandi (1984) and Aurangabad (1988). In the late 80s, communal riots that broke out in Meerut (1987) and the Bhagalpur (1989) were directly the result of ‘Ayodhya dispute’, the dispute was essentially political in nature.

There is a violent political competition among the leaders of both the communities to obtain favour of one community against another for political gain. As a result, communal groups are gaining support from the political parties. Both religious as well as secular leaderships try to take advantage of this situation for their political and non-political ends.

There are many other factors also which contribute to the building up of communal tension. The increased prosperity of a group challenges the traditional political leadership of the town. This political rivalry leads to communally dangerous situations. Political rivalries assume dangerous extent in areas marked by a high level of political instability and social violence.

Politicians have no interest in bridging the gap between communities, but have, in fact, a positive stake in ensuring that it remains as wide as possible. They succeed in misguiding their ignorant co-religionists in the wrong direction and towards the wrong goals, which are against the interests of the people themselves.

3.2.7 Socio-Political Issues

It has been established that in Indian society disputes among various trends within Hinduism or Islam did take place. Often socio-political issues
also engineered communal violence. The principal aspect that came to the surface was ‘cow protection’ and ‘Urdu-Devanagari’ controversy. The demand for the use of the Devanagari script, first made by some Banaras (now renamed Varanasi) Hindus in 1868 and granted by Lt. Governor MacDonnell in 1900 was connected with the tension between old and new elites of UP.\(^\text{10}\)

The local Gorakshini Sabhas began springing up in many parts of Northern India from the late 1880s, and became more militant and brought acute social tension. On the other hand, Muslim revivalist trends were simultaneously insisting on the necessity of the ‘Bakharid’ (i.e. the festival of sacrifice) sacrifices. Thus, the ground was prepared for communal violence in 1893.

In 1967, the attempt to make ‘Urdu’, the second official language in Bihar, was the cause behind communal violence in Ranchi. In 1994, the introduction of a short ‘Urdu News Bulletin’ from the Bangalore Doordarshan (DD) had sparked off communal violence in Bangalore. However, it was clear that apart from ‘linguistic sentiments’ there was certainly a political motive to the entire events.

### 3.2.8 Economic Factor

Many have tried to find economic factors behind communal violence. Theories of development process find the causes in economic competition among Hindus and Muslims in some area. Economic competition often leads to social tensions that can easily turn into communal violence. An important cause of communalism and communal violence springing from it has been unbalanced and exploitative economic relations in Indian society.

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In 1929, Mumbai riots were explained at the time as the outcome of an economic conflict between Hindu strikers and Muslim strike breakers, mixed in with Hindu antipathy towards Muslim moneylenders in the city.\textsuperscript{11} Several accounts of the partition riots in Punjab have also focused on the role of land shortages and conflicts between indebted Muslim farmers and mainly Hindu money lenders in the country side and between Muslim and Hindu business interests in the cities.\textsuperscript{12}

After independence, however, as riots have become much more urban in nature, most economic explanations of riots have focused on either: (i) economic competition due to Muslim craftsmen moving up in the economic division of labour and beginning to compete with Hindu merchants; or (ii) riots stocked by urban land mafias in an attempt to displace one community from increasingly valuable urban real estate.

The inter-dependence between the Hindus and the Muslims in trade and commerce in places like Varanasi, Moradabad, Aligarh and other places have given rise to pressure groups among the artisans and weavers who put pressure on the fanatical members of their respective communities to call off the projection of any communal issue, as in the process the communities stand to lose economically.

Due to the economic factors communal violence occurred in Udaipur (1965 & 1966); Godhra (1980-81); Bihar Sharif (1981); Meerut and Baroda (1982) and in the industrial belt of Bhiwandi-Thane-Mumbai (1984). During 1980, either electoral politics or economic competition played great role in engineering some major riots.


