ethnic conflict & civic life

HINDUS & MUSLIMS IN INDIA

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Chapter 4 Hindu-Muslim Riots, 1950–1995: The National Picture

This chapter deals with the overall statistics on Hindu-Muslim riots, the so-called large-n of communal violence.[1] Based primarily, though not exclusively, on an interpretive reading of the *Times of India* for forty-six years (1950–95), it compiles the riot data and analyzes them. The purpose is to set the stage for the detailed case studies that follow and to ask three questions in particular. First, how is India's communal violence distributed across the nation? Second, do aggregate data, in and of themselves, support some nationwide explanations? Third, if variance is what we should be studying to develop explanations for communal violence, at what level—state, town, village—should variance be studied? What should be the unit of analysis?

The first section explains why existing figures on communal violence are not analytically helpful, making it necessary to create a new data set. The next section describes how data were compiled, what data sources were chosen, and why. Then the chapter breaks down the 46-year time series (1950–95) into the urban-rural, statewise and citywise distribution of violence.[2] It also establishes the city as the unit of analysis for case studies of communal violence. The final section

"tests" a highly popular explanation for Hindu-Muslim violence, one based on modernity. Is modernity the cause of violence or its solution?

EXISTING STATISTICS: WHAT IS WRONG?

For the post-1947 period, the available public figures on communal violence are of six types: official figures on "communal incidents" from the government of India; the annual reports of the Minorities Commission (since 1978); official inquiries into specific riots; government commissions set up to examine issues relevant to public order, such as the Indian Police Commission; the Indian press; and books and articles written by scholars (who were in some cases granted access to confidential records of the government of India).[3]

All of these sources share three defects: government data are neither complete nor easily available; the data are usually not broken down by town or district; and one cannot confidently say that the definition of a "communal incident" was consistent across time and space.

Large Empirical Gaps

Almost all scholars cite the government statistics on "communal incidents" and deaths. This information is usually supplied by the Ministry of Home Affairs in response to questions from a member of Parliament. The published data in parliamentary (*Lok Sabha* and *Rajya Sabha)* proceedings are then reprinted by various journals, especially *Muslim India,* and newspapers. This haphazard process virtually ensures gaps in historical and geographical coverage.

The reports of the Minorities Commission, which, in principle, can fill these gaps, are unable to do so. Ever since its inception in the late 1970s, the Minorities Commission often requested the Home Ministry to supply data on riots, but as the complaints in its reports make clear, the commission did not receive a positive response for many years. In fact, some annual reports of the Minorities Commission have no statistics at all on the previous year's communal riots. In 1992, the commission ceased to a *recommendatory* institution, instead achieving the higher legal status of a *mandatory* body.[4] As a result, its data for the period since 1992 have become better, but for earlier years, there are serious historical and geographical gaps in the publicly available government statistics.

Excessive Aggregation

Only a few Minorities Commission reports provide us with detailed figures on violence in towns and cities. On the whole, they present aggregate figures for

each state. These figures give the impression that communal violence is endemic in states, which have high total figures for incidents and deaths. The truth, however, is that in all of India's states violence is concentrated in a few towns and districts only. State-level aggregation hides too much, not permitting an adequate understanding of how violence is distributed and what its causes might be.

Inconsistent Definitions

Government statistics on communal violence, as they presently exist, also appear to be inconsistent. First, the government typically provides data on "communal *incidents,*" not on "communal *riots.*" The former term encompasses everything from a small-scale scuffle to a pitched battle. A large riot in Aligarh lasting several days might, therefore, contain forty "incidents" according to the local administration but be viewed as a single riot by the residents, by those outside the city, and by Indian newspapers. It seems more important to understand, first, why some cities or districts experience riots so often. We may then wish to know why some riots have forty incidents and others only three of four, depending on whether that question can potentially lead to discovering meaningful patterns.

Second, and just as important, there is inferential evidence for the belief that the definition of a communal incident differs across states or even towns. Some states, such as Gujarat, seem to use a narrow definition that records only serious outbreaks of violence, whereas others such as Andhra Pradesh appear to have included a much wider variety of situations affecting communal relations. For example, the Minorities Commission in 1986 reported that in 1985–86, Andhra Pradesh had 102 incidents, in which 10 people were killed and 108 injured, while Gujarat listed only 60 incidents, in which 230 people were killed and 959 injured.[5]

Two interpretations of the statistics presented above are possible. It may be that the statement is factually accurate; or alternatively, all incidents involving some communal strife, even when no major outbreak of violence took place, were recorded in Andhra Pradesh but not in Gujarat. There is no good way of assessing which of the two interpretations is correct on the basis of government data. A survey of the reports in the *Times of India* for the same time period gives greater credence to the latter hypothesis. In 1985–86, none of the Andhra incidents was considered significant enough by the *Times* to merit a report, whereas a very high proportion of Gujarat incidents were covered: 38 separate incidents with 192 dead.

Interviews with officials of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the

Indian Police Service (IPS)—both in Delhi and in the states—indicate that there is no standard definition applied to the term "communal incident." In fact, the way in which data are collected and reported ensures that Delhi can rarely check the information provided by the state capitals. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, for example, records of communal incidents are passed on from each police station to the superintendent of police, who passes them onto the district collector, who sends them to the state capital in the Fortnightly Demi-Official Report (FDO), which is then forwarded to the Home Ministry in Delhi. Although it appears to be rarely done, the only point in this whole process at which these reports might be checked or questioned is in the state capital, where they can be compared with the reports sent separately to the state government by the Intelligence Department.[6] It is entirely possible that at least for some years, the final figures cited by the government are, for all practical purposes, only an aggregation of figures provided by the respective police stations. The judgment of the station officer may thus travel all the way up to Delhi without any statistical corrections in the intermediate stages.

As a result, we can't be sure of what exactly each incident represents and whether each state, district, or police station is using a consistent set of definitions. If the government were to make more disaggregated information available, we would be able to judge the reliability of its data. As of now, it is unwise to place confidence in their accuracy.

Are Government Statistics Always Unreliable?

It is often said that government statistics are inaccurate in the developing world. Why did we look for government data at all?

Whatever one may say about the rest of the developing world, on a whole variety of political and economic issues the Indian government has continued to produced accurate statistics that have formed the basis of solid scholarship. Indeed, no private agency has yet matched the data-collection resources of the vast government machinery at the village and town levels. For problems such as communal riots, however, these statistics are entirely unreliable.

In order to understand why this is so, let us compare government statistics on communal violence and on some economic matters. In order to determine support prices for agriculture, for example, the government collects cost data at the farm level.[7] According to pre-specified and widely accepted statistical principles of stratified sampling, the statistics are collected by the agricultural universities and released by the Agriculture Ministry for the record books. At each

stage between data collection and publication there are many steps of statistical oversight. If the field staff overstates how much fertilizer is used per acre, it is easy to check the mistake. A comparison of prices and quantities used in previous years already exists, generating reasonable expectations about how much fertilizer will be used if its price goes down or up (via the so-called elasticity estimates). The concerned agricultural university either discovers the source of error through a reexamination of the sample, or it is made to do so by the Ministry of Agriculture. Errors creep in, as they do in all studies based on large-scale sampling, but going by the standard statistical principles followed worldwide, the margins of error are low enough to generate usable data.

More important, in addition to internal checks, there also exists a large academic community to question the accuracy of key definitions and figures and develop better methods for using the data. As a result, India's agricultural statistics are, on the whole, not only reliable but widely considered to be the best in the developing world.

No such internal and external checks have been instituted by the government of India to ensure that data on communal riots reflect social reality. The data are neither publicly available to scholars nor subjected to detailed internal checks. If the country's agricultural statistics are so open and reliable, why can't the same hold for data on communal violence?

Interviews with government officials suggest that in their view, statistical openness on riots would result in a misuse of statistics by those who wish to hurt the government or the country. It is hard to understand the rationale for this argument. After all, the unavailability of accurate statistics never stops speculation; it merely makes the speculation ill-informed. In the absence of accurate figures on communal incidents and deaths, fictional overestimates are produced by communally minded politicians. They take on undeserved and exaggerated importance, for they become part of the so-called communal discourse. The extent of violence is overstated, not understated, when reliable estimates are not publicly made available—for, absent good statistics, there is no good way to stop or challenge inflated claims.

By allowing all kinds of overblown estimates to be presented by the overenthusiastic reporters and communally inclined politicians and activists, the secrecy surrounding riot data does not facilitate the containment of tensions or violence, if that is the purpose of maintaining secrecy. The government of India has yet to recognize this ironic and unintended result of its information policy on riots.

CREATION OF A NEW DATA SET

What sources to use in research on communal violence has become a contentious issue in recent scholarly literature.[8] It is, therefore, best to lay out clearly what sources were used, why, and how. Those not so troubled by the debate on sources may wish to move directly to the substantive results summarized in the next section.

If appropriate methodological procedures are adopted, newspapers remain the best nongovernmental source for alternative statistics in India. The project chose the *Times of India* as the primary source. We went through each day's *Times of India* reports since 1950 and noted where the riot took place, whether it was rural or urban, what the reported cause was (election, religious processions, criminal conduct, and so on), whether a link was explicit between local violence and some national event, the total number of deaths, injuries, and arrests, and details about the police and government response before and after the riot. Appendix B contains the protocol used for data classification.[9]

The *Times of India* was selected as the principal source because it is the only newspaper that covers the whole period (1950–1995); unlike the *Indian Express,* the *Statesman,* or the *Hindu* (at least until recently), it has a truly national coverage of Hindu-Muslim violence; and according to our research, it has, unlike several other newspapers, many a time refused to run unchecked rumors about communal violence as stories without having them verified by its reporters on the ground.[10] To be sure, the *Times of India* reporting was not without defects, but the application of some simple methodological principles, as reported below, could remedy the errors.

All national newspapers in India have several editions, each headquartered in a major city. The choice of edition, therefore, raises questions about the representativeness of reportage. The Bombay edition of the *Times of India* was chosen for the database. It was safe to assume, subject to later checks, that the Bombay edition would be a reliable source for what we might think of as "large national incidents" of violence, such as a major riot with four or five deaths (and many more injuries).[11] As a national paper, the *Times of India,* regardless of edition, would try to report all major riots in the country.

Surprisingly, the *Times of India* proved to be a reliable source for smaller riots as well—those in which between one and three persons died. To test whether the Bombay edition overreported riots from the neighboring regions (Maharashtra and Gujarat), the ratio of small riots (one to three deaths) to ma-

jor riots (four deaths or more) was calculated for all states that saw outbreaks of both. As compared to other states, western Indian states, it turned out, did not have higher ratios.[12] The exercise laid to rest doubts about significant underreporting from distant states.

Below this level of violence—namely, in its reporting of riots in which *only injuries* took place—the *Times of India* did, however, have a strong bias toward incidents in states around Bombay. It underreported events of similar magnitude in other states. Thus, the initial hypothesis about a reporting bias was correct, but the level—injuries versus deaths—at which the bias would work was guessed incorrectly. As a consequence, the statistics reported and analyzed below cover only riots in which one or more people were killed. Lacking confidence in the representativeness of other reports, we excluded injuries entirely from the analysis.

