

# Forms of Collective and State Violence in South Asia

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## Introduction

Virtually all forms of collective and state violence have been endemic in most of the states in South and Southeast Asia for a long time. India alone, the largest state in the entire region, has experienced a very considerable range of such forms, from riots, pogroms, police killings and massacres to retributive genocide; insurrectionary movements based on tribal, ethnic, religious, and regional identities; agrarian-based class warfare (in which the Maoist and other militant groups are termed “Naxalite” by the authorities and most commentators); and state violence, including state terrorism to counter several of the above forms. Most of these distinct forms of violence are regionally or locally confined: tribal movements particularly in the northeast, insurrectionary movements in Punjab (in the recent past) and Kashmir, Naxalite violence in pockets in Bihar and Andhra, and violence labelled Hindu-Muslim in the northern and western parts of the country. The focus of my research on collective violence in India during the past twenty years has been primarily on the latter, though I have also done work on retributive genocide in the Punjab at the time of Partition in 1947 and on insurrectionary movements in Punjab in the 1980s and early 1990s. My principal publications that set forth the arguments to be summarized and elaborated further below, as well as some of the ethnographic and statistical data to support them, are *Riots and Pogroms* (1996), *Theft of an Idol* (1997), *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in*

*Contemporary India* (2003), and *Forms of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Modern India* (2006).

In these publications, I have examined various explanations for the production of collective violence as well as for the persistence of some of these forms, especially riots, in particular places. I have considered and discussed especially the organization and planning of riots and the political contexts in which riots tend to take place as well as the political benefits that are derived from them. In the case of Hindu-Muslim violence, I have noted also the importance of the discourse of Hindu-Muslim antagonism that has corrupted historical writing and penetrated the memory of ordinary persons. This discourse focuses centrally on the great rupture and the enormous, genocidal violence that occurred at the time of Independence with the partition of the country, for which the Muslim population of the country is categorically blamed and continues to be blamed, especially by militant Hindu nationalists, in the countless riots that have occurred since that time. In the discussion that follows, however, I will focus primarily on the *process* of riot production, then extend the analysis to consider and compare other forms of collective violence.

### **Institutionalized Riot Systems**

The center piece in my construction of the process of riot production is the Institutionalized Riot System (IRS), whose workings I have described in more or less detail in all these books and collections of my essays and papers. I want now, however, to fill out as fully as I can the elements of the IRS. Every IRS contains a multiplicity of specialists and roles of all kinds, which come into action at different stages in the production of local riots. Here I make use also of my metaphor of riot production as a

drama, which some critics have found troubling, but those who have read Victor Turner will hopefully not find out of place. Like any play, the drama of riot production proceeds in three stages: rehearsal, production, and post-performance interpretation. It should be noted also here that not all plays succeed; some never make it to the final stages of production for various reasons. In theatre, it may be because the play is not popular, does not appeal to the crowd for whom it is designed, which may occur because it is simply an inferior production or because the audience is not prepared to accept a production of this type. Along the way, the producers may also decide that the time is not ripe.

*Rehearsal.* In the first stage, an array of rehearsal specialists come into play, including centrally a category that I call “fire tenders,” those who arouse and keep aroused the passions of the populace, in anticipation of a new production. They include politicians, particularly sitting members of the state legislative assembly from the city constituencies in which these riots commonly occur and members of the municipal corporations as well as their rivals and other aspirants for their positions. They themselves have several roles. They keep alert to the sentiments of their constituents and the activities of their rivals, particularly with regard to any type of local incident that might be used by their opponents, or by themselves, to advantage in a future election, particularly when elections are in the offing. They receive information, coordinate activities of their party workers, go to scenes of actual or potential conflict, and make speeches that can either dampen, arouse, or inflame local sentiments.

Others who become involved in the rehearsal stage are “respectable” people such as university and college professors. These people claim to be peace activists when, in fact, they are themselves drawing undue attention to incidents that allegedly endanger the

peace. Their role supplements that of the politicians. They provide a veneer of legitimate concern that they convey to the authorities concerning such incidents. Their role is important because of their status, which allows them access to the senior civil and police officers of the city.

But, there is another set of specialists, some less respectable, who report incidents either directly to those of higher status and to the politicians or indirectly through various forms of messages. These include scouts and informants who report incidents of various types, rumor mongers who magnify or manufacture them, propagandists who create messages to be conveyed to the press and the public, vernacular journalists who publish these messages in the form of “news”, and poster plasterers. What are the incidents that are reported, conveyed, and spread in these ways? Of course, they are of the type that allegedly will cause a riot if not properly dealt with: an elopement of a Hindu girl and a Muslim boy; the ubiquitous local conflicts over sites claimed by adherents of the two religions as either a temple or a mosque, a Hindu worship site or a Muslim gravesite; the finding of a dead cow—whose deaths are sometimes more carefully attended to than those of human beings—to determine whether or not they have been poisoned; rights, and convenience of access to Muslim gravesites and Hindu cremation grounds when they lie adjacent to each other; disputes over processions of one community that pass through the neighborhoods of the other; the finding of a piece of meat near a Hindu worship site or the proverbial pig in the mosque.

It is important to recognize, however, that such local incidents exist everywhere, in every city and town in India, and some villages as well, where Hindus and Muslims live side by side. One must ask, therefore, why and how some incidents are chosen to

represent broader issues worthy of extra-local attention. All, or, at least, a great many of these incidents are known to the politicians and the respectable classes<sup>1</sup> who are not directly involved in them, and they are continually kept informed about them. Whether or not they choose to get involved in them is determined by whether or not they consider that it is worthwhile to elevate it, that is, whether they can gain some benefit from it by arousing the sentiments of their voters and raising it to a more passionate level through speeches, staged demonstrations at the site, and visits to the authorities to demand action.

That means, in effect, that there must be, in addition to the everyday foot soldiers who report all potential incidents of these types, those who are more politically sophisticated, whose function is the location of sites of local conflicts with potential for transformation and magnification into politically useful confrontations. These are likely to be local party workers, who themselves aspire to higher positions in the party or wish to be useful to their elected political leader, who are likely to know the full details of the local situation, how far it can be exploited, who are the principal actors. They may also then recruit other persons to come onto the scene to make the situation worse. I am thinking here, by way of example, of the characteristic sudden appearance on a disputed site of an idol to a Hindu god; and/or the claim to ownership by a Muslim of the very site; and also the necessary appearance of a *pujari* to perform worship for the sake of the new representation of the deity; and so on.

Yet another important role required to build up the anticipation for a performance is the focusing of outside attention on the site. By outside, I mean initially outside the neighborhood to adjacent localities, then to the city as a whole, and, at times, beyond that to the region, the state, and the entire country, and the local, state, and national

governments. This is the role of the media. In northern Indian localities, it means especially the local vernacular media, most of which are “yellow” journals; then to the broader vernacular newspapers with a more extensive regional coverage; and ultimately to the country as a whole through the English-language newspapers. In the rehearsal stage, however, the role of focusing attention belongs to the vernacular newspapers that have only a restricted range, to the city and its adjacent areas in the district. The owners and reporters for these local media are often directly linked to the political activists in their communities.