\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.} For an Economic Analysis of Violence in Rural Punjab, see Stephen L. Keller, \textit{Uprooting and Sound Change: The Role of Refugees in Development} (Manohar Book Service, Delhi, 1975).
Various case studies disclose that in period before Ayodhya issue violence took place in cities where Muslim artisans and weavers took over the trading of their products from Hindus. The intense economic competition led to conflicts and riots. The Gopal Singh Committee in its Report (1983) also testifies to the economic factors, local rivalry, acquiring control over and sharing of the gains of economic ventures.\textsuperscript{13}

It is asserted that most of the employers, industrialists, etc., are Hindus, whereas most of the workers and artisans are Muslims. Therefore, communal violence is a distorted form of class conflict. Communal clashes encourage in ensuring that people do not begin identifying themselves with the economic class to which they belong.

The economic factors played a significant role at those industrial places where Hindus and Muslims both were engaged in the same industry. The problem becomes complex, where Muslims occur to be wage-earning artisans. The bigger wealth among the Muslims leads to increase majority’s bigotry.

Economic competition obviously results in social tensions. It was an underlying cause of communal riots being frequently mentioned in some recent writing on the subject. The riots of Aligarh, Moradabad, Bihar Sharif, Udaipur, etc., are the example. Mushirul Hasan explains that the riots in Moradabad, Khurja, Aligarh, Bhagalpur, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat were specially targeted because in these towns Muslim craftsmen, artisans, foundry owners and weavers reap the reward of favourable economic climate and trading relations with oil rich Gulf countries.\textsuperscript{14}


\textsuperscript{14} Siddiqui, ibid. See also Mushirul Hasan, Legacy of a Divided Nation: India’s Muslim Since Independence 287 (Hurst and Company, London, 1997).
Suranjan Das argues that the 1992 riots were actually ‘a land-grabbing riots under a criminal garb’. The real estate developer—‘anti-social’ nexus sought to exploit the post-Ayodhya communal uneasiness in seizing stretches of land occupied by particular slums.\(^\text{15}\)

Often, communal forces exploit the economic backwardness of their community to mobilize it against other community. The economic crisis in our society leads not only to communal violence but also to atrocities over women, Scheduled Castes (SC) and members of weaker sections of society. The present inflation and worrying economic condition is also responsible for communal violence.

### 3.2.9 Business Rivalries

Business rivalries are also regarded as the cause behind the communal disturbances. The society is so interdependent in its business activities that it is difficult to visualize a situation where give and take among various sections is non-existent. Hindu and Muslim entrepreneurs and artisans cannot flourish without each other’s assistance. Any bitterness in their relationship would affect the whole industry adversely.

If we carefully study the causes of certain communal riots, we will find that business rivalry between the traders forms the real background for communal violence. The comparative economic prosperity among the Muslims leads to greater political aspirations among them. This results in a communally dangerous situation.

During the last few decades, a perceptible qualitative difference is being felt in many towns. Communal forces have identified certain contradictions in

\(^{15}\) Wilkinson, *supra* note 11 at 10.
their relationships to create situations in which further communal clashes are encouraged. The contribution of land mafias in communal violence is visible in Ahmedabad and Mumbai. In Hyderabad riots (1990-91), it was found that the role of land mafias in collaboration with their political mentors was derisive in engineering and sustaining these riots for long periods.\(^\text{16}\)

The riot of Bhiwandi (1970) is the clear example of business rivalries among traders resulting in planned and organized attacks on the looms working for rival traders. Similar tendencies are visible in some other riots also. The economic targeting of Muslims in the Gujarat riots (2002) is unprecedented. Muslim businesses have been systematically destroyed. The Tribunal recorded extensive evidence of the divesting loss of property of the Muslim community in the state. Due to business rivalry, the anti-social elements are encouraged to attack the opposite business establishments.

### 3.2.10 Administrative Failures

Weak law and order is one of the causes of communal violence. After partition, the most of communal violence took place because of the weak law and order. There was failure of the police and administrative officers in gauging the intensity of the communal situation in advance. This very cause is attributed behind many serious communal riots including Ahmedabad and Baroda (1969), Bhiwandi (1970), Hyderabad (1978 & 81), Bihar Sharif (1981), Bhagalpur (1989), and several other major riots.