Two other methodological issues need to be clarified. The newspapers were read interpretively, not literally. Newspaper reports sometimes do not make a distinction between intrareligious and interreligious violence, reporting them both as "communal." At other times, communal riots are called a clash between two communities. Finally, the term "communal" can cover a whole variety of clashes: Christian-Hindu (as in the tribal areas), Christian-Muslim (as in the state of Kerala), or Hindu-Sikh (as in the state of Punjab in the 1980s), not simply Hindu-Muslim. A detailed understanding of the variety of religious groups, festivals, and contentious issues in different parts of India was thus needed to classify a communal riot as a Hindu-Muslim one. Unless the description of a riot in the newspaper was supported by a discussion of symbols and issues involved, a communal riot was not coded as a Hindu-Muslim riot. Appendix B also contains the set of interpretive rules followed in the statistical coding and classification.

Finally, when faced with an inconsistency in the numbers of reported deaths between different sources cited in the *Times of India,* the classifying rule was one of using the lower figures, not the higher figures. Minimal numbers were considered superior to maximal numbers for two reasons. First, on subjects that are emotionally and politically charged and where government data are unreliable, we cannot generate an intersubjective consensus on the highest numbers reported, for no scholar can find out exactly how many people died. We can, however, get a consensus that "*at least so many* people died." In calculating deaths in Indian riots, statistical exactitude at a national level (large-n) is impossible, for there are no faultless sources of riot-related statistics for the entire

country. Such precision is possible only for selected cities (small-n), where fieldwork and exhaustive investigation of documentary sources can be combined to produce accurate statistics.

The improbability of statistical exactitude, however, does not preclude statistical reasonableness. The latter is possible not only because a consensus that "at least so many people died" can be achieved but also because, methodologically speaking, trend analysis examines *directionality,* not the exact distance of one data point from another. If statistical accuracy is impossible, the minimal acceptable figures can be a good second-best for ascertaining directionality, provided minimal figures are the consistent basis for constructing a time series.

This conceptual reasoning is supported by the fact that the aggregate government data for the 1960s and 1970s show the same national trends as the data compiled through the *Times of India* and reported below.[13] Two different data sets, thus, independently point to the same national trends, though neither can be called exact. Does the same directionality by any chance mean that the decision not to rely on government data was wrong?

Results that are no different nationally do not suggest that the decision to disbelieve government data was wrong. First of all, the similarity is only at the aggregate (national) level. Inconsistent definitions can produce the same overall result as consistent definitions do, if the inconsistencies cancel one another out. More important, the government data are not systematically broken up at the urban, rural, and district levels. Thus, despite similarity in aggregate results, the data set based on the *Times of India* is superior because it is disaggregated at many levels. Having compiled riot-by-riot, city-by-city, state-by-state, and year-by-year records and known how it was done, we can have greater confidence in the reasonableness of the *Times* data set than in government reports that never clearly lay out the procedures of classification. Finally, government reports combine all communal riots in their statistics, including Hindu-Christian, Christian-Muslim, and Hindu-Sikh violence. The *Times of India* reports allow us systematically to exclude all riots not concerning Hindus and Muslims.

To sum up, in the statistics presented below two different kinds of claims will be made. First, wherever absolute claims about the number of deaths have been made, they essentially mean "at least so many deaths." Second, however, whenever statements about *trends* have been made, no such qualification is required. Until greater precision about the actual number of deaths can be achieved, the "second best" is the only strategy open to empirical researchers.[14]

HINDU-MUSLIM VIOLENCE: WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

National-Level Trends

Did the all-India pattern of communal violence change between 1950–95? It is generally believed that after the peace of the 1950s, the magnitude of violence has increased since the early 1960s. The statistics, in fact, show no trend at all between the early 1950s and the mid-1970s; the pattern can at best be called a random walk (figure 4.1). After the mid-to-late 1970s, however, we do see an unambiguous and rising curve of violence peaking in 1992, when the mosque in Ayodhya was destroyed. In 1994 and 1995, Hindu-Muslim violence dropped to very low levels. It is perhaps true to say that Hindu-Muslim violence in India has declined since the peak of 1993, but in order for that decline to be called a trend, good data on several more years will have to be recorded. It is a judgment to be made in the future.

Figure 4.2 shows the rural-urban breakdown of reported deaths from 1950 to 1995. It confirms the widespread perception that Hindu-Muslim violence is essentially urban. At less than 4 percent in 46 years, the share of rural deaths in overall communal rioting is minuscule. Underreporting of incidents in rural

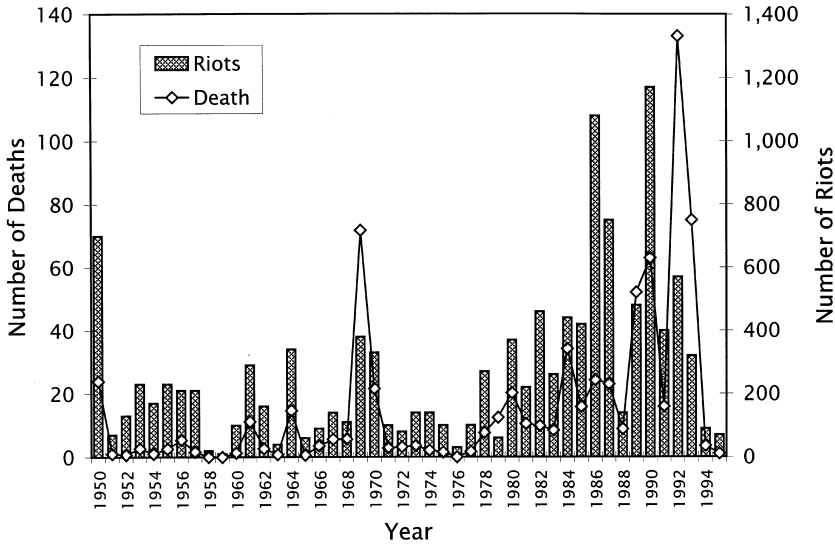
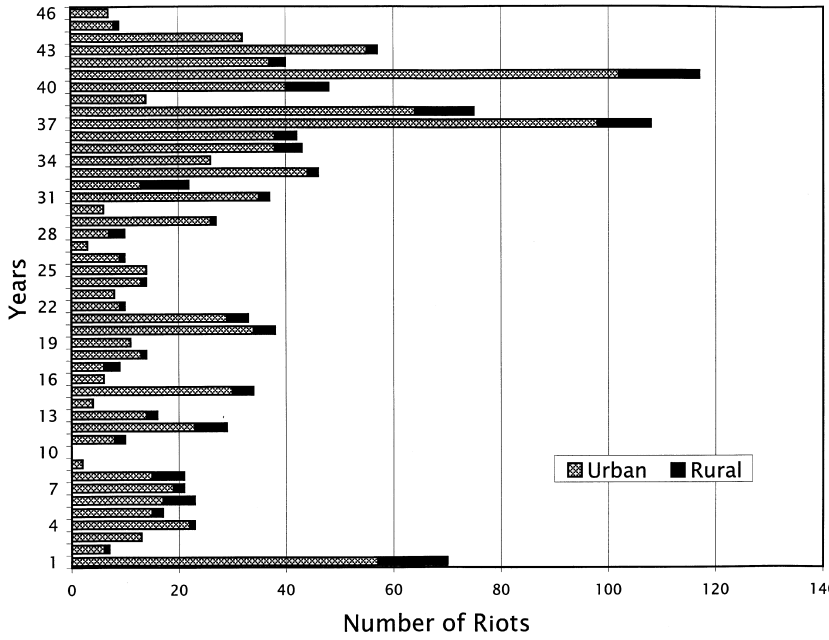


Figure 4.1 Hindu-Muslim Riots, 1950–95



Note: On the y axis, 1 represents 1950, and 46 represents 1995.

Figure 4.2 Rural-Urban Breakdown of Riots by Year, 1950–95

areas may indeed have led to an underestimation of the rural share, but the difference is simply too large to be entirely an artifact of reporting. Even after some underreporting is factored in, it is reasonable to conclude that urban India is the primary site of Hindu-Muslim violence. Put another way, for the rural underreporting completely to undermine the claim that communal violence mainly affects urban India, the underreporting would have to be 15 to 20 times lower than the actual figures. No one intimately familiar with Indian newspapers is prepared to believe such massive underreportage.[15]

It is also sometimes argued that during the Ayodhya movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s communal violence spread to rural India for the first time since the 1947 partition. Figure 4.2 shows that even in the 1960s riots took place in rural India. The Ayodhya movement did indeed provoke a much larger number of incidents—both rural and urban—than in previous years, but it is not true that communal violence in rural areas became increasingly prevalent as a proportion of all violence in the late 1980s. Statistically speaking, the ups and downs of rural communal violence on a base as low as 3–4 per cent of total violence cannot be read as unambiguous or strong indicators of upward or down-

ward trends. It is best to conclude that communal riots have taken place in rural India right since 1947, but the rural share has always been low.

State-Level Trends

A great north-south divide marks perceptions about communalism and communal violence in India. Northern Indian states in general, and Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in particular, are generally believed to be the worst-affected by communal violence. This is partly because, in both popular and scholarly perceptions, the "worst" states are usually seen as those with the greatest total number of incidents and deaths. Therefore the most populous states, even if they have a lower per capita rate of deaths in communal riots, appear to be the most violent. Do significant differences emerge if we compare the aggregate and per capita figures for states?

Figure 4.3 shows the ranking of states when we control for the size of urban population. Uttar Pradesh is not the worst state. The West Indian state of Gujarat, in fact, has the highest per capita rate of deaths in communal incidents, at around 117 per million of urban population. Bihar in the north (78 deaths per million) and Maharashtra in the west (45 deaths per million) also have higher per capita rates than Uttar Pradesh (43 deaths per million). Clearly, communal-

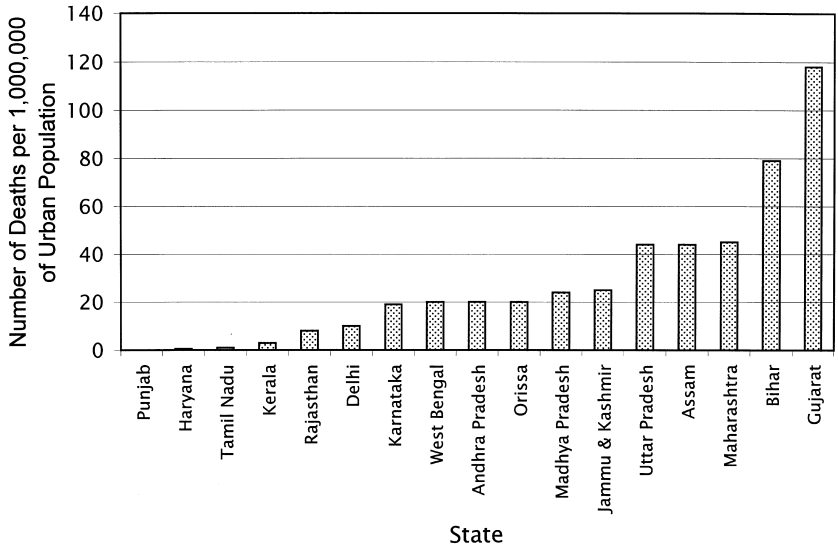


Figure 4.3 Deaths per 1,000,000 of Urban Populations in Riots with One or More Deaths, 1950–95

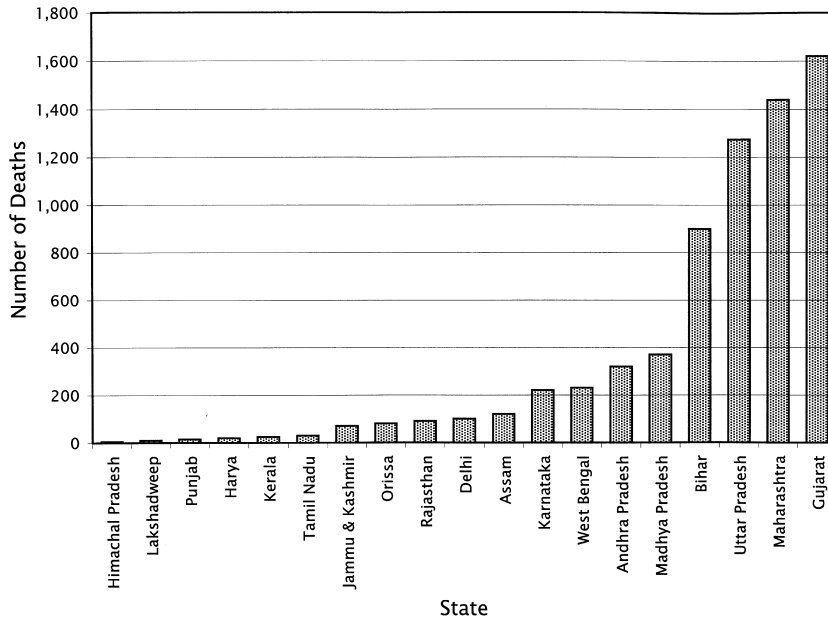


Figure 4.4 Rankings of Total Deaths in States in Riots with One or More Deaths, 1950–95

ism is not primarily a northern Indian problem; it is also a serious issue for western India.