*Enactment.* In the second stage, which I call the activation or enactment phase, the production specialists take up their roles. There is some overlap of types of persons who play roles in the different stages of riot rehearsal and production, but there are also some new participants with distinct roles. Recruiters, including professors and college and university students, are deployed to bring out the crowds, often of students from local colleges. Other recruiters bring in criminals from the slums to kill, burn, and loot. Lumpen elements now also participate in the violence, looting, arson, destruction, and rape. Illegal manufacturers of bombs and other forms of explosives also now enter the picture, who provide the means for the more dramatic actions. The politicians appear at this stage also as speech makers, organizers, instigators, inciters, and rescuers of perpetrators, who are freed from jail through their intervention and protected from prosecution for their actions. Lawyers stand ready behind the politicians to assure perpetrators they will be released from jail and, if necessary, defended in court. Government functionaries sympathetic to one side, usually Hindus sympathetic to the militant Hindu, anti-Muslim ideology, also perform necessary roles: these may vary,

depending on the situation, from inaction (standing aside), to helping one side, and/or themselves participating in the killings. State government ministers may support and guide the local level riot producers or they may procrastinate, failing to give orders to the local administration to prevent, contain, control, or stop the rioting until the work has been done. In such situations, the roles of the district administrations are critical. They usually do not act to prevent and control riots unless the ministers specifically give the orders for them to do so.

Then there are the communications specialists. These include, as just noted, rumor mongers, poster plasterers, and the vernacular media to print rumors and false, inflammatory reports. I have noted elsewhere that these papers must be considered a part of the institutionalized riot systems of northern India. Moreover, they have almost free rein without competition during riots in which widespread and prolonged curfews are imposed. For, at such times, the more reputable, less inflammatory, more reliable English-language and companion vernacular-language presses associated with them are not readily available in streets closed to newspaper vendors. But, the vicious “yellow press” is circulated widely and freely.

Ultimately, the role of a partial, prejudiced, anti-Muslim police force must also be considered crucial in the production phase of riots that involve large-scale killings in contemporary India. I will here emphasize two aspects of the police role in large-scale riotous violence, labelled “Hindu-Muslim.” First is the administration of curfew in a prejudicial manner that causes untold misery in affected areas and provides opportunities for the police and/or Hindu crowds in collusion with the police, to inflict misery and death upon Muslims, including many law-abiding persons who become confined, largely

defenseless targets for attack. Second, whether in curfew areas or in wider public spaces, in virtually all post-Independence riots in India, most especially in the last two decades, most of the killing is done by the police, and most of the killed are Muslims. Further, the police have perpetrated several notorious and horrendous massacres of Muslims, including two infamous ones in one of my three research sites, namely, Meerut city, in 1982 and 1987.

*Interpretation.* This brings me now to the third stage in riot production, that is, the post-performance phase of interpretation and explanation. In the case of theatrical productions, this is the phase of critical analysis. In the case of the production of violence, the central activity on the part of the riot producers and their accomplices, witting and unwitting, is to avoid the fixing of responsibility on the actual planners, organizers, and perpetrators of the violence through blame displacement. This is a game common in all societies in connection with all kinds of disastrous events. In the United States, it is called the game of “spin.” And there is a vast array of spin doctors within and outside government to do the work. In contemporary India, similar activities come into play after every major riot.

So, we have now to consider the roles played by explanation and interpretation specialists, the spin doctors of riot production. They, of course, include all the members of the respectable and articulate classes who have participated in the previous stages of riot production: the politicians and the press especially. But here, the sphere of those complicit in the toleration and perpetuation of such riots widens to include those who are not directly involved and who even loudly proclaim their abhorrence of the rioting. For example, the English-language press that does not participate directly in the instigation



and activation of collective violence now becomes implicated through the ways in which it reports upon how the riots happened. Although, from time to time, very insightful and accurate reports are published, for the most part, the respectable papers, and particularly their editorial writers, conclude that the riots were a shameful reflection on the state of the nation, particularly on Hindu-Muslim sentiments of antagonism; that the riots themselves were a spontaneous uprising of feelings over particular events that intensified those antagonisms; that, in short, the public was responsible. Or, generalized statements will be made concerning the deplorable activities of some organizations or particular politicians. There is even a standard list of organizations that are named, some of whom everyone knows are involved, such as the leading militant Hindu organizations. But then, in order to maintain balance, several Muslim organizations are named, even though they may not have had anything to do with the violence produced.

Each type of assignment of blame serves particular purposes. The spontaneity argument, of course, turns attention completely away from the actual organizers and perpetrators. It may also be a kind of sleight of hand that at once deplores and accepts the actions of the public, behaving improperly but understandably, like children. Whatever the emphasis, it serves the same purpose of blame displacement. Those who blame both sides equally are also engaged in a form of obfuscation. Assigning responsibility only to the militant Hindu organizations, even where it is clear to knowledgeable observers that they have been the principal organizers, may be resented even by persons who are not themselves supporters of those organizations, but consider the Muslims to be a violent force in the country generally responsible for riots. In the heyday of Congress dominance of the political arena, when the Congress drew considerable support from Muslim voters,

but also needed to maintain its Hindu political base, blaming both Hindu and Muslim *organizations*, not the Muslim or Hindu populations, gave the appearance of even-handedness and upholding of secular values. And on and on . . .

Also involved in the perpetuation of violence from time to time are some—not all—the commissions of inquiry appointed to inquire into the circumstances that produced these riots. Although these commissions of inquiry are usually headed by judges, sometimes retired Supreme Court justices, they are appointed by the government of the day, which may or may not have been involved directly in the production of the riots to be investigated, but certainly do not want to be blamed for them in any way. So, in those times when riots were produced as a consequence of internal conflicts within the ruling Congress or even instigated directly by Congress ministers and important local party leaders, the chairmen of such inquiry commissions would, of course, be chosen, if not to be on the side of the Congress, at least to be known for their secular credentials, a label associated with Congress nationalism.

Nowadays, where and when the BJP has been in power and riots have occurred under their watch, the heads are likely to be persons who can be counted upon at least not to be anti-Hindutva (the term used for Hindu nationalist ideology) and, at best, to be sympathetic Hindu judges. Where such reliable judges cannot be found, or where the public outcry is sufficient to require the appointment of a more highly and widely respected and impartial judge, whose final report directs blame against the government that appointed him and his committee, the method of choice is simply to table the report. In either of these two types of cases, the results are to obscure the dynamics of the process of riot production and to displace blame away from the perpetrators or, when the

report does not do so to the satisfaction of the government of the day, to file away the report.

A second group of explanation and interpretation specialists in India and elsewhere are social scientists, who often also, for the most part, explain it all away and play a great role in the process of blame displacement. They do so in several ways, of which the most prominent is the reversion, with more or less sophistication, to the spontaneity argument and/or as well to innate tendencies in human nature.<sup>2</sup> But, most prominent in such works is the inordinate attention given to spurious attempts at causal analyses of the incidence of riots and to the question of why riots occur here and not there, as if one can then find by this method the magic key to the occurrence of riots and thereby apply some as yet unspecified equally magic solution.<sup>3</sup> It is as if one were to ask the question, why are so many plays produced regularly in London, New York, and Chicago, but not elsewhere, or why are there only a few productions in other places?

There are other ways of asking “why,” however, without attempting a pseudo-scientific causal explanation. That is to ask what is the purpose of riots, what aims are they designed to achieve, what kind of strategy is being pursued to what ends, what are the consequences of riots? Further, whatever the ends may be, *how* are riots produced, which is to say, what is the process of the production of riotous (and other forms of collective) violence? Finally, what are the contexts in which riots are produced? But this question is not to be answered in some vague sense through examination of a multiplicity of ecological factors, but in the sense of the political, economic, and social context of the immediate present, the time and place. These questions, at least, have provided the focus for my own research.

The metaphor of a dramatic production that I use here should not be misinterpreted. I do not consider the audience for a riot to be merely passive viewers. Nor are the members of the general public, who respond to the call for violence mere “puppets,” manipulated by the principal organizers. To extend the metaphor a bit further, there are many walk-on parts and much adlibbing, in which participants have their own reasons for involvement: private vengeance, elimination of economic rivals through destruction of persons and property, looting, sexual opportunities, and many other motives that may drive people to engage in acts of violence, including, not least of all, the sheer joy of it. What the organizers most especially provide is a justification for actions that would normally be dangerous for ordinary persons to engage in and that provide cover for the actions of such persons, whose very participation also provides cover for the organizers themselves and the interpretation specialists, who may now attribute the violence to the mass of the people acting spontaneously or out of legitimate outrage over the alleged provocations of the very victims of the violence.