N.S. Saxena argued that if the administration had been strong and police force alert, the incidence of communal violence would have been tiny. Citing

the Charan Singh’s administration he pointed out that “in spite of the fact that there was no serious disturbance of any kind, riot figures went up from 7,158 in 1969 to 8,570 in 1970 because even the smallest breach of orders resulted in registration of riot cases.”\(^{17}\) He further adds that the administration is responsible for all major communal riots.

The Madon Commission enquired into the riots of Bhiwandi and Jalgaon by recording regarding the adequacy of the administrative measures that:\(^{18}\)

1. The authorities had failed to take steps to check communal propaganda;
2. The authorities had failed to judge correctly the objectives of the organizers of the Shiv Jayanti procession; and
3. The authorities had failed to take action against the misuse of temples.

The commission had further recorded several instances, which proved that the concerned police officers and personnel did not prevent rioters from their acts of arson and rioting. Due to the nexus among police and anti-social elements, administration does not remain effective in curbing communal violence. Communal violence is prolonged and people’s faith in civic administration is adversely affected because of weak law and order.

The Report of the Srikrishna Commission on Mumbai riots (1992-93), which was submitted in 1998, points out that the failure of state administration was primarily responsible for the extra-ordinary situations. The Srikrishna

\(^{17}\) Supra note 1 at 110.

Commission Report indicts that “four precious days were lost for the Chief Minister to consider and issue the orders as to effective use of army for controlling the riots.”\(^{19}\)

### 3.2.11 Partisan Behaviour of Police

The partisan role of state machinery particularly police goes in sustenance of communal violence and reactive motivation by the group feeling. The partisan attitude of police allows petty clashes to turn into a major communal violence.

The Madon Commission on Bhiwandi riots (1970) has recorded that the concerned police officers and personnel showed communal bias and actively assisted the Hindu rioters in burning and looting Muslim properties and the communal discrimination was practiced in making arrests. The police turned a blind eye to what the Hindu rioters were doing.\(^{20}\)

The Moradabad riots (1982) and the Maliana and Hashimpura episode in Meerut (1987) are the glaring examples of one-sided action of the Uttar Pradesh (UP)-Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC). Harish Sharma quoted the statement of the then State Minister, Abdul Rahman Nashtar, regarding Meerut riots, “after Moradabad riots, Meerut became the second instance when the PAC was blamed along with the local administration for the riots. In both the cases, a minor issue was given the colour.”\(^{21}\)

N.C. Saxena enquiry into the Meerut riots of 1982 summarizes the orders of senior police officers in one phrase: ‘Muslims must be taught a lesson’. The police and PAC faithfully implemented this policy. Looting and

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\(^{19}\) Siddiqui, *supra* note 13 at 128; see also The Times of India, August 7, 1998.


\(^{21}\) *Supra* note 1 at 111.
arson in this context was considered legitimate and necessary and was therefore ignored.\(^{22}\) The other examples of PAC being responsible for communal violence are Aligarh, Badaun, Bulandshahar, Bijnor and Kanpur.

V.N. Rai, an ex-police officer of UP held the police partisan as the cause of communal violence. He feels that it is already imprinted in the police mind that Muslims initiate the communal riots and hence as precautionary measures, the police arrests particularly Muslims and searches their homes. He describes that in all the major riots including Ahmedabad (1969), Bhiwandi-Jalgaon (1970), Tellicherry (1970), Meerut (1982 & 87) and Bhagalpur (1989), role of the police has been highly anti-Muslims.\(^{23}\)

The Srikrishna Commission Report indicates that the police personnel were found actively participating in riots, communal incidents or incidents of looting arson and so on. The partisan role of the police in Mumbai riots (1992-93), Gujarat killings and in Orissa riots (2008) has been equally shameful. The partisan role of the police in Mumbai riots is well documented in a compilation from the *Times of India*. The Srikrishna Commission accuses the Mumbai Police of ‘built in biases’ against Muslims, which became more pronounced after attacks on the force.\(^{24}\)

3.2.12 Rumours

False and exaggerated rumours pave an easy way to communal violence. In almost all riots the role of rumours in rousing communal zeal is quite famous. Rumour plays a mischievous role in fanning the flames in a surcharged

\(^{22}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{23}\) *Id.* at 112; see also V.N. Rai, *Sampradayik Dange aur Bhartiya Police* 87-108 (Radha Krishna Prakashan, Delhi, 2000).

