**General Topic- 1**

**Communal violence** is a form of violence that is committed across [ethnic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group) or communal lines, the violent parties feel solidarity for their respective groups, and victims are chosen based upon group membership. The term includes conflicts, riots and other forms of violence between communities of different religious faith or ethnic origins.

The Indian law defines communal violence as, "any act or series of acts, whether spontaneous or planned, resulting in injury or harm to the person and or property, knowingly directed against any person by virtue of his or her membership of any religious or linguistic minority, in any State in the Union of India, or Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes within the meaning of clauses (24) and (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution of India".

Colm Campbell has proposed, after studying the empirical data and sequence of events during communal violence in South Africa, Palestinian Territories and Northern Ireland, that communal violence typically follows when there is degradation of rule of law, the state fails to or is widely seen as unable to provide order, security and equal justice, which then leads to mass mobilization, followed by radicalization of anger among one or more communities, and ultimately violent mobilization. Targeted mass violence by a few from one community against innocent members of other community, suppression of complaints, refusal to act against, killing peaceful demonstrators, imprisonment of people of a single community while refusal to arrest members of other community in conflict, perceived or actual prisoner abuse by the state are often the greatest carriers of communal violence.

Research suggests that racial separation may also cause communal violence. Even if a small minority of individuals prefer to live in ethnically homogenous settings due to fear of other ethnic groups or otherwise, it can result in high degrees of racial separation. Kahara argues that such racial separation decreases the possibility of positive contact across ethnic lines.  India and Pakistan are countries that were born through violence. The partition of the Indian subcontinent witnessed hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Muslims killed during riots, ethnic cleansings, and cross-border migrations. Since the 1980s, with the spectacular rise of Hindu nationalism, riots have again become a recurring feature of Indian politics. All of this prompts the question: what is the original cause of Hindu-Muslim violence?

For many scholars, the simple answer lies in the negative legacies of British colonialism. It was the British that “constructed” modern Hindu and Muslim identities through mechanisms like the first scientific census of 1871. And it was the British that used a “divide-and-rule” policy to drive apart religious communities, thereby promoting violence between them. In this post, however, I will argue that this seemingly straightforward argument connecting British rule and modern communal riots is problematic for three reasons.

Located in South East Asia, India is the world’s seventh largest country and the second most populous with over one billion people. India is a culturally rich area that has emerged from a number of divisions and conflicts throughout its lifespan. Previously held under the administration of the United Kingdom from the mid-19th century, India became an independent state in 1947, following independence struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi, and has advanced throughout that time into one of the world’s leading economic powers. However, India also faces issues of large-scale poverty as well as corruption and terrorism. Conflict has affected the region, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, with riots between the two traced back to 1893. The area has also witnessed separation and partition such as the split of the large Eastern province of Bengal into two, based on religious lines. Mahatma Gandhi was the leader of the Indian independence movement in British ruled India. Gandhi believed in non-violent protest and was an inspiration to millions of followers. Gandhi was opposed to the partition of India and Pakistan and worked towards improving Hindu-Muslim relations.

HINDU-MUSLIM RIOTS : In India, riots between Hindus and Muslims can be traced back to 1893, sparked off by religious processions, disputes over temples and mosques and cow protection movements (cows are viewed within Hinduism as a symbol of wealth and abundance), among many other things. One of the first major communal riots took place in August 1893 in Mumbai when one hundred people were killed and 800 injured in riots that lasted for over six months. The aftermath of the riots were felt across Northern India all the way to Bombay and Rangoon.

CALCUTTA RIOTS: The Calcutta riots of August 16th, 1946 – also known as ‘Great Calcutta Killing’ or ‘Direct Action Day’ – was a day of widespread riot and manslaughter in the city of Calcutta, now known as Kolkata. The Muslim League Council planned a general strike (or ‘Direct Action’) to demand the creation of a separate country for Indian Muslims (Pakistan). What started as a day of protest resulted in the deaths of five to ten thousand people, while a further 15,000 were wounded over a three-day period of conflict during riots and manslaughter between both sides in the worst riots the country has ever seen. Skirmishes between the communities continued for almost a week. Five battalions of British troops, supported by four battalions of Indians and Gurkhas, were positioned in the city in the days that followed and rioting eventually reduced by August 22nd. Figures vary as to how many people died or were injured with official estimates suggesting 4,000 dead and 100,000 injured while other sources suggest many more thousands died. The breakdown of Hindu and Muslim casualties also varies. India and Pakistan won independence in August 1947, following a nationalist struggle lasting nearly three decades. It led to the largest mass migration in human history of up to ten million people. As many as one million civilians died in the accompanying riots and local-level fighting, particularly in the western region of Punjab which was cut in two by the border. An agreement was met that divided Colonial India into two separate states – one with a Muslim majority (Pakistan) and the other with a Hindu majority (India).