### **The Contexts of Riot Production**

Now, what are the contexts in which riots and other forms of collective violence pitting members of different religious groups against each other are produced and *why*—in the above sense of the term *why*—are they produced in some places, not others? My work on Hindu-Muslim and other forms of violence in contemporary India has demonstrated that the contexts are primarily political.<sup>4</sup> Large-scale riots are produced especially during and after mass mobilizations, before elections, and during mobilizations preceding elections. Further, they are produced at those times when there is absence of political will in the state government—and consequently in the local administration—to prevent, contain, and

control rioting if and when it occurs. Of course, in the case of what are called Hindu-Muslim riots, there must be a juxtaposition of Hindus and Muslims, and particularly in the contemporary context, a Muslim population, of a certain size.

There must also be a political space that will benefit the party engineering the riots, provided in India as a whole since the decline of the Congress during the last two decades, and of the secular ideology and political practices associated with it and other parties which grew out of the Congress.<sup>5</sup> But there must also be a political configuration at the local level such that riots will benefit the party that engineers it, because the consequence of large-scale riots in contemporary India has been to consolidate Hindu and Muslim voting behind opposite parties. So, in the current political situation in India, the political configuration and the population balance must be such that a calculation can be made by the BJP that a riot will produce a Hindu consolidation that will outweigh the Muslim consolidation and produce a plurality or majority for its candidate in a local election or, in the case of Gujarat and in other states at times, in the state as a whole. So, riots take place in those sites where all these opportunities exist and where preparation and rehearsal to take advantage of them have been going on for some time.

The main point to stress here, though, is that, however horrific the violence, however much it depends upon the demonization of a religious group, however much it is focused upon the destruction of the property and the killing of the owners and members of the other religious group, the intention is not to destroy the other community, but to depict the other community as a threat, to instill fear in ordinary people and hatred in others, and to use the violent results to put the other community in its place in order either to build a broad political movement or, more narrowly, to win a local election. There is,

nevertheless a potential for expansion of such violence into genocidal slaughter, as in the case of Partition in 1947 and Gujarat in 2002. In the former type of case, the issue becomes who controls a territory and the violence is designed to clear the territory of the other group, that is, to engage in ethnic cleansing. In that case, demonization of the other and the other's religion and glorification and valorization of one's own may become a useful recruiting tool. But the goal is not conversion or extermination of a religious group; it is rather the political and nationalist goal of gaining total control over a territory. In the Gujarat case, the aim was to spread violence as widely as possible in districts where an electoral advantage could be won in an upcoming statewide election in order to maintain the existing militant Hindu government in power.

At this point, it may be asked why violence is chosen rather than some other form of non-violent action consistent with democratic norms? Certainly, non-violent forms of political mobilization are used most of the time in India, as in other societies in which there are competitive elections. But, most forms of political mobilization aim for the support of specific collectivities whose votes will turn the tide in an election. Non-violent appeals based on class, caste, religion are, of course, commonly made. Whether the decision on the form of action is going to be towards conventional political mobilization or violent mobilization obviously involves a political calculation in a particular context that one or the other strategy will work best. In the case of Hindu-Muslim violence, the context may be local or state-wide and the choice will be based on the calculation that, for example, the Hindu population in a particular city or in the state as a whole will be more easily and effectively moved, mobilized, and consolidated by arousing violence against Muslims while simultaneously blaming the Muslims for causing it. This strategy

obviously requires the existence of a Hindu-Muslim population balance such that mobilization and consolidation of both sides, which happens when the strategy works, will work to the advantage of the party (in recent years principally the BJP in many states or the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra) likely to benefit most from the consolidated Hindu vote. It will not work and, therefore, will not be used if such a mobilization would favor the Muslims, that is, where Muslims are in a majority. It is a strategic political calculation undeterred by feelings of democratic proprieties.

During the last two decades, the most prominent type of IRS has been that just described, but it has not been the only type either since or before Independence. In the pre-Independence period (which is not our concern here), there were comparable Muslim organizations precipitating riots for political purposes as well, including for the very large purpose of mobilizing support for the very creation of Pakistan. In the post-Independence period, riots involving Hindus, Muslims, and the police have been produced by the Congress as well as the BJP. They have even been precipitated by Muslim politicians competing against each other for the Muslim vote in cities and towns where a Hindu-Muslim riot would benefit one of them, for example, the one perceived as the best defender of the Muslim community. In Hyderabad, where Hindu-Muslim riots were endemic for a long time after Independence, both Muslim and Hindu political organizations organized rioting for electoral advantage. The principal Muslim organization in that city, the MIM (Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen) had benefited from communal rioting, sometimes in collusion with the Congress in the 1990s. As the demographic and political balance has shifted, however, with the Muslims constituting only 37 % of the population of the city, the BJP, striving to increase its strength in that

city, would be the principal beneficiary. Consequently, the MIM no longer finds that instigating Hindu-Muslim violence can be of benefit; rather such violence would benefit the BJP.<sup>6</sup>

### **Forms of Collective Violence: Problems in their Study and the Importance of Processual Analysis**

My purpose in constructing the framework of the IRS was to draw attention away from the misguided conventional understandings of riots and to stress their organized character. Indeed, at the very heart of the process of riot production is the effort, in the explanation phase, to make it appear spontaneous, to hide its essential character as an organized form of violence. This masking is inherent in the connotation of the label itself, that of “riot,” which conjures up images of wild, disruptive, tumultuous, and violent crowd behavior, all of which does, in fact, ultimately enter into the picture.<sup>7</sup>

There are many other forms of collective violence, all of which are subject to similar distortions that arise from the very attempt, including especially in the social science literature, to label them precisely. Distinctions are made, for example, between riots and pogroms, ethnic cleansing and genocide, and the latest obfuscatory label for the turmoil in Iraq, which the U. S. government and press have decided should best be called sectarian conflict rather than civil war, ethnic cleansing, or genocide, all of which have in fact been in progress in that country for some time. I want to stress, in fact, that precise labelling of this sort in the social sciences is as much a form of obfuscation as the labels produced by governments and the so-called “free press.”

Instead of using precise labels, we need to conceive of the various forms of collective violence in processual terms, on a moving scale from riots to pogroms, to



ethnic cleansing, genocide, and civil war. At every stage, the perpetrators and explainers of the violence, from local politicians and gangsters to the press and heads of state, choose the terms that put them in the most favorable light and absolve them from responsibility. So, they prefer to call pogroms riots, genocide ethnic cleansing or mere unintentional massacres, and, as just said, civil wars sectarian conflict or, even better, mere insurrections against the state. In fact, however, these are all fluid terms that cannot and should not be precisely defined. Collective violence moves from one form to the other, with the labelling itself being part of the process, designed to hide what is truly happening.

But we can and must mark the progression from one blurred form to another, while at the same time noting that it all begins and ends, in fact, with labelling. The first stage precedent to all forms of collective violence is the use of categorical definitions to define the “target” for harm or destruction, whether it is an ethnic or religious group or an economic category, such as the term, “kulak” for the peasants to be eliminated under Stalin’s regime. And this initial labelling also begins the simultaneous process of obfuscation, for every form of categorical definition disregards intragroup differences as well as the presence of interspersed populations or it seeks to purify the categorical groups by eliminating difference and to solidify groups by homogenizing territories through intimidatory killings or outright ethnic cleansing. When the objective is solidification and homogenization of the group, breakdown of intergroup linkages between groups becomes mandatory: no intermarriage, elimination of associational linkages, intolerance of all forms of eclecticism, and the like.