\(^{24}\) Siddiqui, *supra* note 13 at 128-29.
atmosphere. It is always a key in the hands of communal elements to engineer communal violence. The most effective to incite the mass is the rumour of the women or girl of one community being molested, raped or kidnapped by the members of another community; or the killing of a cow by a Muslim; etc.

In 1950, rumours about alleged ill treatment of Hindus in certain districts of East Bengal, reports of alleged forcible mass conversion to Islam, desecration of images of Hindu Gods, etc., invoked communal violence in a number of districts of West Bengal.

In 1961, rumours played a vital role in Jabalpur riots. The communal violence was provoked by rumours about a Hindu girl being assaulted by two Muslims. The main cause of Nellie, Assam riot (1983) was rumour that the Bengali Muslim had cut off the breasts of Hindu women and displayed them in the Hindu areas to show their power. In Bhagalpur riots (1989) too, the role of rumours was significant.

In December 1990, during the second phase of kar seva in Ayodhya, violence broke out in Aligarh, among other towns on December 7. On December 8, rumours gripped the town that Muslim doctors at the J.N. Medical College, A.M.U., Aligarh, deliberately killed a number of Hindu patients. Such rumours and propaganda did maximum damage.

During Gujarat killings (2002), the Gujarati press became the agent provocateur. Sandesh published false reports, rumours and biased reports, which aggravated the flames of communal violence. The story starts with the Godhra incident. On February 28, Sandesh published a front page story that, “10 to 15 Hindu women were dragged away by a ‘religious fanatic’ mob from the railway compartment.” The story was entirely false. Next day, Sandesh carried a follow up to this false story with the heading “Out of kidnapped
young ladies from Sabarmati Express, dead bodies of two women recovered—breasts of women were cut off.”25 This false story has spread like wildfire across Gujarat and was compounded by extreme sexual violence and bestiality against Muslim women.

Rumours are circulated rapidly and their distortions grow with each repetition. It should be the imperative duty of the district administration to counter rumours floated around by unscrupulous persons.

3.2.13 Lack of Communication

During communal violence, there is no free exchange of views and opinions between the two communities and both the communities perceive as inimical. Such absence of inter-group communication is favourable for communal violence.

During communal violence, both communities paste and distribute posters and pamphlets thereby increasing communal tensions and continuation of communal violence. Such communication preaches communal hatred and prejudice to incite communal violence.

Isolated individual instances of injustices and loss, rightly or wrongly are published and communicated in the newspapers and consequently communal groups get support for continuing communal violence, as one community perceives that the other community committed violent acts against it.26

An individual personal attack is sometimes misconstrued as an attack against the entire community. As a result, people become scared and frustrated and thereby more violence takes place.

25 Aziz Burney, India Lose Freedom: Gujarat 2002, The Turning Point of Indian History 155 (Indian Publishers’ Distributors, Delhi, 2005).
26 V. Kannu Pillai, Communal Violence: A Sociological Study of Gujarat 121 (Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2006).
3.2.14 Insecurity and Fear

Communal violence takes place, as members of one community perceive the threat, harassment, fear and danger from the members of the other community. The response to the threat is either fight or departure. The latter generates fear and terror and the former cause’s hatred and anger phobia. There is a lack of inter-personal trust and mutual understanding resulting in subsequent fear and worry among the communities.

During communal violence, neighbors and acquaintances become enemies to one another. Though they are staying nearby, some persons from the same locality participate in communal violence. Thus, the people known to each other over a period become assailants.

During communal violence, there is lack of rapport between the people and police. People do not report many communal incidents to police, as they are afraid of personal assaults by the criminals in the absence of adequate protection by police.27

3.3 Religious Causes

Many scholars have discussed the problem of communal violence through different angles but they have perhaps forgotten the violative point of religion as the perpetrator behind communal violence. However, it has been observed by various studies that religion was not the sole factor responsible for the origin or growth of communal violence before and after partition.