**Violence During Partition**

 By most estimates 200,000 to 1 million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs died after the 1947 partition. Most of the violence was in the Punjab and to a lesser degree Bengal, where long-standing animosity between the Hindu majority and Muslim and Sikh minorities, egged on by firebrand politicians, erupted in full scale carnage. No one knows how many people were killed. The British have long claimed only around 200,000 were killed. Most historians put the figure at around 500,000 and some so as high as 2 million.

 During partition, people recall seeing oxcarts stacked with bodies. Thousands of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim women were kidnapped and raped. "Terrible vendettas were enacted on their bodies," wrote novelist Bapsi Sidwa in TIME, "not so much to dishonor them as to humiliate the men of another faith." The violence lasted for about three months, from August until it ended suddenly and mysteriously in November. It is estimated that around 20,000 people had already died when Nehru gave his famous independence speech at midnight on August 14-15.

 Entire trainloads of refuges and entire columns of people fleeing on foot were slaughtered for being caught in the "wrong" zone. Most of the violence was carried out against Muslims by Hindus angry that India had been divided and Sikhs bitter over the loss of their land in the Punjab. Muslims answered back with retaliatory killings. The murder of trainload of Muslims heading for Pakistan, for example, lead to "ghost train" of dead Hindus going the other way. Much of the violence was incited by rumors of slaughter that never happened or rumored attacks that never occurred. "People on both sides had gone mad," one journalist from Lahore told Time. "Any sane person can't explain it. The entire people were caught in a frenzy."

**Violence Against Muslims During the Partition of India and Pakistan**

 Many Muslim immigrants that arrived by train in the newly formed Punjabi section of Pakistan were slaughtered by Sikh residents. One man told Time that he came upon a mass of bodies with sword and gunshot wounds. He said the entire landscape was silent except for the cries of babies crawling around the corpses of their dismembered mothers and the moans of an elderly woman that was still alive but had her arms and legs cut off.

 One Hindu man, who was 12-year-old at the time of the partition, told Time he accompanied a gang of youths that attacked a trainload of Muslim refugees heading out of India. He said arrangements had been made for the train to stop at a pre-arranged place, where the passengers were told to lie face down while they were stabbed and beaten death. A Hindu boy that screamed "Kill, me too" was granted his wish. The Hindu man told Time, "At the time it seemed OK and justified because we were doing it in reaction to what happened in India."

 A Sikh living in a Muslim village in India told Critchfield, "The Muslims thought they were safe. They were ready to fight back as soon as they saw the Sikhs start to surround the village at daybreak. A two o'clock in the afternoon Dogra [Hindu] soldiers opened fire...The Muslims had muzzle-loading rifles. They answered the fire...At about four o'clock in the afternoon those Dogras came with machine guns...Thousands and thousands they were, Sikhs and Hindu and Dogra, like herds of sheep surrounding the village.When the Muslims saw they couldn't cope with the heavy incoming fire, they all ran back into their houses...The Sikhs shouted 'Kill these kaffirs!'...We could hear the screams of women and the shouts of our Muslim friends 'Help us! We are being killed!' ...It ran like fire. Men who were hungry for generations started raping women right in the courtyards. Some of the women jumped into wells...I saw a woman holding a child. They tore the baby from her and speared him in the air in front of her eyes...The wells were filled with women and there was a cutting and harvesting of human heads. I ran to a sugar cane field and hid myself there...Even six months later the stench in [the village] was terrible. Like the children, most of the women died. I would wager less than two percent of the women escaped.

 One Sikh man, who admitting killing 40 people with a machete, told Time 50 years later: "I feel no remorse. The Muslims were responsible for the division of the country. We needed to teach them a lesson."

 Describing attacks in Bombay in 1947, one Muslim man told The New Yorker, “One night, there were attacks by the Hindus on various houses. So many were killed that night. Three or four times our own house was under attack. But when the Hindus would come with all their weapons and run to attack on the gate of our building, the Muslims who lived in our building would get together behind the gate and raise our slogan: Allahu akbar! God is great. When hearing that, they would think were fully armed inside or I do not know what, but they would run away. They wold run away! And we had nothing.”

**Violence Against Hindus During the Partition of India and Pakistan**

 One Pakistani soldier, who played a part in the torching of a markets that killed several hundred Hindus, told Time: "Our chaps would kill with really good spirit. We didn't feel anything.” One Muslim family that arrived in Pakistan on a train that been sprayed with bullets, leaving most of the passengers on the roof dead, said when they arrived "near our house there was a harsh smell." They soon discovered a Hindu temple and drinking well stuffed with corpses.

  Edward Behr, a filmmaker who served in the Indian army, wrote in Newsweek, "Three weeks after partition, wave after wave of armed Pathans swept into Peshawar from neighboring tribal areas, systematically massacring Hindus and Sikhs and looting their homes. From Sept 7 to 17, in Peshawar City, some 800 bodies were recovered a day."