A fundamental change in the use of violence for the above purposes takes place at another crossroad, with the rise of leaders openly espousing violence. Up to a point in the life of a society in disintegration, the use of violence, however widespread, is not condoned or is excused for cause or, to use a very fashionable and very irritating term in common use nowadays, is described as “senseless.” This latter term is one of the most obfuscatory ones in current use, the virtually universal coinage of press, politicians, university presidents, and heads of state after every riot or massacre or suicide bombing. Virtually all forms of collective violence, far from being senseless, have strategic purposes: intimidation of the other, consolidation of one’s own group, forced migration, etceteras.

Another step in the progression comes with escalation in the brutality and scale of violence. Both have occurred, for example, in India, something not captured by statistics on the incidence of riots and the numbers of deaths, and so forth. Increased brutalization takes many forms: rape followed by killing of women; quartering of men, women, and children; burning alive of households with all members; televised sawing off of the heads of captives; the various forms of killings used by insurgents in Iraq today (2007 and before) mentioned in the press, but rarely described in detail. While it is certain that the killers take great pleasure in what they do in imposing the utmost agony upon their victims, the strategic character of such forms of killing also ought to be evident.

And these several precedent steps all point towards and, ultimately, if the next stage is reached, build towards displacement of peoples. Displacement occurs initially in small steps. Selected areas of a town are attacked with such viciousness that the inhabitants are forced to flee. In India, they may flee to their native villages or to relatives

in the countryside or, as in Delhi during the 1984 Sikh riots or Gujarat 2002, or Sri Lanka since the beginning of the civil war up to the present, placed in IDP (internally displaced persons) camps. One of the markers of this transition is the increased ratio of killings to injuries. Riots produce more injured than killed, pogroms increase the ratio in favor of killings, massacres produce only deaths and no injured except those who miraculously survive, genocides leave no survivors.

We now arrive at the next stage, the deliberate use of violence as a mechanism of ethnic cleansing. Note that the U. S. is now (2007) in that stage in Iraq, that is to say, in precisely the situation of the British in India at the time of partition, watching the enactment before our eyes of ethnic cleansing accompanied by genocidal killings virtually every single day of the week while the press and U. S. political leaders fail (deliberately) to identify clearly what is going on; at first, they avoided the term civil war in favor of sectarian conflict/violence, but rarely, and only recently, made any reference to what was actually happening, namely, a rapid transition into ethnic cleansing and the early stages of retributive genocide. Also to be noted here is the way in which labelling draws our attention away from catastrophic violence, as in Darfur, where Kofi Annan at one point stated that what was happening there was not genocide,<sup>8</sup> presumably because it did not fit the 1944 definition of genocide, a legalistic statement; but the problem is in the very labelling itself or rather the misuse of labelling as a device for so-called scientific precision or the framing of legal briefs.<sup>9</sup>

We arrive here at the point that leads to the final solution, of transgression of traditional boundaries of what is permissible, not just rape, for example, but systematic use of rape not only for pleasure but to disgrace an entire people, including especially the

men who have become enfeebled, unmanned, unable to protect their women and female children. But this kind of action is merely one of many types that add up, finally to a general and complete release of passion in a revenge and retaliation cycle, leading to disintegration of all restraints.

Now, there is nothing inevitable about this progression. A country, such as the United States at various times in its history, at least since after the Civil War, may experience only riots, of which there have been various forms, no doubt, but few that have gone beyond what might reasonably be called riots (organized, of course), a few of which in the past did also include outright massacres of blacks, and many of which ended in lynching of individuals. Nor do I intend to imply that India as a whole has moved on a path towards Armageddon. The national disgrace of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 in Delhi was a case of malfeasance on the part of the central government that allowed this to happen under a dithering home minister, who later became prime minister of the country and then dithered even more disastrously in 1992 while the mosque at Ayodhya was torn down, precipitating massive riots over large parts of the country that ended in the deaths of several thousand people.

In any case, in India's federal system, riots are, as it were, a state subject. Most states in the Indian Union which have experienced extensive riots and riot periods have moved along the scale from riots to pogroms to outright police massacres. But, under certain political conditions, they have also moved back from further escalation or have undergone long periods in which few large scale riots or pogroms have occurred. At the same time, the state of Gujarat has definitely moved beyond the stage of mere riots and pogroms to that of state-sponsored massacres, extreme brutalization of the minority

population, displacement of tens of thousands of Muslims into IDPs, open espousal and justification of violence, and granting of complete impunity to the perpetrators. And this government remains in power today (2007) five years after the perpetration of this great pogrom.

But this schema of progression should not be treated as something to be reified and quantified and systematized and put into some political science theory of collective action or game theory or uncertainty reduction or what have you. It is all indeterminate, with no clear boundaries, and the order may be altered and things will change as they always do because the people who engage in such actions are aware that we are watching them and will change their tactics to avoid being hauled up before a tribunal or the U.N. Court or whatever agency has any potential authority or power to punish them for their atrocities. But, we ought to be watching them and, most especially, documenting in detail what they do and how they do it so that one way or another the perpetrators will be hauled up.

### **Further Thoughts on the Progression in the Forms of Violence**

It is possible to refine even further the progression outlined above. Take, for example, the progression that leads to the ultimate ends of either ethnic cleansing or genocide or some combination of the two. These ends are often preceded and/or accompanied by various other intermediate consequences of intergroup violence, such as displacement, relocation, and deportation of selected targetted populations. When such violence is directed toward that end, it is of a different sort entirely from the killings that take place in ordinary rioting. Tambiah has noted that such “displacement of people” involves “forced evacuations by burning homes, intimidations, targeted killings,” whose end is “the

abandonment of localities in populous cities [and] also the capture of the same territorial space by the winners (usually the larger of the rival groups living in the locality in question).”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the great, total cross-migration in 1947 of Hindus and Sikhs, on the one hand, and Muslims, on the other hand, to the Indian and Pakistani sides of the new borders, respectively, that took place in the weeks and months immediately before and after the partition decision announcement at Independence on August 15 was preceded by several expulsions of vulnerable groups at particular places. Most notable in this case was the forcible expulsion of Sikhs and Hindus from the northwestern Rawalpindi division of Punjab in March, 1947. These so-called riots, along with the building violence in the most contested cities of Amritsar, Lahore, and Multan in the center of Punjab, themselves represented “an escalation of violence” compared to earlier riots. They were, in effect, “a curtain raiser” to the denouement of August-September.<sup>11</sup> They thus constituted both escalation and premonition. These are critical stages, testing grounds as it were, for the authorities, who must either act decisively with massive force or expect further escalation.