However, religion acts more as an agent determining the attitude of its followers than the motivation or mainspring of communal violence. Religion has become a cat’s paw in the hands of unscrupulous elements. Let us now

27 *Id.* at 122.
examine some causes in order to understand the problem of communal violence from the religious aspect and the religious causes responsible for communal violence may be discussed under the following heads:

### 3.3.1 Proselytisation/Conversion

Proselytisation is a source of communal conflict and communal violence. Frequent conversions caused a great resentment among people. Assimilation is peaceful co-existence in a heterogeneous system, which presupposed passivity on the part of the assimilated.

During the continuous phases of communal violence in Bengal from 1905 to 1947, and pre-partition communal riots in several parts of the country, conversion was one of the main causes of communal violence. After partition, the fundamentalist also did not give up the idea of conversion.

The conversion of Dalits to Islam at Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu communalized the Hindu mind in India. The outbursts of communal conflicts after the ‘conversion’ episode indicate that caste and communal problems have become intertwined in Indian politics. The conversion issue intensified communal discord in the country and resulted in communal violence in many parts of the country. The communal violence in Ahmedabad, Pune and Sholapur in 1982 had been the direct result of the Meenakshipuram conversions.

The recent communal violence against the Christian community in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Uttrakhand and particularly in Orissa in 2008 was due to the conversion of Adhivasis and Gorkhas to the Christianity.

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3.3.2 Religious Conflicts

Religious conflicts are the expressions of beliefs on the ground of superiority. The man is influenced by instinctive impulse and remains on the brute plane and due to ignorance, fear and fancy; deceit becomes dominant with cruelty, jealousy and violence.

There is a general religious revival among the different communities in our country. The newfound faith in religion by the communities has, however, given rise to several problems. Every religion teaches its followers that its understanding and interpretation of God, Prophet, etc., is the best and the ultimate. The tremendous faith in one’s religious beliefs and a feeling that non-believers in these are misguided people who derive to be told regarding the correct path, lead to conflicts, which may be termed as religious conflicts.

Normally, the destruction of places of worship of other community and forced or voluntary conversions were supposed to be part of religious duty. Thus, communal violence breaks out because of ‘Jehads’, ‘Crusades’, etc., the religious dogmas, division and worship lead to open conflict, threats to social order and integration.

3.3.3 Religious/Communal Organisations

Before partition, the communal organizations were able to convince their co-religionists that their problems were because of the other religionists and the solution to these non-religious issues was available in religion. This was the basic cause of widespread communal violence between the two communities.

Later, both Hindus and Muslims have established various organizations such as Bajrang Dal, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Shiv Sena, VHP, Jamat-e-Islami, etc., to protect their interests and as a result communal tensions and
violence have increased. Similarly, people have become conscious of religion and religious fanaticism has increased among Hindus and Muslims.

These organizations have vast resources and command workers to protect their interests due to alleged injustice done to them. These organizations have enormous capital formation, buildings, workers and land and regular massive income from their patrons. The issues rose by these organizations and large-scale mobilization of the people to achieve communal objectives, helped such organizations in gaining legitimacy by posing themselves as the real representatives of their community.

These organizations have been promoted as the prestigious forums of a particular community and they take a lead to create all types of communal disturbances. Various inquiry commissions have established the role of communal organization in fomenting communal trouble. The Madon Commission (1970) held branches of communal organizations like the Shiv Sena, Bhartiya Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha and Tamir-e-Millat responsible for fomenting communal tension.

However, religious/communal groups in free India continue to exploit the situation; the tug of war between them has intensified the communal divide; their leaders thrive on spreading hatred. One believes in extermination of the other group the other in retaliation.

The communal violence is thus organized by vested powerful semi and quasi-politically affiliated groups. It is, therefore, necessary that such organizations should not be allowed to ransack the lives and properties of innocent people.

29 Supra note 26 at 178.
3.3.4 **Religious Processions and Celebrations**

The manipulation of religious processions by political leaders is an old phenomenon. Processions became significant vehicles of violence, when local power politics was at stake. Communalists use religiosity for boundary definitions in political and other spheres. Their emphasis remains on religious festivals, processions, etc. They try to promote solidarity by exaggerating incidents when such processions have been infringed upon.