Indeed, the two western states—Gujarat and Maharashtra—not only have a greater per capita rate of deaths and incidents but also a larger number of total deaths in riots than do Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (figure 4.4). Does this finding, then, suggest that perceptions about the levels of violence are entirely wrong?

Not quite. Although Gujarat has high levels of deaths in communal incidents, a look at the state level data for Gujarat over time (figure 4.5) in comparison with that for Uttar Pradesh (figure 4.6) and Bihar (figure 4.7) suggests that there are significant qualitative differences in the levels of violence in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh that may, at one level, justify the popular perceptions of them as the most communally violent states.

Gujarat's violence is not consistently high: long periods of peace alternate with periods of extremely high violence. Twenty-five of 46 years between 1950 and 1995 had no riots or very few incidents of communal violence. Either Gujarat does not have riots, or if it does, the violence reaches very high levels quickly. Contrariwise, the history of communal violence in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (figures 4.6 and 4.7) is much more consistent. Similarly, Maharashtra

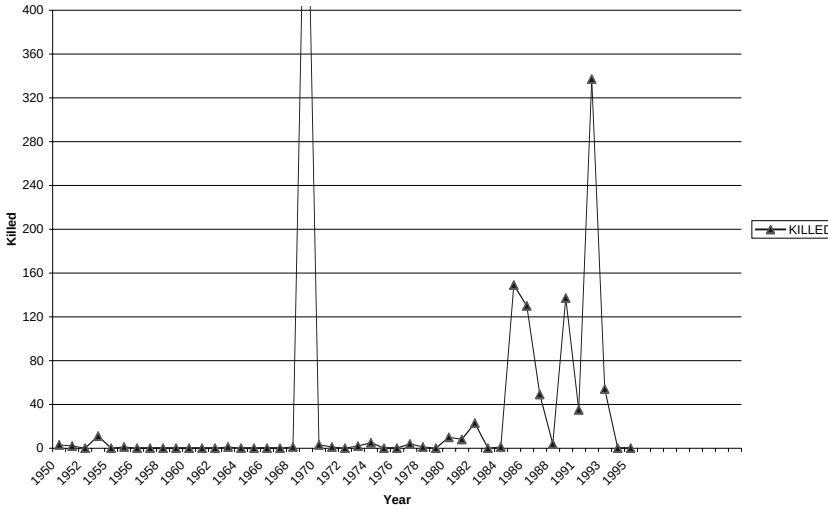


Figure 4.5 Total Deaths per Year, Gujarat, 1950–95

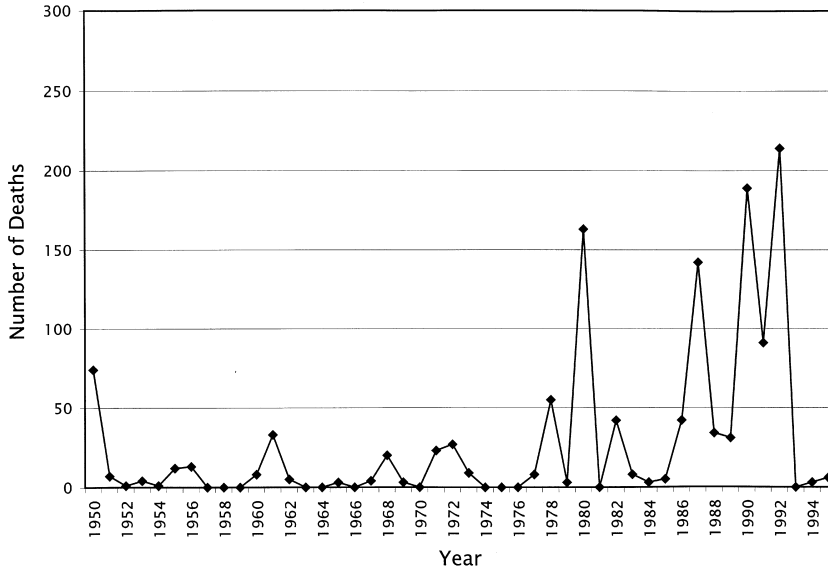


Figure 4.6 Total Deaths per Year, Uttar Pradesh, 1950–95

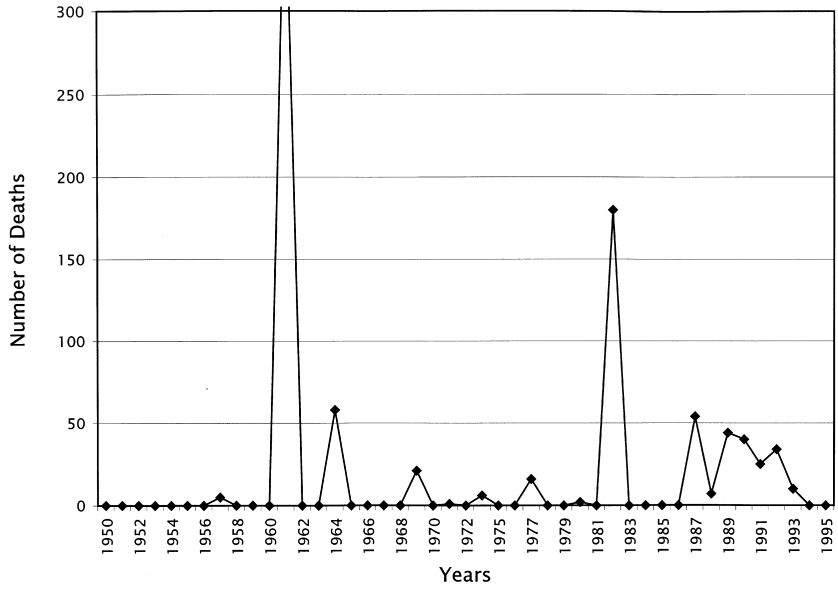


Figure 4.7 Total Deaths per Year, Bihar, 1950–95

(figure 4.8) also has a pattern of consistent violence. There are more years of violence in these states than of peace. In other words, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra should be regarded as states "prone" to communal violence. Gujarat's case is one of proneness to *big* violence amid long stretches of peace.[16]

Did the preexisting state patterns continue or change during the Ayodhya movement (1986–93)? Although the violence-prone states discussed above maintained their patterns, it is worth noting that even states where Hindu-Muslim peace normally prevailed were unable to escape the violence engendered by the Ayodhya agitation between 1989 and 1993. Consider trends in the communally peaceful states of Orissa, Rajasthan, and Kerala (figures 4.9, 4.10, and 4.11).[17]

City-Level Trends

By far the most significant results are to be found at the city level. Table 4.1 shows towns with the worst record of communal violence between 1950 and 1995 in increasing order of magnitude (columns 2 to 5). How the orders of magnitude were derived requires some explanation.