Hence, Hansen considers March 1947 “the beginning of the process of ethnic cleansing.” It was marked, as he puts it, by a change “in the nature of violence from traditional violence to genocidal violence.”<sup>12</sup> That is, in contrast to mere sporadic, precisely targetted killings, what began to happen were “genocidal massacres where whole or parts of villages were destroyed.” And, of course, though it was masked and denied later and has not been exposed until recently for the lie it was, “the violence was neither unorganised nor spontaneous.”<sup>13</sup> Rather, one should say, it was even more

organized than the violence that is associated with mere riots. It was, in hindsight, a beginning, but it is also the case that it was a beginning because of a lack of foresight or an unwillingness or incapacity to act to prevent the denouement.<sup>14</sup> In Punjab 1947, on the eve of the day of Independence, there was in fact no effective authority to stop the escalation. Indeed, on the contrary, many of those at the highest levels of government in both the new states were deeply implicated in the final ethnic cleansing and genocide that resulted.<sup>15</sup>

But there is even a further progression between ethnic cleansing and the most extreme form of genocide practiced by the Nazis against the Jews. This was indeed preceded by pogroms labelled riots by the Nazis, followed by displacement, deportation, and relocation, leading ultimately to total extermination that spared none—women or children—and offered no possible alternative. In the Nazi case, indeed, “ordinary police” were given instructions to make targetted cities, indeed entire regions, *judenfrei* (“free of Jews”).<sup>16</sup> This was done in some cases through the notorious “deportation trains”<sup>17</sup> and in other cases by straight-out, “open-air massacres”<sup>18</sup> of assembled Jews by either the ordinary police or the *Einsatzgruppen*. But the South Asian experience with ethnic cleansing and retributive genocide has been a step or two removed from this all-inclusive extreme, for beautiful women were taken and bartered and used,<sup>19</sup> many times even married into the other side, especially Hindu women to Muslim men. It was possible for some men also to escape death by conversion to Islam or to “become a Hindu,” though these were not always safe options and often, especially in the case of circumcision of adult Hindu men, was little more than a grotesque, painful, and dangerous mutilation.<sup>20</sup>

Ashish Nandy has made a further distinction that is worth noting, although his conclusion is inane. The German killers of Jews carried out their assignments often, if not mostly, with a “sense of detachment,” as Browning has noted,<sup>21</sup> though Kogon once remarked that, in the camps, the predominant affect at the condition and fate of the Jews was expressed in laughter.<sup>22</sup> Somehow, however, Nandy finds solace in the distinction between the Nazi killings of Jews and the passionate killings engaged in by Indian mobs.<sup>23</sup> However little solace I find in this distinction, there is certainly a quantum leap in organization—and, of course, state direction—from even the retributive genocide in the Punjab in 1947 to the extermination of the Jews during World War II. There is yet a further distinction to be noted once a genocidal project has been undertaken under state direction, namely, concerning the possibility of resistance and refusal to participate. Few anywhere in Nazi-controlled Europe had either the desire or the courage to protest. When they did so, their protests were ignored.<sup>24</sup> Under the Nazis, even Jewish rabbis felt compelled to cooperate with the selection of those scheduled for death and those to be given “work permits” that would save their lives for a short time.<sup>25</sup> In South Asia, on the contrary, outright opposition to the riots, pogroms, and massacres and the consequent displacement of peoples has been continuous, often vociferous, and, in India, has lately taken encouraging new forms that will be discussed in the conclusion.

While there is no certainty in these progressions, which may be stopped by various means, especially by force directed at the actual perpetrators and by state action to reverse the process, it has been too often a clear precursor in South Asia. It was so in Sri Lanka especially in the 1983 riots and in the expulsions of Sinhalese and Muslims from the Jaffna peninsula in the 1990s, leading to their displacement into IDP camps.



Such displacements have occurred from time to time as a consequence of riots and pogroms in various parts of India, notably after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi and the 2002 pogroms against Muslims in Gujarat state, where the IDP camps remain. But, even in many smaller riots in cities and towns in northern and western India, the consequences have been the displacement, almost entirely of Muslims, from their areas of concentration to outlying areas or back to their ancestral villages. When this is done at the behest of real estate developers, who take advantage of such rioting for their pecuniary purposes, it is not necessarily a precursor of outright ethnic cleansing in a broader area. However, it often is, and has been the case especially in Bombay where both Masselos and Tambiah have noted the collusion between the Shiv Sena and real estate developers directed towards the “dispossession and displacement” of Muslims from slum areas, sometimes countered “by Muslim gangs on a lesser scale.”<sup>26</sup> Tambiah does not hesitate to call the aims and consequences of the 1992-93 riots in Bombay “ethnic cleansing.”<sup>27</sup> I have found similar instances of such collusion between real estate developers and rioters instigated by the BJP in my own research in Kanpur City.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, when forced displacement is done for electoral advantage by such organizations as the local militant Hindu parties, the BJP and the Shiv Sena, it may or may not presage large scale ethnic cleansing. Thus, in my own research in Aligarh town in Aligarh district, I found an (apparently) deliberate effort to use riots to force Muslim voters out of outlying areas of the city constituency, where the BJP politicians alleged they were voting illegally to their disadvantage. However, even when such displacement for either pecuniary or political reasons is partial and limited to specific material or

political ends, when permitted by a failure of the authorities in the first instance, followed by a subsequent failure to reverse such displacement, it is sufficiently ominous.

### **Comparative Relevance of the Construct of the IRS**

I believe my arguments concerning organization, preparation, planning, and deliberation are relevant to several forms of collective violence. I read a bit of the literature on Russian pogroms as I was developing my views on riots years ago, and found the literature at once absorbing and deficient. The main issues seemed to focus on this very question of definition. That is, the prime question was whether the tsar himself and his personal advisers in the state apparatus were behind the pogroms or whether they were local and spontaneous. It seemed to me that the historians working on these pogroms should have been asking different questions, particularly my questions. Were there local institutionalized riot systems in place in the pogrom-ridden cities and towns of Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? If so, under what circumstances did they come into being and become activated? Some recent work on these pogroms has found my work and arguments on India as well as that of other colleagues relevant to understanding them.<sup>29</sup> It has also seemed to me, and others have also said it to me, that there are substantial similarities in the planning and organization of the genocides in Rwanda and Burundi that bear comparison with my description of the process of riot production in India. That does not mean that a riot in Aligarh is the same as genocide in Rwanda, which would be a travesty of my position.

The history of riots in the United States and other Western countries also needs to be looked at with fresh eyes. From the nineteenth century right up to the present, black-white riots have been largely conceived within the framework of black-white antipathies

and the black ghetto riots of recent times in the framework of black rage at their condition. It has seemed to me that the element of deliberate organization and planning and the political connections were never adequately explored, least of all in the voluminous and famous Kerner Commission studies that brought together numerous contributions from American social scientists, virtually all of whom, I think, failed to tell us anything about the dynamics of riot production. Here, Steven Wilkinson is at the forefront in drawing explicit comparisons between riots and pogroms in India, the United States, and elsewhere in his recent work, some of it not yet published.<sup>30</sup> He does not use my term, the IRS, but his work suggests it would not be inappropriate to do so.

But, to return to South and Southeast Asia, Christopher Wilson's Australia National University dissertation, *From Soil to God: Ethno-religious Violence in North Maluku Province, Indonesia, 1999-2000*, soon to be published by Routledge, also illustrates two very important features of collective violence that correspond well with my own findings in India. The first is that there can be no hard and fast distinctions among the forms of collective violence, variously called riot, pogrom, massacre, genocide, etc. On the contrary, they tend to shade into each other and, if not dealt with firmly, tend to cross the imagined boundaries between such categories as they expand in scale, in the selection of victims, and in the atrocities perpetrated. This dissertation provides, indeed, an example of how riots and massacres in different places can expand to become virtual military confrontations, leading ultimately to retributive violence as revenge and retaliation are sought for successive acts of violence, culminating in ethnic cleansing, which is what, in effect, was the end of the violence described. But, rather than use these terms, Wilson has preferred to consider the expansion of such violence and

ethnic cleansing as taking place in phases that he labels initiation, escalation, dispersion, political exploitation, and religious war. Not all these categories would be applicable in every comparable case, but the merit of this approach is that it avoids spurious attempts to categorize and pinpoint precisely the particular form of the violence being enacted in each phase.

The most impressive aspect of the research carried out for this dissertation and the presentation of it is the way in which the author has followed events that transpired over a considerable period of time in several different areas, ultimately encompassing an entire region. I am not aware of anything in the literature that has done this so well or, indeed, at all. But even more important, he has developed a scheme to encompass the transformation of events in both their scale and the nature of the issues, precipitating events, and composition of the perpetrators of the violence that might be profitably applied elsewhere. Wilson's research demonstrates the interconnectedness of the various occasions of violence he has studied without falling prey, indeed showing the utter inadequacy, of other approaches and popular understandings that see such events as occurring spontaneously, in one place after the other by some kind of mimicry or as if violence spreads like a viral infection.