The revisionalism as a weapon was pressed into service by political leaders to develop base after 1920. The communalists are also behind the increase of religious ceremonies and processions like ‘Bhagwati Jagran’, ‘Durga Pooja’, ‘ Ganesh Utsav’, ‘Rath Yatras’, ‘Shiv Jayanti’, ‘ Ramnavmi Utsav’, ‘Laxmi Puja’, ‘ Sarasvati Pujan’, ‘ Ganesh Puja’, ‘ Ram Lila’ , ‘ Tazia’, etc. These religious processions have increased in number and the scale of participation over the years.

Planned and organized efforts are made for the public performance of religious rituals. Even the scale of organizing the public performance of religious rituals becomes an issue for competition among rival communalists.\(^{30}\)

Show of strength at the time of religious festivals has also become a new behavioural pattern. When a procession of a particular community passes through the area of the other community, attempts are made to shout slogans or tease them. This often creates a communal clash.

Sometimes religious celebrations and processions sparked off communal violence. This happened in Silhat (1782), in Pilibhit (1871), in Prabhashtam (1882), in Bareilly (1871, 1887 & 1962), in Etawah and Delhi (1886), in Ayodhya (1912), in Patna (1916), in Gaya and Shahbad (1921), in Allahabad


Recently, due to religious celebrations and processions communal disturbances have been reported from Baroda, Sewari, Moradabad, Jabalpur, Titwala, Ahmednagar, Ujjain, Nandurbar, Lucknow, Bareilly, Hyderabad, Dhule, Malerkotla, Varanasi, Kolhapur and Azamgarh.

Thus, religious processions become an irritant for causing communal violence. Further, other religious processions, on occasions of both Hindu and Muslim festivals are primary factors responsible for communal violence.

### 3.3.5 Religious Rituals

Seeds of distrust are planted by exploiting deep religious traditions of both communities; difference in their different religious practices and rituals are highlighted and often, it is shown that one is out to destroy the other. Religiosity imparts passion and intensity to communalism.

The extent of religiosity is very high. Even minor variations in the public performance of religious rituals evoke violent reactions. These reactions are the outcome of the constant reinforcement of religious group’s identities through the propagation of communal ideology.

\(^{31}\) Supra note 25 at 47-50.
3.3.6 Religious Fanaticism

Religious fanaticism among the people also has its source in the constant preaching and actions of communal organizations. Since they are interested in sharpening the differences between religious groups, it is in their interest to make their followers hard-boiled, unreasonable and passionate followers of a manipulated form of the religion concerned, a form which is, in fact, farthest from the actual tenets of the faith.

That is why it is a common feature, observed in every religious/communal group, to unite whenever the ‘religion in danger’ slogan is raised. Politicians and priests mobilize people around this slogan, and they preserve in keeping the slogan alive all the time.

This fostering of fanaticism is of course, facilitated by the ignorance and the lack of awareness amongst the people. That is why vested interests have a stake in keeping ignorant as many people as possible and as long as possible.

3.3.7 Revival of Fundamentalism

The last three decades witnessed emergence of fundamentalism in all sections of our society. Prominent display of the religious signs and slogans on vehicle and public places has caught up rapidly.

The increasing participation of people of different communities into religious places is an indicator of the rise of religious fundamentalism even amongst the educated persons. Almost all the communities have been insisting on talking out new processions and that too through non-conventional and disputed route leading to violence.

Later, stress is also being laid on the construction of new buildings and the renovation of old, dilapidated and abandoned religious places, which have
been resented to by the opposite community at many places on several
casions. Ever increasing use of loudspeakers on religious places create
disharmonym at many times. Attempts to restrict such activities are termed as
anti-religious.

Another feature is exploiting the sentiments of the respective
communities in furtherance of their agenda by undertaking mass mobilization
programme such as ‘Rath Yatra’. All such programmes add to the hardening of
attitude, mutual bitterness, intolerance and aggression towards each other.
These are really unwelcome signs for any civilized and harmonious society.