The first question in deriving any such measure is: How does one define

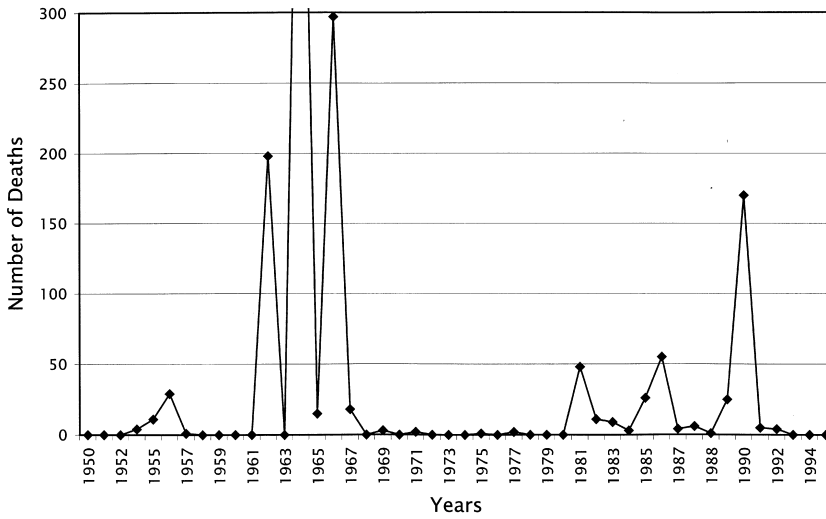


Figure 4.8 Total Deaths per Year, Maharashtra, 1950–95

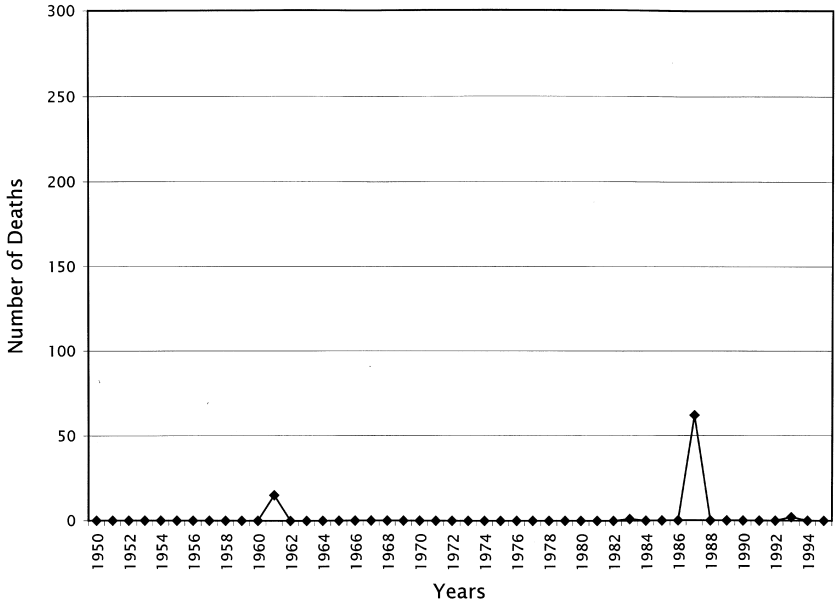


Figure 4.9 Total Deaths per Year, Orissa, 1950–95

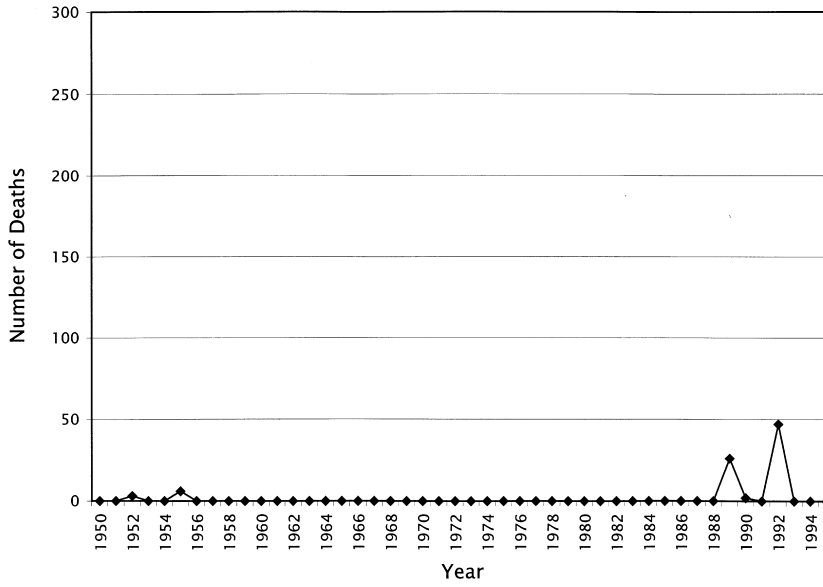


Figure 4.10 Total Deaths per Year, Rajasthan, 1950–95

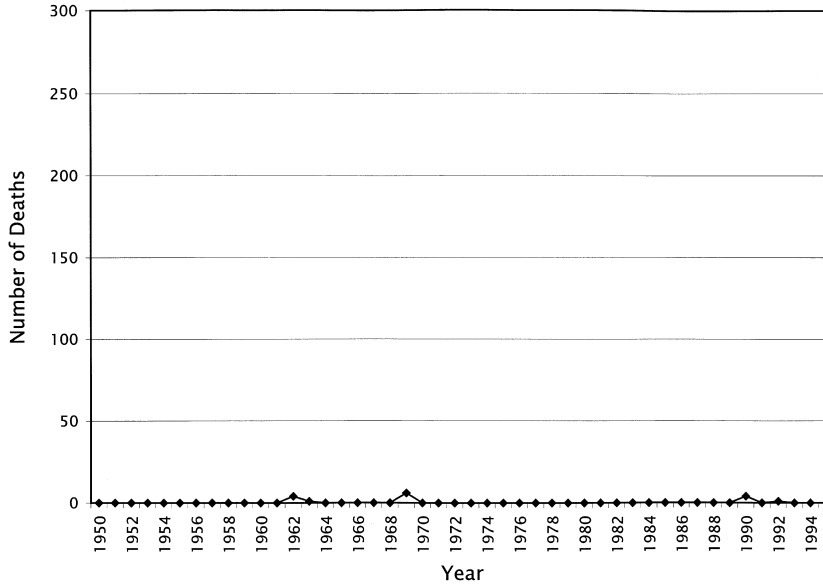


Figure 4.11 Total Deaths per Year, Kerala, 1950–95

"riot-proneness"? There are problems with only using deaths as a measure. Should a town such as Bhagalpur, which had one serious riot in 46 years—but a riot in which scores were killed—be considered more "riot-prone" than Delhi, which has had a large number of riots but very few deaths per riot? One would obviously have to combine intensity *and* persistence. To develop such a composite measure for riot-proneness for the period 1950–95, four simple questions, making the benchmark progressively more stringent, were asked:

a. How many cities in India had at least 3 communal riots, spread over at least 2 five-year periods, in which a minimum of 15 deaths occurred? (table 4.1, column 1);
b. How many had at least 4 riots over at least 3 five-year periods and a minimum of 20 deaths? (column 2);
c. How many witnessed at least 5 riots and 25 deaths over 4 five-year periods? (column 3);
d. Finally, how many had at least 50 deaths in at least 10 riots over 5 five-year periods? (column 4).

These columns can be called RP1, RP2, RP3, and RP4, respectively.

If my reasoning is right, the RP4 category (column 4) was truly riot-prone in the period 1950–95. Of the four categories of riot-proneness constructed, RP4 combines intensity and persistence in a most stringent way. In principle, RP3 (column 3) could also be included in the category of riot-proneness but, as we will see below, the inclusion of RP3 does not alter the primary conclusion that emerges from such an exercise.

The eight RP4 cities account for as many as 45.5 percent of total deaths in urban India and 49 percent of all deaths in the entire country. The RP4 cities hold only about 18 percent of India's urban population, showing how concentrated the country's Hindu-Muslim violence is. Their proportion of the population would, of course, be considerably smaller if urban and rural subtotals were combined. With the latter included, "riot-proneness" would seem to be confined to a mere 5 percent of India's total population.

The riot-prone cities also account for a disproportionate share of Hindu-Muslim violence in their respective states. In the state of Gujarat, for example, the two RP4 cities—Ahmedabad and Vadodara (Baroda)—account for about 75 percent of the total deaths between 1950 and 1995; the city of Hyderabad had more than 90 percent of all riot deaths in the state of Andhra Pradesh; and metropolitan Bombay accounted for 63 percent of all deaths in the state of Maharashtra (and what would be functionally equivalent, the four RP3 towns of Ma-

Table 4.1. Violence in India's "Riot-Prone" Cities as a Proportion of All Reported Hindu-Muslim Violence, 1950–95

RP1: Mimimum of 15 deaths in 3 riots over 2 five-year periods	RP2: Minimum of 20 deaths in 4 riots over 3 five-year periods	RP3: Minimum of 25 deaths in 5 riots over 4 five-year periods	RP4: Minimum of 50 deaths in 10 riots over 5 five-year periods	Deaths, 1950–95	% Literate	% Muslim
Bombay	Bombay	Bombay	Bombay	1,137	83	14
Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	1,119	79	15
Hyderabad	Hyderabad	Hyderabad	Hyderabad	312	71	34
Meerut	Meerut	Meerut	Meerut	265	61	34
Jamshedpur	Jamshedpur	Jamshedpur		198	81	12
Bhiwandi	Bhiwandi			194	63	53
Surat				194	76	15
Aligarh	Aligarh	Aligarh	Aligarh	160	60	35
Moradabad	Moradabad			149	57	48
Baroda	Baroda	Baroda	Baroda	109	82	11
Bhopal	Bhopal	Bhopal		108	72	28
Delhi	Delhi	Delhi	Delhi	93	77	8
Kanpur	Kanpur	Kanpur		81	72	20
Calcutta	Calcutta	Calcutta	Calcutta	63	78	14
Jabalpur				59	79	11
Bangalore	Bangalore	Bangalore		56	81	14
Jalgaon	Jalgaon	Jalgaon		49	79	16

	Sitamarhi				47	n.a.	18
	Indore	Indore	Indore		45	78	13
	Varanasi	Varanasi	Varanasi		42	64	24
	Allahabad	Allahabad	Allahabad		37	73	22
	Nagpur	Nagpur	Nagpur		37	82	10
	Jaipur	Jaipur			32	70	18
	Aurangabad	Aurangabad	Aurangabad		30	77	31
	Srinagar	Srinagar	Srinagar		30	n.a.	89
	Ranchi				29	83	15
	Malegaon	Malegaon			23	70	68
	Godhra				18	76	40
Deaths in Riot-Prone Cities	4,706	4,359	3,887	3,263			
All, India Deaths-1950–95	7,173	7,173	7,173	7,173			
Riot-Prone Cities as a Percentage of all India Deaths	66	61	54	45.5			
Riot-Prone Cities as a Percentage of all urban deaths	69	64	58	49			
Deaths in rural India as a Percentage of all deaths			3.57				

harashtra—Bombay, Aurangabad, Jalgaon, and Nagpur—had 70 percent of all deaths in the state).[18] All of these states had more towns that were peaceful than were violent. Violence, thus, was not concentrated in a particular state but in various cities in different states. The unmistakable local concentration and the relationship between state-level and city-level statistics clearly establish the city as the unit of analysis for a study of the causes of communal violence. India's Hindu-Muslim violence is city-specific. State (and national) politics provide the context within which the local mechanisms linked with violence are activated.

Moreover, popular perceptions about some cities are simply wrong. Until 1993, when horrible communal riots broke out, Bombay, India's premier business city, was often called an island of peace where local energies were mostly spent on cosmopolitan pursuits and monetary gains. This is simply not true. Bombay's modernity and cosmopolitanism have not precluded communal violence. Bombay was among the most communally violent cities even before 1993. Similarly, Delhi and Calcutta, both considered to be peaceful after independence, especially the latter, also have a bad record, though their violence level is considerably lower than that of Bombay. They tend to have small riots but there have been many of them. Delhi and Calcutta benefit from what might be called a scale effect. Given their sheer size, violence in some areas, unless truly ghastly, does not affect routine life in other parts. A riot in Old Delhi does not affect life in New Delhi to the same extent as similar violence would in smaller cities such as Moradabad or Meerut, where practically the whole city can come to a standstill.

Finally, note that all RP3 and RP4 4 towns are the so-called Class I cities of India—in other words, their populations are greater than 100,000. Even in the least violent (RP1) category, there are only two towns—Godhra and Sitamarhi—that are not Class I. Communal violence at its most intense and persistent seems to be a phenomenon of India's larger towns. Communalism may exist in Class II towns (50,000 to 100,000 people) and Class III towns (25,000–50,000), but tensions do not lead to high levels of violence.

Several hypotheses suggest themselves. It may be that communal tensions flare up less in smaller towns, for they lack the relative anonymity of India's largest towns and allow greater routine interaction between Hindus and Muslims. Or, it may simply be that large towns are extremely difficult places for the police to control violence once it breaks out.

In the detailed city comparisons undertaken later in the book, these factors are investigated at length. On a more general level, however, a theoretical de-

bate can be discussed right away. Since larger cities are more modern than smaller towns and villages, it is argued, especially by anti- and postmodernists, that this is enough to show a causal link between modernity and communal or ethnic violence. Is that right?

MODERNITY AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Arguments about the relation between modernity and communalism or communal violence have long been dominant in intellectual circles. By now, of course, the debate has come full circle. Until the 1960s, modernization was considered a solution to the problem of communalism. Over the last decade or so, however, antimodernity arguments have acquired unprecedented popularity. India has had strong advocates on both sides. The customary view, a view that is often associated with Nehru and the Indian left, was that greater modernity would solve the problem of communalism. To the antisecularists or antimodernists, however, modernity is a problem, not a solution.[19]

The Modernists

That a rising tide of rationality and modernization would sweep away the ascriptive identities of religion, ethnicity, and nation—identities that had led to such violence, bloodshed, and ruin in the first half of the twentieth century—was not simply an argument confined to the left. The modernization theory was an article of faith for most intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s, it was clear that the expected erosion of ethnicity and religion was not taking place. Since then, the persistence of these identities, despite modernization, has been taken more or less for granted by scholars.[20]

Although few believe in the modernization theory today, a newer form of the argument has emerged of late. In the recent version, the emphasis has moved from economic prosperity to literacy, and, more generally, to "human development."[21] Amartya Sen, for example, has drawn a contrast between Kerala, which has the highest literacy rate in the country and lowest communal violence, and North India, which scores low on literacy and high on riots. Sen argues that literacy and communal violence are related and that improved literacy will lead to lower communal violence or even its gradual elimination.[22]

This argument relies too heavily on a Kerala–Uttar Pradesh or Kerala-Bihar comparison. If we cast our statistical net wider, the argument breaks down. States with the lowest communal violence happen to be at two opposite ends of the literacy spectrum. Kerala and Rajasthan are both among the least commu-

nally violent states. Kerala, as is widely known, is the most literate state in India. At 90.59 percent, its literacy rate in 1991 was far above India's overall literacy rate of 52.21 percent.[23] Rajasthan, however, also communally peaceful, is among the least literate. At 38.81 percent, its literacy rate is among the lowest in India. Moreover, states such as Gujarat and Maharashtra have high levels of communal violence coexisting with high literacy rates. At 63.05 and 60.91 percent, respectively, both of these states were considerably above the national average in 1991.