Also noteworthy for Indonesia is the recent book by Sidel, which documents and analyzes several phases of rioting in different parts of the archipelago. While he has developed his own framework attuned to the specific conditions of Indonesia, there is much in his work that is consistent with mine and with Wilson's. First, of course, is the organized character of all the forms of violence that he discusses. Second, he notes the presence in the "mobilizational processes" among what he calls the "protagonists" of

violence of my “fire tenders” and “conversion specialists.” Third, he is attuned to the issue of blame displacement, noting how each riot “resulted in a bewildering flood of commentary and analyses variously blaming social inequality, government policy, Chinese/Christian hegemony, or elite conspiracy” for the violence.<sup>31</sup> He also takes note of several kinds of transformations in the forms of violence that have occurred in successive waves: from riots that led more to destruction of property of victims, Chinese or Christian, than killings, moving to pogroms in a later period with extensive killing, culminating in regional ethnic cleansing, and most recently to “religious violence,” characterized by both the author and the participants as *jihad*. Fourth, he notes also the close connection between ostensibly interethnic or interreligious violence with elections and election outcomes that would distribute resources and even territorial boundaries between religious groups. Such violence in these respects has similar consequences as the riots that I have studied in India, namely, consolidation of opposed communities in order to determine the election outcome and the consequent redistribution of resources between communities.

But the clearest example of both the role of the IRS in riots and of the progression in the forms of collective violence over time comes again from South Asia, from Sri Lanka, where the progression has run across almost the full range of possibilities. Tambiah has noted the first stages in this progression in a series of four riots, the first in 1958, followed by three in succession two decades later in 1977, 1981, and, of course, the grand culmination of the series in 1983. What distinguishes this particular progression from earlier riots in Sri Lankan history is that they were specifically ethnic riots, and more specifically attacks by “segments of the Sinhalese population against the Tamils.”<sup>32</sup>

In Tambiah's account, it is also noteworthy that each riot in the series took different forms. Notably, each successive riot involved greater organization, more direct involvement of the police and armed forces, the implication of government ministers, and increased destruction, brutalization, and loss of life. Thus, in 1958, the police and armed forces "saved many Tamil lives and earned their reputation as upholders of law and order; in 1977 they turned indifferent; but from 1981 onwards they have become a party to the riots, frequently figuring as the prime villains."<sup>33</sup> In 1981, "the police and armed forces did not intervene to prevent Sinhalese mob attacks on the Tamils until the declaration of the state of emergency on August 17, many days after the attacks had begun."<sup>34</sup>

Finally, in 1983, there was nothing less than "the first *massive breakdown* [original italics] of law and order among those entrusted with its preservation to occur during Sri Lanka's history as an independent nation-state."<sup>35</sup> The 1983 riots were also characterized by "systematic destruction of shops and commercial and industrial establishments, many of which employed Sinhalese labor." Further, these riots were widespread, beginning first in Colombo, then extending "in ever widening waves" to numerous other towns in the country where there were "the largest concentrations of Sri Lankan Tamils (outside their own areas of dominance in the north and east) and of the Indian Tamils in the tea plantations."<sup>36</sup> Further, these riots were prolonged, extending from the initial attacks on July 24 to August 5.<sup>37</sup> "In sum," Tambiah concludes, "the 1983 riots were a kind of pogrom, which was motivated, purposive, systematic, and organized." Tambiah does not use my term, the IRS, for the organization of the riots of 1983, but he provides ample evidence for it. Among the participants he identifies are

“certain Sinhala politicians and their local agents, organized crime figures and smugglers, and small businessmen seeking to eliminate rivals.” He also notes the role of “riot captains” in organizing mobs and of Buddhist monks, who “played a role in inciting crowd action, sometimes as supportive witnesses and orators,”<sup>38</sup> in my terms, the “conversion specialists.” Finally, supporting the view of the 1983 riots as, in reality, pogroms, Tambiah notes, as have others, “firm evidence of planning and direction, the participation of certain politicians (especially from the ruling party) and government employees (minor staff, laborers, technicians), and the use of government vehicles and buses.”<sup>39</sup>

Obeyesekere takes a similar view to Tambiah concerning the progression in what he calls “the institutionalisation of violence” in Sri Lanka, also marking the 1977 riots as the turning point. He too points especially to the role of Cyril Matthew, Minister of Industries, and also president at the time of the Jatika Sevaka Sangamaya (National Workers Organisation), the largest trade union in Sri Lanka, from which “thugs” were recruited to enact much of the violence committed in those riots. Also implicated, according to Obeyesekere, were two other ministers, the prime minister himself (R. Premadasa) and the Minister of Transport, a Muslim MP, with their political bases in the slums.<sup>40</sup>

In his analysis of the 1983 riots/pogrom, Tambiah makes a comparison between those events and the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984. But India has since provided an even more apposite parallel in Gujarat 2002. The justification for the 1983 pogrom was the killing by Tamil militants of 13 Sri Lankan army personnel (presumably all Sinhalese) by Tamil militants in northern Sri Lanka, then under the occupation of the Sri

Lankan army in the early stages of the civil war. Since there was some apparently spontaneous crowd violence when the bodies of the victims were brought to the airport and the cemetery, then removed by the army, the ensuing organized violence could be taken also as “spontaneous.” Similarly, the explosion and consequent death of some 60 or so people (all presumed Hindu) in the train compartment at the Godhra train station in Gujarat provided an excuse for the launching of a massive government-directed assault on the Muslim population in widespread areas of the state, barefacedly masked as a spontaneous uprising of the Hindus of Gujarat. In Sri Lanka, there was a central government minister (Cyril Matthew) said to have provided overall direction to the pogrom of 1983. In Gujarat, the entire government, including its chief minister, Narendra Modi, were, according to most informed observers and commentators, directing matters.

One last point about the 1983 riots that is also consistent with my findings and those of Wilkinson in relation to large scale collective violence involving Hindus, Muslims, and the state in India is the close connection between these events and the opportunities to gain political advantage from them. Tambiah notes that the 1983 riots took place at a time of intragovernmental conflict among “three major factions . . . contending for power,” who were also jockeying for position in an anticipated struggle to find a successor to President Jayawardene. In this impending struggle, Cyril Matthew, the principal government figure behind the extension of the violence, was one of the key figures.<sup>41</sup> How this would have affected the succession is not clear and needs further elucidation,<sup>42</sup> but the general pattern of riot production as part of the process of gaining political advantage against factional rivals or against other parties has been made clear in my work and that of Wilkinson in India.<sup>43</sup> In Gujarat and elsewhere, electoral



calculations have been of primary importance in the timing of riots. In the Punjab at the time of partition and in Indonesia and Sri Lanka as well, issues of boundaries and control of territory have been critical in the deliberate enactment of riots, pogroms, massacres, and genocide.

### **Insurrectionary Violence and Civil War**

Where the state remains in relatively firm control over its population, and ethnic minorities remain relatively dispersed and powerless, the progression may not move beyond riots and pogroms, enacted at particular times for the narrow purposes mentioned above, especially temporary political advantage. Where, however, there is a concentrated population of a discontented minority, one alternative move is towards insurrection or outright civil war. For discontented minority populations in India, confronted with the power of a huge state with a formidable military force—in addition to the armed police and other paramilitary formations—civil war is out of the question. But rebellion and insurrection are possible and have been continuous in the northeastern tribal regions of the country since Independence. In Kashmir, a major insurrection has been in progress now for two decades. In Punjab, an insurrectionary movement was carried out for a decade from 1984 until 1993. These conflicts have different origins and trajectories from the progression outlined above and have not followed consequent upon riots and pogroms.