3.3.8 Religious Fundamentalists

In the beginning, both communities were mixed with each other but soon
the relations between the two started straining, doubt and hate started creeping
in among the members of both the communities. Hindu fundamentalism began
in the later part of the 19th century. The establishment of Arya Samaj gave rise
to Hindu nationalism based on religion. The cow slaughter and stoppage of
music before the mosque became areas of conflicts between the two
communities. Hindu communalists put breaks into the efforts of unity by the
Hindu nationalists while the British openly patronized Muslim communalists.

The Muslim fundamentalists often brand the Indian State as ‘Hindu’;
Hindu fundamentalists accept this and start prescribing a code of conduct for all
‘Muslims’, and they charge ‘Muslim’ with being strongly organized and blind
supporters of their own co-religionists. Muslims accept this allegation and
claim that if they do not defend their religion the ‘Hindus’ will stamp out Islam.

Thus, Hindu fundamentalists view minorities as enemies of the nation
and communal violence as deliberate acts intended to humiliate and injure the
Hindus. While Muslim fundamentalists view communal violence as well
organised and pre-planned, and designed to terrorize the Muslims—to depress them, to drive them out of their own areas and to reduce them into second-class citizens.

Fundamentalists in either community use their influence in creating certain biases. They have taken all possible opportunities to incite the minds of the people and at times even resorted to the use of foul language. However, it cannot be ignored that Hindus and Muslims have deep-rooted prejudices against each other, which are taken advantage of by the fundamentalists. For instance, by mobilizing the masses on communally sensitive issues, the communalists succeeded in inflaming the already existing prejudices.\textsuperscript{32}

The fundamentalists exploit the discrepancy between the self-perception of one religious group and perception of it by the antagonistic communal group to spread fear, suspicions, mistrust and insecurity among their co-religionists. Thus, fundamentalists of one group, instead of emasculating the communalism of another group, feed and fatten it through violence or communal propaganda.

3.3.9 Hurting Religious Sentiments

Very often, provocation due to hurting of religious sentiments resulted in the communal violence. For instance, communal violence in Srinagar in 1967 broke out when some torn pieces of the Holy Quran were found in college latrine. In 1968, at Tinsukia in Assam, communal violence took place due to the killing of a cow by a Muslim.

In December 1986, communal riots broke out in Bangalore and Mysore, because of defamatory article against last Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). The Moradabad riot (1980) was due to the intrusion of a pig into the Idgah during

\textsuperscript{32} Supra note 28.
‘Eid’ prayer. The incident had its repercussions in many other towns of the state and in Delhi, MP and Kashmir. In 1982, communal violence broke out in Amritsar and Patiala, due to the demand for a total ban on smoking and cigarette sale in Amritsar, a holy city. The demand was mainly because of religion as the use of tobacco was forbidden to Sikhs.

Both politicians and priests of their religion succeed in stoking the flames of communal hatred, bias and prejudice and in triggering communal clashes whenever convenient to them.

3.3.10 Spending on Religious Activities

Due to frustration and stress, people become more religious and as a result, communal bodies are flourishing all over the country taking advantage of liberal democracy and freedom of association. Increased number of sacrifices and ygnas at the cost of thousands of rupees are organized and a large number of people visit religious places and attend celebrations. The activities of religious groups, by spending on religious and semi-religious activities have been held responsible for communal violence.

The real cause of conflict between two communities in Moradabad riots (1980) was economic competition and the increased degree of spending on religious and semi-religious activities such as construction of more mosques, madarsas and maktabs, which were construed as flow of Arab money into India to strengthen the Muslim fundamentalists.

Thus, such activities could easily cause a greater degree of hostility among the other communities and succeeded in creating an atmosphere for communal violence. Sharp reactions are also seen where any place of worship is erected or established by one community in an area where the other community exceeds in numbers.
It should also be kept in mind that contrary to the impression carried by the people in general, religion is not the root cause of the communal violence; it is rather a powerful instrument in the hands of those interests, which seek to play their game through it.

Religious causes are sometimes peculiar to the extent that one fails to understand the real motive behind the fire except that of the religious rigidity. However, religious issues should not be taken as single causative factor of communal violence.