Disaggregation at the city level also yields the same result. The RP3 or RP4 towns in table 4.1 have literacy rates ranging from 60 percent (Aligarh) to 80 percent and above (Bombay, Baroda). The national average for urban literacy was about 70 percent in 1991.[24] Rural India, with a literacy rate considerably lower than that of urban India, is not the primary site of communal violence.

Since, as we move from state-level to city-level data, we can get a large number of observations, it is also possible to run regressions and test the conclusion above more rigorously. Indeed, results of both standard least squares and logistic regressions, as reported in detail in Appendix C, show that literacy has no relation at all to whether a city will be prone to riots.

In short, there is no systematic relationship between literacy and communal violence. For a whole variety of reasons, India ought to improve its literacy levels. But one should not expect that an increase in literacy will reduce communal conflict.

The Antimodernists

How do the data presented above reflect on the arguments of antimodernists or antisecularists? Let us briefly recall the antisecularist view, according to which modernity in its various manifestations—rationality, urbanization, science, and secularism—is the cause of higher religious or communal violence. First, in the garb of a nation-state, modernity tends to flatten the diversity of traditional cultures. Many people resist homogenization, sticking instead to their particularistic roots—be they in religion, language, or culture. India is perhaps the most diverse society in the world. Attempts at homogenizing India are bound to produce violence. Second, modernity attacks the values of a religiously driven society such as India, generating a reaction among the believers: dams, even in a modern age, cannot replace temples of worship. Finally, and most important, modernity, according to antisecularists, makes politicians immoral. Religion used to provide inner controls on human behavior; the mod-

ern man considers nothing sacred; in search of power and profit, a modern politician, if necessary, will use communal violence as a strategic tool.

The antisecularist view has been adopted by both antimodernists and postmodernists.[25] Its theoretical grandeur and popularity notwithstanding, it has never been tested. Nor has it ever been indicated what might constitute an appropriate test for the argument, given that the modernity-versus-tradition view, strictly speaking, is an epochal view. It speaks of the modern and premodern times, not of shorter time horizons. The latter, needless to add, are more easily testable than the former.

The epochal sweep of the argument may create problems of exact testing, but a proximate test is possible, and it begins to show the cracks in the antimodernist claim. In his writings, Nandy, among the most influential antimodernists of our time, has consistently maintained that the *link between tradition and rural India* is very much alive even today. Modernity has established its hegemony in urban, not in rural, India. The countryside may gradually fall into the trap of modernity, but it remains less afflicted by modernity, and its traditional mechanisms of peaceful resolution of religious disputes are, by and large, still alive. Nandy's argument against the urban-industrial India is unambiguous: "As India gets modernized, religious violence is increasing. . . . In the earlier centuries, . . . inter-religious riots were rare and localized . . . [S]omewhere and somehow, *religious violence has something to do with the urban-industrial vision of life and with the political process the vision lets loose*."[26]

Does the urban-rural distribution of communal violence support antimodernists? It is true that Hindu-Muslim violence primarily takes place in the cities, not in the countryside. But, as shown above, it is also true that as much as 82 percent of urban India is not prone to such violence. Although an overall urban-rural distribution may suggest that modernity, proxied here by urbanization, may potentially be a cause, a greater disaggregation—that is, an intra-urban distribution—of violence indicates that greater modernity cannot be the reason for higher communal violence.

Urban violence can be examined in yet another way. The most riot-prone areas, as we have seen, are the largest urban centers: the so-called Class I cities, having a population of more than 100,000 people. Moreover, the regression results, presented in detail in Appendix C, also show that the size of the city, measured by its total population, significantly affects the probability that a city will be riot-prone.

Can this observation support the antimodernist claim? The largest cities, af-

ter all, are the farthest removed from traditional India, whereas smaller towns maintain, to a considerable extent, the intimacy of village India and arguably its peaceful resolution of religious disputes.

Of the roughly 218 million urban people in India in 1991, 142.14 million (65.2 percent) lived in Class I cities. The population of the eight RP4 cities, all Class I, was about 39.5 million, which was about 28 percent of the total population in Class I cities.[27] Thus, only 28 percent of the overall population of Class I cities lived in riot-prone areas. Even if we extend the definition of riot-proneness to RP3 cities, we find that the aggregate population living there was 37 percent of the total Class I population in 1991. More than 63 percent of the most urban part of the country manages its life in a relatively peaceful manner, broken at worst by an occasional riot.

Once we put this breakdown and the regression results together, an interpretation begins to emerge: the larger the city, the greater the chance that it may become riot-prone, *but it does not have to.* We need to ask why, even though the population size of the city increases the probability that it will be riot-prone, many Class I cities remain calm. The variance within urban India significantly erodes the antimodernist argument.

These tests are unlikely to satisfy the antisecularists and modernists, who may claim that their arguments are deeper. Arguments about modernity, they may claim, are either not reducible to testing, or if tests are conducted, they should cover the pre-modern and modern periods of Indian history, not urban and rural India after 1950. By this logic, only the former can provide a conclusive test.

We only have impressionistic knowledge about communal violence in premodern India, whereas a great deal can be said about the modern period, especially the twentieth century. The incomplete evidence that historians have produced shows considerable Hindu-Muslim rioting in the eighteenth century, though the levels of violence do not appear to be comparable to those reached in the twentieth century.[28]

Short of examining exhaustive data, is there a way of resolving the debate? Let us suppose for the sake of argument that the twentieth-century levels of communal violence are indeed historically unprecedented. Would this assumption support antimodernists?

It may well be that the higher levels of communal conflict simply reflect the breakdown of pre-modern ascriptive hierarchies. The rise of equality and self-respect as a behavioral idea can be shown to have undermined caste hierarchies in much of India in the twentieth century: southern India experienced such an

erosion in the first half of the century, and northern India is experiencing it now.[29] Is it that religious communities, like caste communities, in traditional India were placed in a hierarchical relationship of lesser and higher worth, of lesser and higher privileges, and such hierarchies were acceptable so long as notions of deference held cultural and ideological sway? If true, then the role of modernity is of a different kind, for it is not the intolerance of modernity or its penchant for cultural uniformity but its attack on ascriptive hierarchies that would cause communal conflict. The former is the argument of antimodernists, not the latter. Indeed, scholars such as Charles Taylor have put the latter idea at the heart of research on ethnic conflict today.[30]

CONCLUSION

If there are enough places that, in spite of modernity, do not have communal violence, and communities in such towns have found a way to solve or coexist with interreligious problems, the explanatory focus will have to shift from modernity to institutions or factors that make it possible for communities to live together and solve their problems in a relatively peaceful manner, instead of expressing them in acts of violence toward one another. These peace-keeping factors will be better able to explain communal peace or violence, not modernity per se. By going into the local history of conflict and peace, the case studies presented in the later chapters confront this issue at length.

Part III **Local Variations**

INTRODUCTION

We proceed now to the three paired cases—a comparison in each case of a violent and a peaceful city having, at the very least, roughly similar Hindu-Muslim proportions in the population. The case materials follow a two-step methodological procedure.

First, we ask why one city has been peaceful and the other violent in recent times. The method of process-tracing is applied to establish how, given similar stimuli or provocations, different kinds of civic networks—intercommunal versus intracommunal, associational versus quotidian—are linked to the divergent outcomes—peace and riots, respectively.

Second, it must be asked whether the relationship observed is merely a correlation or whether civic integration is also *causally* connected to communal peace. This analytically necessary step required investigation of the history of each major civic association found present in the cities researched. It turned out in the process of such detailed historical inquiry that almost all of those associations were born between the 1920s and the 1940s. This finding naturally trig-

gered a question: What was it about the period starting from the 1920s that generated such coincidence in so many cases?

The search for an answer took the inquiry to India's freedom, or national, movement, especially to how the 1920s constituted a transformative moment —socially, culturally, and politically. With the spectacular rise of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers, India's freedom movement, confined to the English-speaking thin upper crust of India before then, became mass-based in the 1920s. The aim of the movement was not simply to wrest independence from the British but, equally important for our purposes, also to reconstruct Indian society. Gandhian ideology was premised on the belief that the British conquest of India was in large part based on India's own internal inadequacies and underlying problems." These had to be fought and Indian society reconstructed just as the battle to oust the British was to be conducted. A mass-based Congress Party was a primary agent of the battle against the British, but it was to be only one of several institutions for social reforms and campaigns.[1]

What would these reconstructive projects be? Gandhian ideology identified several goals: ridding India of Hindu-Muslim divisions and untouchability; building a tradition of self-reliance *(swadeshi);* uplifting the tribals, women, and the downtrodden; and creating educational institutions that could instill pride among pupils, not a sense of shame about being Indian, which British education of Indians and British versions of Indian history had quite successfully done.

Such a massive nation-building project, moreover, was to be carried out in the overarching framework of nonviolence. As is well known, Gandhi was a leading practitioner of "civil disobedience." Violence, Gandhi thought, was not the way to deal with British rule in India. The superior military force of the colonial power could always overwhelm violent acts of defiance, whereas the ruler after a point could not use violence against a people who, while protesting, continued to take blows of the ruler in an organized, disciplined, and peaceful way. Principled nonviolence, Gandhi argued, would produce helplessness in the ruler, for it would make the use of violence self-defeating and morally disgusting. By doing so, it would also build strength in a community. Nonviolent resistance to unjust laws would both defeat the British and build a strong Indian nation.

It should be clear how important education, campaigning, and organizations were for such a nation-building project. India's freedom movement thus was social as well as political. It created a whole range of associations and organizations in India. Indians did interact with one another before that, but pre-

1920 civic engagement was basically an everyday and informal engagement. By creating cadre-based political parties, trade unions, new educational institutions, and new cultural and social organizations, the Gandhian shift in politics laid the foundations of India's associational civic order.

Gandhi is viewed as the father of India, but it is not often realized that he was a master of civic activism and thinking. Gandhi did not have a theory of governance, nor did he trust the state to guide human affairs. His reliance on moral transformation of society meant a lot of civic, nongovernmental activity. In a revealing passage, he wrote: "Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation is necessary. . . . In such a state everyone is his own ruler. . . . In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least."[2] This position inevitably led to what in today's language can be called a primary reliance on civil society for governing human affairs and only a secondary reliance on the state.

Given how massive the vision and project were, it is to be expected that Gandhi wouldn't entirely succeed, but neither did he completely fail. All kinds of organizations and campaigns came into being. Anti-British violence was indeed minimal, but Hindu-Muslim violence could not be contained in many parts of India.