  Muslims that arrived from India and were traumatized by what they saw on the trains to Pakistan began butchering Sikhs troops waiting to go to India. "This left only a handful of troops," Behr wrote, "to save Peshawar's Hindu and Sikh minority from marauding, murdering tribesman. Many to their credit did try to stop the violence. Others—including the Peshawar police—looked the other way."

 "I was compelled to open fire on tribesman caught butchering Hindu nurses in the courtyard of Peshawar's Military Hospital. To my knowledge, none of the tribesmen were ever brought to justice, though as a personal favor to me, Peshawar's chief of police, fearing for my life, kept them in jail until the November day I left for England—and demobilization.”

**Gandhi in Calcutta after the Partition of India and Pakistan**

 On the evening of August 15, 1947, as Indian and British big shots toasted independence in Delhi, Gandhi was camped out in an abandoned house in Calcutta in effort to quell sectarian violence that seemed to be ready out at any moment. Four days after arriving in Calcutta on August 12, Gandhi wrote: "I have taken many risks, perhaps this is the greatest of all. Who knows what will happen. If things go wrong here they will probably elsewhere. If things improve here, then perhaps they will improve everywhere."

  As he pulled up in his temporary home in Calcutta in a Chevrolet, a mob greeted him with shouts of "Traitor!" and "Save Hindus, not Muslims." One man who saw Gandhi recalled, "I was very disappointed. Gandhi had no biceps, no triceps, nor forearms. I saw an old man with no teeth. When he spoke he made a 'whoosh, whoosh' sound."

  One for the first things that Gandhi did was strike a deal with a Muslim leader, saying that he would guarantee the safety of the Muslims if the Muslim League promises to protect the Hindus. Gandhi then gave speeches, fasted, walked through troubled neighborhoods, lead prayers and read from the Bhagavad Gita.

  One Hindu bodybuilder later told Time, "I promised my gang ten rupees for each murder and five rupees for each injury. It was a lot of money at that time but most people did not want to be paid. They wanted revenge." After listening to a Gandhi speech he said, "What he said began to make a lot of sense. 'Blood for blood will not solve the problem. Then this violence will never end." I understood that he was right. I had enjoyed killing Muslims but then they killed my 19-year-old son. The more I killed of them, the more they would kill of mine. I pledged that I would stop killing and start working for Gandhi"

  At midnight on August 14-15, Hindus and Muslims celebrated independence together in Calcutta and each group invited the other into their temples mosques and homes. Gandhi spent the first day of Indian independence—something he spent most his life to achieve—by praying, fasting, dictating letters, spinning cotton and lie in wait about potential for violence.

  Two weeks after independence, Gandhi’s calls for restraint and non-violence were ignored. Muslims and Hindus fought with one another and mobs ransacked the British governor's mansion. The Indian writer Nirad Chaudhuri blamed the violence on Gandhi, who, he said, based his campaign on hatred by Muslims and Hindus against the British but ignored the tendency of the work groups towards violence. "Gandhi thought that his admonition of violence would be listened to," Chaudhuri wrote. "Of course they were not and could not be."

**Refugees Arrive in Their New Homes**

  Some of the migrants ended up in homes of people that had migrated in the other direction. Others ended up in the cities—Muslims in Karachi and Hindu's in Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. It is estimated that the population if Delhi doubled to one million as refugees from the Punjab occupied homes and shops formally owned by Muslims and set up tent communities in the countryside outside the city. In one fell swoop Delhi became a Punjabi city.

  When Sikhs from Pakistan arrived in India, Gurkha soldiers told them "No Muslim will attack you here," but they didn't say anything about cholera which, because of a lack of medicine, was unsuccessfully treated with onions and moonshine, resulting in dozens of deaths. When the Sikhs finally arrived in the village they were assigned to houses that had been leveled by anti-Muslim mobs, and the stench from the thousands of corpses of dead Muslims, many stuffed into wells sealed with concrete, was almost unbearable. [Source: "The Villagers" by Richard Critchfield, Anchor Books]

  The Parsi novelist Bapsi Sidwa said that Muslim refugees from India built up a tent city around Lahore and milled about begging for jobs. Describing a bungalow in her neighborhood abandoned by a Sikh family she wrote in TIME: "Around New Year's I begin to notice signs of occupation: a window boarded up with cardboard, a diffused gleam from another screened with jute sacking. The takeover has been so subtle that it dawns on me only gradually: I have new neighbors. I know they are refugees, nervous of drawing attention to their furtive presence."

  Refugees scrap together money any way they could. Three brothers in Delhi made a living boarding trains without tickets and then "selling" the seats to legitimate travelers for five rupees. One of the men hawked fountain pens in Connought Places and tried to learn aircraft maintenance before was worn out by the daily 20 mile walk the training center.