In Sri Lanka, however, where a full scale civil war has been in progress since the 1983 riots, there has been such a connection and progression from riots and pogroms to civil war, and the two have been interconnected. The 1983 rioting was, as above noted, at least in part and probably more than in part, a calculated response, on the part of the Sri

Lankan government ministers involved to pay back the Tamil population for the killing of thirteen Sinhalese military, killed by a land mine planted by a Tamil guerrilla force. Jeyaratnam Wilson notes that, at that time, “the Ceylon Tamil north was in a state near to civil war” and that, “by early July 1983, the situation was out of control.”<sup>44</sup> The rioting in response to the killing of the Sinhalese troops began on July 24. From this point on, what had been an insurrectionary movement became a full-scale civil war between armed forces in control of contested, but separate territories. Since 1983, there have been no large-scale riots or pogroms directed at the remaining Sri Lankan Tamil population living in Sinhalese-majority areas, though they continue to be scapegoated at times, as happened in June 2007 with the forcible removal of Tamils from Colombo after the latest LTTE bombing in that city.<sup>45</sup>

### **Conclusion: On the Importance of Truth-tellers**

At the end of most of my presentations on the subject of collective violence in India, those in the audience who have been moved by it, especially young secular Indians, invariably ask, with some anguish, what can be done. Although I have never considered myself a policy analyst, I have come to feel obliged to deal in some way with this kind of response. With regard to the IRS, I have described a situation of widespread complicity at all levels in society with the systems of riot production. Is there then no antidote?<sup>46</sup>

There has gradually been developing in India a counter-system to the IRS that I call an Institutionalized System of Riot Documentation (ISRDR). Its components are, in several ways, mirror opposites of the IRS. It is, first of all, an extra-local system. It is manned by educated, secular, patriotic men and women who deplore the violence, understand its roots better than most people, and consider it their moral duty to

investigate and document the circumstances that lead to the production of particular occasions of large-scale violence and to identify the individuals and organizations that are most deeply implicated in it. They include individual scholars, human rights organizations, retired Supreme Court justices, social scientists, historians, and anthropologists.

A central figure in this system is a man, Asghar Ali Engineer, a secular Muslim, who has headed for decades now a Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism in Bombay (Mumbai). He personally visits every site in India where a major riot has been produced, reports on them in his journals and online, and publishes an annual survey of all such riots in the *Economic and Political Weekly*. He has also written and/or edited nearly 40 books on various political and religious subjects, of which several deal directly with Hindu-Muslim riots. His works are required reading for anyone who wishes to understand how riots are produced in India.

But Asghar Ali is not alone. There are human rights organizations in India that send teams to sites of major violence, usually comprising Hindus, Muslims, and sometimes Sikhs and Christians as well. These teams usually arrive at the immediate end of a riot as soon as curfew has been lifted. They publish sizeable pamphlets or articles in human rights journals on major riots that go far beyond the reports that appear in the newspapers, and stand as correctives to their false or incoherent reporting. Among these organizations, the best known is the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties.<sup>47</sup> Especially noteworthy in this connection was the massive response of the ISRD in the aftermath of the 2002 Gujarat riots, documented by a wide range of individuals and organizations,

whose total production of print on the killings is said to have reached approximately 16,000 pages.<sup>48</sup>

Another type of forum for truth-telling that is brought into being after the most horrific riots is the ad-hoc court put together by human rights and civil liberties groups, usually headed by a retired Supreme Court justice, that gathers eye-witness testimony and publishes its conclusions in a substantial volume at the end of its proceedings. These courts are called citizens' tribunals. Such ad-hoc courts have a dual function. First, they are there to document what has happened and to present the results as truthfully as they can. Second, they are there to make sure that the officially appointed commission of inquiry, if one is appointed at all, does not obfuscate the origins of the violence and the identities of the principal perpetrators of it.

The third important group comprises those social scientists, historians, and anthropologists who seek to re-focus our gaze in a world dominated by symbol-specialists, populated with simulacra, representations, and justifications of all sorts, which serve to divert our gaze from actualities to rationalizations, by asking the wrong questions and, therefore, naturally coming up with untrustworthy results. There are many such scholars in India and some in the West in this third group. I consider myself part of it. What distinguishes this group especially is the questions they ask, that I consider to be the right questions: not why a riot has happened, but, under what circumstances it has happened and how it is done, that is to say, not to provide a causal explanation in the scientific sense of an "if, then" proposition, but to expose a process to full view; not to displace blame, but to pinpoint responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Lest my use of this term be misunderstood, the meaning I wish to convey is one of appearance and social standing, not of character.

<sup>2</sup> See esp. Donald Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Oxford: University Press, 2001) and Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). For some details on the problems with the latter work, see Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), pp. 418-19, fn. 44 and Dipankar Gupta, Review of Varshney's book, under the title, "Fanaticizing Religion," *The Book Review* (September 2002), pp. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> For a striking illustration of this form of causal analysis, see Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, pp. 158-59, where he lists among the "reported causes" of riots in Aligarh City, as reported in the *Times of India* (but taken seriously in the text), the following: "dispute between fruitseller and customer," "reported insulting of the Gita," "clash between students," "clash between Hindu and Muslim wrestlers," "random stabbing," "false rumors," etc. This is sheer trivialization, as well as grossly misleading.

<sup>4</sup> As has the work of Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> That is not to say, of course, that there were no riots before the decline of the Congress, only that there were differences in the contexts in which they were produced and in their purposes and effects.

<sup>6</sup> The best analysis of these tendencies in Hyderabad, which also tests the applicability of the IRS as well as the arguments of Varshney and Wilkinson, is an undergraduate honors thesis completed at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts by Vishal Agraharkar, *Political Incentives and Hindu-Muslim Violence: A Study of Hyderabad, India*, 10 May 2005. Although it is an undergraduate thesis, the author carried out a month's research in Hyderabad, in addition to extensive documentary research.

<sup>7</sup> Another term far too often used to encompass not only riots, but all other forms of collective violence is "mass violence." I have almost never used this term because it clearly runs counter to all my arguments about collective violence by focusing on the "mass" of the people, thereby, in effect, laying the burden of blame on a nameless conglomeration rather than on the principal organizers of the violence. The term, collective violence itself is also perhaps problematic, but its very vagueness suits my purposes herein.

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<sup>8</sup> E.g., “U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said last month he was not ready to describe the situation in Darfur “as genocide or ethnic cleansing” but he did call it “a tragic humanitarian situation” and raised the possibility of international intervention.” CNN.com, July 24, 2007. And three years, later, from a U. S. “envoy”: “The on-going Darfur crisis is no longer a genocide situation, according to U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Andrew Natsios. Natsios, a Professor in the School of Foreign Service, spoke on Wednesday in Gaston Hall.” *The Georgetown Voice* (Washington, D.C.), 9 February 2007.

<sup>9</sup> The problem, as is well known, lies in the emphasis on” intent.” If intent cannot be proved, genocide cannot be proved, leaving open the certainty of the working of the self-denying prophecy by which perpetrators and their apologists find means to deny their intent to destroy an entire people.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 176

<sup>11</sup> Anders Bjorn Hansen, *Partition and Genocide: Manifestation of Violence in Punjab: 1937-1947* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2002), p. 110.

<sup>12</sup> Hansen, p. 115.