The case materials that follow show that different parts and cities of India participated differently in this project of national reconstruction. Why it turned out to be so, why even the extraordinary powers of Gandhi and his followers could not produce "a straight line out of the crooked timber of humanity," and what the implications were in different parts of India—these are the matters of inquiry and analysis in the next chapters.[3]

Part III **Local Variations**

Aligarh and Calicut: Internal and External Cleavages

Chapter 5 Aligarh and Calicut: Civic Life and Its Political Foundations

Before investigating the similarities and differences between the towns of Aligarh and Calicut, let me relate the story of our field research in the two towns. The story bears on a key theme of the comparison: intercommunal trust or communication in civic life.

In order to gather statistics on the Hindu-Muslim breakdown of business ownership in Aligarh, a town in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a Muslim member of our research team approached the District Industries Office. A Hindu journalist was sitting there. The project was introduced and a request for data made. A story appeared in the local daily the next day that the CIA was conducting research on Hindu-Muslim relations in India. The newspaper further said that Harvard University, the sponsor of research at that time, was an agent of the CIA. Moreover, the newspaper argued, Muslim research officers were being deployed to gather sensitive information, and a Hindu professor was directing the project from Harvard. The purpose of the project, according to the story, was to discover the causes of riots in Aligarh so that similar riots could be incited in Calicut and other peaceful towns of India. In order to weaken India, the

newspaper said, the CIA wanted to instigate widespread Hindu-Muslim violence all over the country.[1]

The research team was unnerved by the banner headlines. Luckily, the national dailies did not think the matter was important enough to carry the story. Research was resumed later in Aligarh. It took some time, however, to allay the fears and instill enough confidence in ourselves that the project could go forward, without such unwarranted and scurrilous journalistic attention.

Several months later in Calicut, a town in the southern Indian state of Kerala, I interviewed E. Moidu Moulvi, a leading Muslim freedom fighter, who passed away in 1995. When I reached the Moulvi's house, I found three reporters and photographers. My purpose was to have the Moulvi recall Hindu-Muslim interactions in Calicut during the freedom movement in the 1920s and 1930s. The role played by the Moulvi during the movement was familiar to me, but little did I realize that the Moulvi was a legendary figure in the city. The newspapers had reporters whose "beat" was to cover the evening of the Moulvi's life. I did not want a public interview, but the journalists requested that they be allowed to stay. They were curious about the research project, about the questions I had for a great political figure of the city, and about his answers.

The next day a leading local newspaper ran a picture of the Moulvi being interviewed by me. The caption read: "A Student of History Meets a Maker of History."[2] Calicut reporters did not think that the purpose of my research was to spread disaffection and violence in their peaceful town, as their counterparts in Aligarh had suspected. They did not ask whether I was Muslim or Hindu. They made a clear distinction between curiosity and suspicion. Indeed, it took very little time to gather information on matters generally considered sensitive in Aligarh. The local business federation gladly shared information on the Hindu-Muslim breakdown of Calicut's trade sector. In Aligarh, it is remarkably difficult to get these figures.

For the Muslims, the two towns are culturally, educationally, and historically significant. Aligarh's Muslim University (AMU) is intimately tied up the modern history of northern Indian Muslims. Since its founding in the 1870s, first as a college, the AMU has been a symbol of the educational and political aspirations of a critical mass of Indian Muslims. Indeed, most scholars of modern India would argue that it is impossible to write the history of Muslim politics in the subcontinent without understanding the role of the AMU. It was the intellectual center of the movement that led to India's partition in 1947 and to the birth of Pakistan. And after 1947, it continued to be the center of higher edu-

cation for Muslims in northern India, as well as an object of intense political passions and controversies.

Though not exactly comparable to Aligarh's national political significance, Calicut is the center of culture and education for Kerala Muslims. As Aligarh is venerated by northern Indian Muslims, Calicut is respected by Kerala Muslims. It is the headquarters of several leading Muslim institutions and organizations: the Muslim League, the Muslim Educational Society, and the Muslim Service Society. Farook College, the first Muslim college in Kerala, was founded in Calicut. The Calicut University was especially set up to make higher education accessible to Muslims of the area.

Moreover, starting in the 1970s, both cities have developed a substantial Muslim middle class. From both, Muslims migrated to the Middle East in large numbers after the oil price increases of 1973. Profiting from remittances sent home from the Gulf, Muslims have improved their economic standing in both cities. Finally, both have a roughly similar percentage of Muslims in the town population. Muslims have comprised 34–35 percent of Aligarh's population since 1951; in Calicut, their share is 36–37 percent.

Calicut and Aligarh, however, are also a world apart. A deep intercommunal civic engagement marks life in Calicut. Neighborhoods are remarkably integrated, and so is the city's business and professional life. In Aligarh, Hindu-Muslim civic engagement is minimal. Calicut has not had a single communal riot in a century, although it came desperately close to breaking its harmony in 1921 during the so-called Malabar rebellion. Aligarh is infamous for frequent outbreaks of Hindu-Muslim violence. It is among the most riot-prone cities of India identified in table 1.1.

Why do Hindus and Muslims live peacefully in Calicut but not in Aligarh? Two arguments are made in the comparative materials presented here. First, a thick civic engagement between Hindus and Muslims marks Calicut, which makes it hard for politicians to play the politics of religious polarization. Some have tried; most do not, *including politicians who would clearly benefit from such polarization.* The BJP's electoral fortunes are a case in point. The BJP has been a marginal political entity in Calicut. Nothing would benefit the BJP more than antagonism between Hindus and Muslims in Calicut, but the party is unable to create communal animosities. Contrariwise, the BJP flourishes in Aligarh and has often been associated with communal violence. Since independence the politicians of Calicut have, on the whole, built bridges across religious communities. In Aligarh, communal polarization has been the princi-

pal political strategy of the BJP and many Muslim leaders, and violence often part of the political calculations.

Second, although they restrain politicians in the short and medium run, the intercommunal civic networks in Calicut were *politically* constructed in the long run. Caste injustice within Hindu society rather than communal antagonism between Hindus and Muslims has historically formed the master narrative of Kerala politics. Caste was more central to the ascriptive hierarchy in Kerala than was religion. Hence ethnic conflict historically took the idiom of caste.[3] Hindu-Muslim politics functioned within a larger context of intra-Hindu caste differences. In Aligarh, the reverse has been true. Communalism has been the dominant political narrative for a century, and caste politics within Hinduism has historically functioned within the larger framework of Hindu-Muslim antagonisms. Communalism in Aligarh emerged because a declining Muslim aristocracy, part of the ruling class in pre-British times, was unable to come to terms with a framework of political participation that relied on elections, not nominations and quotas. Rather than accepting the egalitarian implications of democratic rule, the former Muslim aristocrats wanted to protect their privileges, to which the rising Hindu middle classes were opposed. The Muslim elite wanted a form of consociationalism, which would make them the spokesmen for the entire Muslim community. Their political rivals

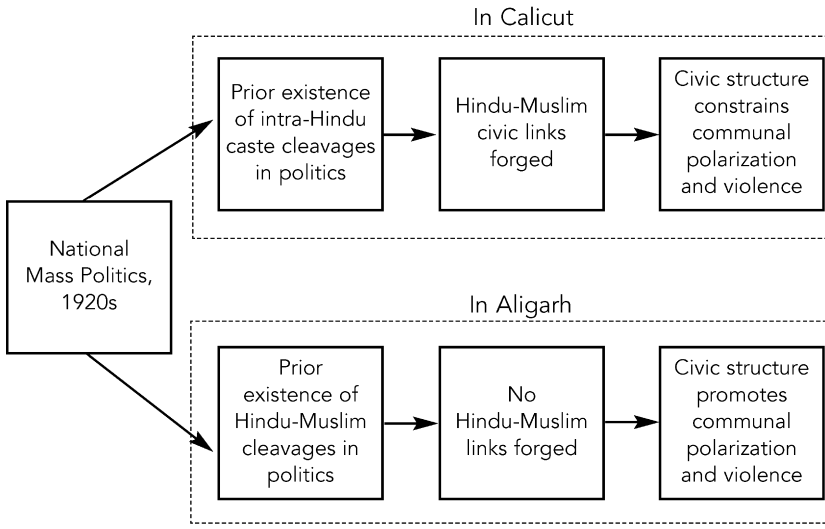


Figure 5.1 Politics, Civic Life, and Communal Violence in Calicut and Aligarh

argued in favor of a majoritarian political system. The latter would not accede to communal consociationalism, and the Muslim elite would not accept majoritarianism. Later, as franchise expanded and mass politics emerged, the consociational argument became part of Muslim mass politics as well. The British, a third important factor in the Hindu-Muslim equation, used the emerging divide among the Hindu and Muslim political elite. Aligarh remained at the center of this larger process.

Figure 5.1 diagrammatically presents the two arguments together. The account below is also organized around the two parts of the explanation above. I first compare Aligarh and Calicut's civic life. Then I turn to its political foundations between the 1930s and the 1940s. Once these foundations were laid, the post-independence phase in politics was marked by a vicious circle of violence in Aligarh and a virtuous circle of peace in Calicut. These circles are explored in the next chapter.

VIOLENCE AND CIVIC LIFE

Similar Provocations, Different Responses: An Example

Between 1989 and 1992, when the Hindu nationalist agitation to destroy the Baburi mosque in Ayodhya led to unprecedented violence in much of India, the two cities responded very differently. Communal tensions did emerge in Calicut, but *all* political parties, including the Muslim League and BJP, supported the local administration's efforts to maintain law and order. The city-level peace committees, formed with the participation of political leaders, were the key tension-management device; in addition, neighborhood-level peace committees emerged between trusting neighbors and neighborhood-level leaders. Unfounded rumors circulated in the town that pigs had been thrown into mosques and temples attacked. Such rumors often lead to riots in several cities in India. In Calicut, the peace committees, and the press, helped the administration squash rumors.

In contrast, blinded by a Hindu nationalist fervor during the Ayodhya agitation, the city of Aligarh plunged into horrendous violence. Unlike Calicut newspapers, which would neutralize rumors after investigating them, Aligarh's local newspapers printed blatant falsehoods in order to incite passions. Two of the largest-circulation Hindi newspapers wrote in lurid detail that Muslim nurses, doctors, and staff of the university hospital had killed Hindu patients in

cold blood.[4] Some Hindus were indeed killed outside the university campus,[5] but nobody was murdered in the AMU hospital.[6] The rumors, however, were believed. In the revulsion created by the presumed outrage in the hospital, gangs of Hindu criminals went on a killing spree. Some of them stopped a train just outside the city, dragged Muslims out, and brutally murdered them. Their acts of killing were underreported by the press. Owned and edited by journalists of Hindu nationalist orientation, these newspapers were later reprimanded for unprofessional behavior by the Press Council. The damage, however, had already been done. Gruesome violence rocked the city for several days, leading to at least 75 deaths.

Aligarh's remarkably fragile local mechanisms of peace were insufficient to deal with the situation, as they had repeatedly been in the past fifteen years. The law and order machinery broke down, as it had frequently. And as was true so often before, criminals engaged in killing could not be brought to book. They were not only protected by politicians; they also they had remarkable journalistic connections—Muslim criminals with the Urdu press and Hindu thugs with Hindi press. Effective peace committees could not be formed at the city level in Aligarh, for it was difficult to get the BJP and Muslim politicians together. Rumors would often be started, and played upon, by political organizations. Instead of investigating rumors professionally, the press would print them with utter recklessness.