### 3.4 Trivial Causes

The studies on communal riots have established a clear nexus between various trivial causes and communal violence which cannot be denied. Besides the general and religious causes, some of the trivial causes responsible for communal violence and disturbance are summarized as under:

- Changing the root of processions.
- Clashing of times of prayers of different communities.
- Cow slaughter.
- Demarcating new places for Tazias.
- Desecration or destruction of places of worship.
- Disputes over places of worship.
- Dispute between property owners and tenants.
- Distribution of objectionable pamphlets.
- Disturbances in religious processions/functions.
- Due to the migrated Muslims and refugees.
- Emotion and insecurity.
- Intolerance during fairs and festivals.
- Laying the foundation for new statues.
- Marriage, eve-teasing and sexual relations between members of the opposite groups or cases of elopement.
- Mischievous media reporting.
- Objection to playing of music, singing and dancing in front of mosque and other religious places.
- Objectionable speeches.
- Obstructions placed during religious processions.
- Pelting stones to disturb the religious processions.
- Performing Qurbani (i.e. sacrifice) in a public place.
- Petty quarrels between members of different communities.
- Personal quarrels.
- Presence of objectionable animals at the time of prayers as happened in Moradabad riot in 1982.
- Provocative and abusive slogans against the other community.
- Publishing of provocative articles and objectionable writings.
- Reaction for religious conversions.
- Reaction and repercussion of riots of other places, i.e., Delhi riots of 1987 as a fall out of Meerut riots of 1987, etc.
- Road accident.
- Sacrificing of cow on ‘Bakharid’ (i.e. the festival of sacrifice).
Chapter 3

- Sexual offences.
- Showing signs or symbols of insulting.
- Sudden quarrel.
- Taking out processions through unconventional and non-permitted routes.
- Throwing of colours, gulal, etc., on mosque or other religious places.
- Throwing of colours, gulal, etc., on persons who resent it.
- Throwing of liquor and flesh of objectionable animals at religious places.
- Vulgar display of religious fervors on the localities especially at the places inhabited by the members of the other community, etc.

The other causative factors responsible for communal violence inter-alia, are free-rumour mongering, lack of counter measures to dilute the effect of rumours, transmission lag in the information flows, lack of effective implementation of laws, lack of public cooperation, unrestrained use of loudspeakers at religious places and other similar practices, no regulation on religious processions, existence of different disputes, lack of responsive and responsible behaviour by local administration and lack of coordination between the various administrative units on the spot.

However, all the above causes simply initiate the process and it cannot be suggested the above list is exhaustive. It may be correct to state that there are the catalysts, which galvanize into violence an atmosphere, which is permeated with the poison of communalism. The creating of this atmosphere and the perception of the both communities about each other have all to be viewed in the context of the several factors, which have been discussed earlier as responsible for communal violence.
The tension between the two communities has placed them on two opposite poles, where the scope of compromise is possible only if flexibility in interpretation of religious tenets is shown. Humayun Kabir believed that “in a plural and democratic society communalism is inevitable because of the clash of interests between minority groups and the majority community.”

3.5 Concluding Remarks

The problem of communal violence encompasses religious, political, socio-economic, cultural, historical and intellectual spheres in different ratios and extent with reference to different states and regions. After partition of the country, communal violence is organized, planned and executed by the stakes for deriving selfish gains. In most cases, it is politically motivated and the role of rumours in rousing communal passions is quite famous.

The post-partition violence, more often than not, has turned out to be an attempt to adversely affect the prosperity of each other. Many attempts by minorities in making some progress in order to gain some degrees of economic self-sufficiency have been frustrated by communal violence in Mumbai, Moradabad, Bhiwandi, Aligarh, Varanasi, Jabalpur, etc., and particularly in Gujarat, where concerted efforts were made in this direction.

Thus, the basic cause of all communal disturbances is the communal atmosphere pervading the country and the communal tension built up between the two communities. The communal atmosphere provides a ready-tilled soil for communal minded people to sow seeds of communal hatred and nurture them until the bitter harvest of communal violence is reaped.

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33 Supra note 1 at 131.