<sup>13</sup> Hansen, pp. 180-81. See also Ian Talbot, “The 1947 Violence in the Punjab,” in Ian Talbot (ed.), *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics and Violence in India and Pakistan 1947-2002* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. pp. 1-2 where he considers the issue of spontaneity versus organization in the context of the partition genocide, as well as the relative utility of the spontaneity argument in contrast to the emphasis on organization in the IRS to explain the violence there as well as later episodes of violence in India such as the anti-Sikh violence in Delhi in 1984 and the Gujarat violence of 2002. Several other papers in this volume also discuss the utility of the IRS in contrast to the approaches of Horowitz and Varshney, finding the construct applicable in several cases but both the latter two wanting.

It is necessary also to stop and ponder the length of time too often required to expose to full view such events as genocide: 50 years in the case of Punjab, a hundred in the case of Armenia, and hundreds in the cases of the American massacres and destruction of the native Indian population in the United States. The weeping begins only then, far too late, and so self-fulfilling.

<sup>14</sup> There was, however, sufficient warning, coming from Jenkins, the British governor of Punjab, as I have pointed out in my article, “The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946-47: Means,

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Methods, and Purposes,” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2003), 5(1), 71-101, reprinted in Paul R. Brass, *Forms of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Modern India* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2006). Moreover, there was one British officer who saw clearly what was happening and, in his own area of authority, the Bahawalpur state, took firm and immediate “action against communal violence.” Further, as Mark Tully has noted, Penderel Moon “criticized the authorities in Amritsar for not opening fire during the riots in the Punjab in March 1947”; “Introduction” to Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India*, New edition (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xiv.

<sup>15</sup> Parenthetically, we are just at that stage in Iraq (2007), where the “world’s only superpower,” which has created the mess there, lacks either the power or the will to prevent further mass slaughter. As in India 1947, everyone in authority and with power is to blame and all have already begun to displace blame: Democrats and Republicans blaming each other and the Democrats seeking to blame the Iraqis for their failure to achieve specified goals or benchmarks at certain specified points.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p.121; for example, the entire district of Lublin was made *judenfrei* with the slaughter by such means by one ordinary police battalion of 500 men, who massacred “at least 83,000 Jews”; pp. 141-42.

<sup>17</sup> Browning. p. 27

<sup>18</sup> Browning, p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, among many other recent sources, Andrew A. Major, “The Chief Sufferers’: Abduction of Women During the Partition of the Punjab,” *South Asia*, XVIII, Special Issue (1995), p. 61, who notes that “large-scale abduction and sale of girls seems to have been part of a systematic process of ‘ethnic cleansing’”.

<sup>20</sup> David Gilmartin, for example, refers to the forced “Hindu conversions to Islam” in the Noakhali/Tipperra riots in Bengal in October 1946; “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, no. 4 (November 1998), p.1,086. On the possibility and often the futility of these options, see, in addition to the usual academic sources, the fine recent Indian film, *Earth*.

<sup>21</sup> Browning, p. 127.

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<sup>22</sup> Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them*, trans. from German by Heinz Norden (New York: Berkley Publishing, 1950). I cannot remember the exact citation. But, of course, the German forces also engaged in the utmost brutality against the Jews in both round-ups and, as Kogon also notes, in the camps as well.

<sup>23</sup> Ashish Nandy, "Telling the Story of Communal Conflicts in South Asia: Interim Report on a Personal Search for Defining Myths," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (January 2002), p. 14.: "Even though in a few instances they came close to it, these were not industrialized, assembly-line killings, of the type in which the twentieth century specialized, and killers and victims involved in them had not been reduced to being cogs in a killing machine." What is one supposed to conclude from this statement? Is passionate killing of large numbers of people (say in the 1984 massacres of Sikhs in Delhi) less dreadful? Does it retain the human personality better since the killers are not mere "cogs." Does Nandy really want us to believe that personally cutting persons up into pieces with swords, burning them alive, and, nowadays, the revival of the great medieval practice of cutting off people's heads, filmed for TV wherever possible, is more agreeable, less repulsive, than the German gas chambers?

<sup>24</sup> E.g., as in Oslo, when the protest of "Norwegian Protestant bishops" failed to prevent the deportation of "531 Norwegian Jews, men, women and children" to Birkenau; Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985), p. 499. More successful was the subterranean action of "Danish sea captains and fishermen" who transported 5,919 Jews and "part-Jew" to Sweden (p. 499) as well as protests from Italy and Italian troops in France and from Bulgarians (pp. 543-47).

<sup>25</sup> Gilbert, p. 223.

<sup>26</sup> Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds*, p. 255. See also Jim Masselos, "The Bombay Riots of January 1993: The Politics of Urban Conflagration," *South Asia*, XVII, Special Issue (1994), esp. pp. 87-90.

<sup>27</sup> Tambiah, , *Leveling Crowds*, pp. 255-264.

<sup>28</sup> See chapter vii, "Kala Bachchca," in Paul R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 207-08.



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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Michael F. Hamm, "Jews and Revolution in Kharkiv: How One Ukrainian City Escaped a Pogrom in 1905," in Jonathan D. Smele and Anthony Heywood, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Steven I. Wilkinson, "A Constructivist Model of Ethnic Riots," forthcoming in Kanchan Chandra, *Ethnicity, Politics and Economics*.

<sup>31</sup> John T. Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 102-04.

<sup>32</sup> S. J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 13. In other words, Tambiah deliberately excludes from this series the Sinhalese-Muslim riots of 1915 and the JVP insurrection of Sinhalese youth in 1971. Though the latter also involved attacks on Tamils, they were not principally and explicitly oriented to ethnic targeting.

<sup>33</sup> Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*, 21

<sup>35</sup> Tambiah. *Sri Lanka*, pp. 25-26

<sup>36</sup> Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>37</sup> Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds*, p. 99-100.

<sup>39</sup> Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds*, p. 96.

<sup>40</sup> Gananath Obeyesekere, "The Origins and Institutionalisation of Political Violence," in James Manor (ed.), *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 160.

<sup>41</sup> Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*, pp. 32-33 and 48-49.

<sup>42</sup> Presumably, the riots provided an advantage to the "hardliners" within Jayawardene's government. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*, p. 27.

<sup>43</sup> Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence*.

<sup>44</sup> A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London: C. Hurst, 1988), p. 171.

<sup>45</sup> See Human Rights Watch, "Sri Lanka: End Expulsion of Tamils from Colombo," ([hrw.org/english/docs/2007/06/08/slanka16106.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/06/08/slanka16106.htm)).

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<sup>46</sup> Varshney claims that he has one, called “civic engagement,” which I have commented upon elsewhere. For specific examples of the failure of civic engagement to prevent riots, see Paul R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol*, ch. iv, esp. pp. 122-26 and Paul R. Brass, “The Development of an Institutionalized Riot System in Meerut City, 1961 to 1982,” in Ian Talbot (ed.), *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics and Violence in India and Pakistan 1947-2002*, pp. 98-101. Two recent unpublished papers have also found the civic engagement argument of little or no use in explaining the killings in Gujarat 2002, but have found the IRS construct useful there as well. See Manali Desai, *Leviathan in the Colonies: Regimes of Governance and Ethnic Violence in Western India, 1941-2002* and Howard Spodek, *Pogroms and Politics, Gujarat, 2002*.

<sup>47</sup> Others, past and present, have included the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee (Committee Against Communalism), The Indian People’s Human Rights Commission, and the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights.

<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the most important among these documents is the three-volume report (comprising 816 pages) of the Concerned Citizens Tribunal, *Crime Against Humanity: An Inquiry Into the Carnage in Gujarat* (Mumbai: Anil Dharkar), available online at <http://sabrang.com/tribunal/tribunal1.pdf>. Such reports have also been prepared in other places without the help of such organizations. In my own experience, in Meerut City, I found a lone individual, a local Muslim advocate, who collected massive documentation on the two major pogroms there of 1982 and 1987, available only privately in typed copies. But there have been several other published reports on the riots there as well.