Contrast the situation in Calicut. On how peace was kept, two points were common to all accounts given by administrators of Calicut between 1989 and 1992 (as well as those who have been posted there since the mid-1980s and dealt with communal tensions). First, politicians of all parties helped establish peace in the town, instead of polarizing communities, as in Aligarh. Second, peace committees were critical to management of tensions.[7] The latter provided information that local political leadership might have had but the administration did not; they became a forum for everybody to speak and express their anger; they gave a sense of participation to all major local actors; and they provided links all the way down to the neighborhood level. With regard to Hindu-Muslim relations, politics became a constructive enterprise in Calicut.

Peace committees in Aligarh have often tended to be intrareligious, not interreligious. They are formed at the neighborhood level to protect the coreligionists from a possible attack from the other communities. They don't facilitate communication with the other communities; they simply raise the perception of risk and harden those who participate in them. The members of these committees take turns to police their community. Intrareligious commit-

tees are, by definition, based not on interreligious trust but on a lack of trust. Moving within one's own community, hearing rumors that no one can verify or disapprove, staying up in the middle of the night for weeks together, collecting firearms and other small weapons to ensure that retaliation is swift if attacks are made—these activities fuel, and are reflections of, a communal consciousness, not a consciousness that builds bridges.

Political Strategies and Civic Life

Communalism does exist in Calicut, but its meaning is different, closer to the North American than the Indian understanding of the term. Communalism simply means a regard for one's community in Kerala, not a hatred for the other communities. It does not lead to communal violence. The Muslim League (the League) is a powerful political party. Entirely Muslim-supported, it has repeatedly won elections in Calicut. It has held important ministries in coalition governments at the state level repeatedly since 1967. As a result of its governmental power, it has been able to provide remarkable material and symbolic benefits to the Muslim community including state pensions for Muslim clerics, contracts for Muslim businessmen, a state holiday for Prophet Muhammad's birthday, and creation of a Muslim-majority district. The League seeks and gets Muslim votes, but communal polarization and hatred are not consequences of its politics. When they do emerge, the League moderates communal tensions instead of inflaming them.

Why have Calicut's politicians not polarized religious communities? One might say that being a partner in government, a political party such as the Muslim League had everything to gain from enjoying fruits of power, maintaining law and order, and checking potential violence. But it remains to be explained why the League was not *outflanked* by a Muslim group that blamed it for pulling back exactly when it was necessary to fight for Islamic principles—as when the mosque came down in Ayodhya and when the Tellicherry riots took place north of Calicut in the early 1970s.

A radical Islamic group did indeed emerge. When the League argued that the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in December 1992 did not require the League's withdrawal from a Congress-led government in Kerala, the religious purists cried foul. Delhi's Congress government, after all, had miserably failed to protect the mosque. Islamic radicals accused the League of betrayal and of placing power over religious pride. A new group, the Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS) was formed, led by a firebrand religious purist. The ISS embarked on a path of confrontation with the government and with Hindu nationalists.[8] Minor com-

munal violence did break out, but even after several years of campaigning, a period when the wounds of Ayodhya were presumably quite painful, the ISS and its political arm, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), have not been able to register more than a minuscule political presence. Even at a most opportune hour, they have not been able to mount an effective challenge to, much less displace, the League.

Similarly, it remains to be explained why the BJP could not or did not polarize religious communities. Why has the BJP been so ineffective in a state and town where the League in government does everything that the national leadership of BJP would decry as "minorityism" such as public pensions for mullahs, government business contracts for Muslims, an official holiday for Prophet Muhammad's birthday, a Muslim-majority district with its attendant benefits, symbolic and materials, state funds for Arabic education, and quotas for Muslims in government jobs?

In order to create a larger political presence for itself, why does the BJP not turn each act of League communalism into a moment of confrontation? Why does it not convince the Calicut Hindus that the League, its communalism, and its power must be vigorously fought? The BJP leader of Calicut accepts that polarization is in BJP's political interest, for otherwise it may have to continue to be a small player in Calicut (and Kerala) politics. But he is also convinced that his party would not initiate the polarizing process, for it would not like to be blamed for undermining local peace. If the radical Islamic groups launched a violent campaign, however, it would doubtless benefit the party, and the BJP would be happy to respond.[9]

To understand why the BJP is unwilling to polarize Calicut along religious lines (and unable to do so even when it sometimes tries, however faintly), and why the ISS and the PDP have failed to penetrate, even though they have sought to radicalize the Muslim community, one needs to survey the texture of civic life in Calicut. Hindu-Muslim civic integration is so deep in Calicut (and, many would argue, in Kerala as a whole) that to think of polarizing Calicut (and Kerala) along religious lines is to conceive of the virtually impossible. The reverse is true in Aligarh.

The Variety of Civic Networks

Let us first look at the everyday forms of citizen engagement. Nearly 83 percent of Hindus and Muslims in Calicut often eat together in social settings; only 54 per cent in Aligarh do.[10] About 90 percent of Hindu and Muslim families in Calicut report that their children play together; in Aligarh, a mere 42 percent

report doing so. Close to 84 percent Hindus and Muslims in the Calicut survey visit each other regularly; in Aligarh, only 60 percent do, and not often. The Hindus and Muslims of Calicut are simply together more often, and they enjoy it much of the time. Aligarh's Hindu-Muslim interactions are comparatively thin. Aligarh's statistics on all of these interactions would be much lower if we had concentrated only on the violent neighborhoods. The peaceful neighborhoods have a more integrated everyday life. That, inter alia, shows that politics has not destroyed civic interaction in all parts of the town, that human beings can still find ways to be human in difficult political settings. Some of the neighborhoods manage to stay independent of the hegemonic political trends in the town.

What about the associational forms of engagement? Much like Tocqueville's America, Calicut is a place of "joiners." Associations of all kinds—business, labor, professional, social, theater, film, sports, art, reading—abound. From the ubiquitous trade associations to Lions and Rotary Clubs, reading clubs, the head-loaders' association, the rickshaw-pullers' association, and even something like an art-lovers' association—citizens of Calicut excel in joining clubs and associations. Religiously based organizations exist, as they do in Aligarh; what is distinctive is the extent of interreligious interaction in nondenominational organizations.

Consider, first, the economic life of the town. Merchandise trade is the heart of Calicut's economy. The town, with a population of about 700,000 in 1995–96, had no manufacturing except the tile industry, which had nine factories and about 2,500 workers in all. About 100,000 people were partially or wholly dependent on trade, and, though exact numbers are not available, estimates indicate that the town had between 10,000 and 12,000 traders.[11] An overwhelming proportion of these traders were members of trade associations—ranging from foodgrain dealers to bullion dealers—which were in turn members of the Federation of Traders' Associations (Vyapari Vyavasayi Ekopana Samithi).

In 1995, as many as 11 of 26 trade associations registered with the federation had Hindu, Muslim, and Christian officeholders: if the president of the association was from one community, the general secretary was from the other.[12] These associations function as civic bodies, refusing to align themselves with the government: "We don't want to enter politics because our unity will be broken. . . . We have debates in our association, so conflicts, if any, get resolved."[13]

Moreover, such is the depth of engagement that many transactions are without any formal contracts. "Our relationships with Muslim businessmen are entirely based on trust. Payments as large as 10 to 15 lakhs ($300,000–350,000)

are sometimes due. We send bills, but there are no promissory notes valid in the courts of law. Payments come in thirty days. We work through brokers. There is no breach of trust."[14]

Aligarh also has its traders' association (the Vyapar Mandal). In the late 1980s it had about six thousand members. In the 1970s, it had even acquired a fair number of Muslim members who emerged on the business map after the Gulf migration. The association, however, developed a history of infighting about whether it should support the political party in power, the argument being that supporting a party in power that is favorable to traders would benefit all of them. In the 1980s, it was finally split into two bodies: a "secular" organization and a "nonsecular" one. The nonsecular faction joined the BJP. Muslims traders headed toward the secular faction.[15]

Unlike trade-based Calicut, Aligarh has a significant industrial sector. Aligarh is among the largest producers of locks in India. The lock manufacturing is mostly small-scale, and different units specialize in different parts of the manufacturing process. Can't Aligarh develop an economic symbiosis between Hindus and Muslims through the economy?

It is impossible to estimate the number of people working in Aligarh's lock industry. No surveys have been conducted. It pays to underreport how much labor an industrial unit employs, for the small, informal sector does not have to pay pension and other benefits to its workers under Indian laws. Official statistics are thus entirely useless. Foucault's concept of "popular illegality," as one keen observer puts it, has caught the imagination of Aligarh's lock manufacturers.[16]

We know, however, from ethnographic work that workers are both Muslim and Hindu, and so are the firm owners. We also know that an interlocking intercommunal dependence does not exist. The informal credit market, normally dominated by the Hindu loan-giver *(mahajan),* was the only economic activity on which all Muslim manufacturers used to depend until recently. To ensure that the line of credit from a Hindu creditor to a Muslim manufacturer is not broken in times of communal riots, the frequency of which rose considerably in the 1970s, rotating credit societies have emerged.[17] These are intra-Muslim societies, however. They build trust within communities, not across them. Of late, Muslim manufacturers have also broken into the business of supplying raw materials for lock manufacturing. Though all lock manufacturers obviously depended on raw materials, the trade was previously monopolized by Hindu businessmen. As communal tensions arose, Muslim manufacturers developed sources of supply within their own community.[18]

What about the workers? If the businessmen are not integrated, are the workers? Since workers numerically constitute a larger proportion of the town than the businessmen, interreligious links formed in trade unions can, in principle, more than make up for an absence of such links among the businessmen.

Trade unions hardly exist in Aligarh. Decrepit offices of the local branches of national trade unions, with no staff and few data, greet researchers of labor activities. Calicut has less industry and more trade than does Aligarh, which in principle makes it a less hospitable place for trade union activity. Trade unions, however, thrive in Calicut. The largest are linked to two major national federations: the Confederation of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), which is associated with the Communist Party (Marxist), and the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), whose political patron is the Congress Party.[19] Both are interreligious. Even though the Muslim League regularly wins elections from Calicut, the STU, a trade union sponsored by the League for the Muslims, is neither as large as the local units of CITU or INTUC nor as vibrant. It is the weakest and smallest of the three. Muslim workers by and large vote for the League, but they tend typically to join INTUC or CITU for protection of their labor rights. The Marxist and atheistic character of CITU does not stop them from joining CITU's unions if they think that CITU will fight better for their right and wages. In the process, they come in touch with Hindu (and Christian) workers, interreligious links are formed, and a Hindu-Muslim division of the workforce does not take place.

A most unlikely site for unionization—porting, or "headloading"—is by far the greatest example of the associational abilities and success of Calicut workers. Distributed over so many shops and small business units, porters in the bazaar are rarely unionized in India. They are in Calicut (and in Kerala). In 1995, there were nearly 10,000 head loaders in Calicut—about 60 percent Hindu and 40 percent Muslim. Most were part of INTUC and CITU trade unions. Since a bazaar exists in Aligarh, these categories of work also do. But Aligarh headloaders have no associations.

A final and highly distinctive aspect of associational life in Calicut concerns its social and educational activities. The city has had an array of film clubs, popular theaters, and science societies. There is nothing unusual about film clubs, for they have been popular all over southern India in general, though not in northern India (except in elite circles of large cities). But societies interested in taking theater and science to the masses are rather uncommon. Even more uncommon have been reading clubs. Kerala today has the highest rate of literacy in India. "Reading rooms," a unique Kerala institution, accompanied Kerala's

remarkable rise in literacy and formed deep social networks between the 1930s and 1950s. Young people from most communities would get together several times every week to read newspapers and cultural and political books. The fascinating story of the birth and role of reading clubs has been told by Dilip Menon:

> Between 1901–1931, the rise in the numbers of literate was phenomenal. The growing numbers of schools and the rise in literacy found expression in the numbers of reading rooms that were established both in the countryside and in the towns. . . . One of the novelties in the organization of reading rooms was the [communitarian] drinking of tea, as one person read the newspapers and the others listened. . . . Tea and coffee lubricated discussions on the veracity of the news and of political questions, and a new culture emerged around the reading rooms. It was premised upon sobriety and knowledge rather than drunken companionship transcending consciousness, which characterised the toddy shops. The importance of tea and coffee lay in the fact that they were recently introduced beverages and did not fit into any taboos regarding what could be shared between castes. Tea shops and reading rooms all over Malabar provided common place for people to meet and to drink together regardless of caste [and community]. . . . The reading rooms emerged as central to both formal attempts at organization by the left wing of the Congress as well as local initiatives.[20]

The cumulative outcome of the reading room movement is worth noting. In our Calicut sample, as many as 95 percent of Hindus and Muslims reported reading newspapers—a statistic that is likely to be higher than in most towns in the richer countries of the world. In 1995–96, Calicut, with a population of more than 700,000, had 20 newspapers and magazines![21] In contrast, whereas most Hindus in the Aligarh sample read newspapers, less than 30 percent of Muslims did so. Hindus and Muslims in Calicut get their history from a wide variety of sources—newspapers, history books, radio, and elders. Most Muslims of Aligarh get it from elders. It is quite clear that the AMU, the great symbol of Muslim education, was for Muslim elite, not for the masses. The education movement in Kerala was primarily for the latter.

Civic Engagement, Historical Memories, and Mutual Differences

That there is civic engagement between Hindus and Muslims in Calicut does not mean that there are no problems between the two communities or that prejudices have completely disappeared. Calicut Hindus and Muslims do have

some problems with each other, but they have learned to live with differences. Violence, in any case, is not how they would like to express their differences. Institutionalized channels of politics are the arenas of contestation.

Contrasting Hindu-Muslim perceptions of the great Malabar rebellion of 1921 are a case in point. As discussed in the next chapter, the Malabar Rebellion was a cataclysmic event in the areas surrounding Calicut and for Kerala as a whole. It started out as a rebellion against the British in late 1921 but degenerated into Hindu-Muslim violence in which hundreds were killed, thousands injured, and a large number of Hindus forcibly converted to Islam. More than one-third of our Hindu sample called it a rebellion in which the Hindus suffered at the hands of Muslims. Muslims, on the other hand, had a dramatically different version. Not a single Muslim respondent cited a Hindu-Muslim dimension to the Malabar rebellion, calling it a peasant rebellion against the landlords and the British instead.

Differences extend to other areas as well. When asked, "What should the Muslims do which will please you?" nearly one-fourth of the Hindu respondents replied that they should be "more open." About 60 percent resented the way Kerala Muslims treated their women. Nearly 60 percent also thought that the Muslims were "pampered."

The last is a standard BJP argument, yet, as already noted, there is little support for the BJP. Less than 10 percent of the Hindu sample desired that Muslims be "Indians first." In Aligarh, the largest Hindu complaint was not only that Muslims were pampered but that they were antinational. And more than 90 percent of Hindus called the AMU a hotbed of Muslim communalism and antinationalism.

To sum up, despite a significant objection to the Malabar rebellion and a perception of Muslim "appeasement," Hindus and Muslims can form associations, lead integrated civic lives, and get along quite well in Calicut. That they can do so suggests how important intercommunal engagement is. People begin to live with differences, pursue their interests in institutionalized arenas of politics, maintain everyday warmth, and agree on the futility of violence as a way to deal with differences. Moreover, that Hindus suffered at the hands of Muslims in the Malabar rebellion, people feel, is not a reason to implicate every Muslim today in the events of the past. Deep civic engagement dulls the painful edges of historical memories. The depth of intercommunal engagement in Calicut should explain why the BJP can't think of polarization as a strategy and why the Islamic radicals, despite their efforts, are unable to make a break.

HOW CIVIC STRUCTURES CAME INTO BEING

Why and how did Calicut and Aligarh develop such different civic patterns? In order to answer this question, we need to go back to the history of politics in the two cities. Intercommunal civic links, once in place in Calicut, might have seriously constrained political parties having an interest in religious polarization. In the long run, however, variations in civic life were founded on different structures of mass politics in the two towns. In a historical perspective, the pattern and texture of civic life were politically constructed.

The 1920s were a turning point for both cities, as they were for much of India. Mass politics emerged on a national scale for the first time under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The character of India's freedom struggle—or what came to be known as the national movement—was decisively altered by Gandhi. He pulled the elite-dominated Congress Party and the national movement out of their grooves, marked by the dominance of Oxbridge-educated lawyers and a constitutional style of politics. In their place he inaugurated a phase of mass politics, arguing that until the national movement mobilized the masses, it would neither generate enough political pressure against the British nor lead to an inclusive nation. The first nationwide civil disobedience was launched in 1920. For reasons outlined below, it collapsed in 1922, and as it did so, long-lasting patterns of politics emerged in much of India. Both Aligarh and Calicut participated in the movement, but they emerged from its collapse with very different consequences.

In Aligarh a politics of Hindu-Muslim communalism was instituted; near Calicut, Hindu-Muslim violence did erupt, but a politics of caste cleavages and social justice was stabilized. Over the next decades, arguments about Hindu-Muslim differences over the Indian nation and the caste injustices of Hinduism became the master narratives of politics in Aligarh and Calicut, respectively. As explained in Chapter 3, these two narratives are fundamentally opposed to each other. The communal narrative seeks to build Hindu unity and, in its ideological imagination, pits a united Hindu community against a united Muslim community. The caste narrative attacks the desirability of Hindu unity and has little space for Hindu-Muslim cleavages in its political imagination. Instead, it concentrates on the injustices of a hierarchical Hindu social order and seeks to build lower-caste unity, as opposed to Hindu unity. Hindu upper castes, not Muslims, are the key adversary of the caste narrative of politics. Given that these narratives were not confined to elite politics but defined mass mobilization, the communal narrative polarized Hindus and Muslim in civic life, and

the caste narrative brought them together, polarizing the upper and lower Hindu castes instead.

How did two different narratives of politics acquire hegemony in the two cities in the 1920s and after? How did they lead to variations in civic structures? These questions constitute the focus of the analysis below. The main claim is that the pre-existing ascriptive hierarchies of the two places were different when Gandhi launched the first civil disobedience movement in 1920. Legatees of the Mughal ruling class, a Muslim elite dominated the local social structure at Aligarh (and in much of northwestern India). Since the deep south of the country was not penetrated by the Mughal Empire, a Hindu Brahmin elite took the same place in Calicut (and much of southern India) as the Muslim aristocracy did in Aligarh. When, in an attempt partially to indigenize local governments in the nineteenth century, the British widened the franchise to include property ownership, literacy, and taxation, the basis for rule ceased to be high social birth. Those born to privilege, even if socially powerful, had to contest for political power and authority. Dominance based on high social birth was challenged from below. In Aligarh, the challenge to the Muslim elite came from the rising Hindu merchant castes, and in Calicut, the Brahmin elite faced a rising lower-caste mobilization. When mass politics arose, the former became generalized into a politics of Hindu-Muslim differences and the latter into intra-Hindu caste differences.

Those mobilizing Hindus and Muslims in Aligarh and lower and upper castes in Calicut put in place a whole range of civic institutions: cadre-based political organizations as well as educational, social, and economic associations. The aim was to institutionalize their vision of politics as deeply in society as possible. Civic life before mass politics was mainly traditional; it followed ascriptive lines. There is not much evidence of *mass-based or large middle-class associations* before the twentieth century in much of India.[22] Informal and everyday engagement, based in the neighborhoods, was the primary mode of civic interaction. Such interaction, on the whole, took three forms: It could cross communal lines, if Hindus and Muslim lived together as they did in many towns; it could also cross caste lines for festivals and economic life, but such interaction remained vertical, with Brahmins or upper castes functioning as patrons and members of the lower castes traditionally having the role of clients and dependents; finally, a large part of social interaction was intracaste, as leading members of one caste helped others of their own caste in social and economic spheres. *Associational life* in India took off with the rise of mass politics. Not only were caste and communal associations formed in large numbers, but

intercaste and intercommunal organizations also came into being. Mass politics in Aligarh developed a civic pattern based on the former; Calicut, while having caste and communal associations, also developed a large number of intercaste and intercommunal organizations. Different civic orders thus came to stay in Aligarh and Calicut.

The discussion below starts with a brief description of the national context of politics in the 1920s and 1930s. It then shows how the two towns inserted themselves in national politics and what patterns of politics and civic life emerged.

The National Context of Politics

For the civil disobedience campaign of 1920–22, Gandhi emphasized nonviolence and a joint Hindu-Muslim mobilization of the masses. Both groups fighting together against the British, he argued, held greater political promise than Hindus and Muslims fighting against each other while the British watched. Germany's World War I alliance with the Ottoman sultan, caliph to much of the Muslim world including India, had already brought many religious Muslims directly in conflict with the British, who, along with the French and the Russians, had declared war on the Turko-German alliance.[23] Before the second decade of the century, Muslim elite politics had been pro-British. Between 1915 and 1920, the adversarial relationship of British government with the Turkish caliph (heading the Ottoman Empire at that time) provided a chance to bring Hindus and Muslims together. Gandhi seized the opportunity and convinced the Congress Party to launch the first civil disobedience movement in 1920. Reflecting its dual purpose—expression of sympathy for the Muslims and fighting the British—it was alternatively called the Khilafat (*Khalifa* being the Indian term for the caliph) and the noncooperation movement.

Remarkable Hindu-Muslim unity was created for some time.[24] But a religion-based mass mobilization eventually would release uncontrolled passions. By early 1922, ferocious violence had erupted in several parts of India—against the British in some places and between Hindus and Muslims in others. Nonviolence was clearly dying—partly because the masses could not keep their emotions under control and partly because Muslim clerics did not believe in nonviolence as a creed, only as a method. To pre-empt further violence, Gandhi ended the movement in March 1922. Nonviolence, he argued, demanded greater courage and strength than killing adversaries, and an independence born of violence was scarcely better than servitude.

The end of the Khilafat movement led to the worst period of communal rioting seen in India up to that time.[25] Fearing further violence, the Congress temporarily withdrew from mass mobilization. The organizational gap at the mass level was filled by religious revival groups of Hindus and Muslims. These groups were more interested in proselytization than in freedom from the British. Arya Samaj, the leading Hindu revival organization of the time, started a campaign for reconversion *(shuddhi)* and unity *(sanghthana)*. The aim was to reclaim "low-caste" Hindus who had embraced Islam, voluntarily or due to coercion, and increase Hindu unity. Alarmed by the reconversion drive of the Samaj, Muslim clerics in turn launched the conversion *(tabligh)* and organization *(tanzim)* movements.[26] Literature offending religious sensibilities was vigorously promoted.[27] Lives of religious leaders were threatened.[28] Between 1922 and 1928, according to British records, 112 communal riots took place in India, in which 450 lives were lost and 5,000 persons were injured.[29]

Growth in communal violence convinced the Congress leadership that religious revival organizations had been the principal agents of violence. To renew efforts at an integrated mass mobilization and to challenge the British, preparations for another civil disobedience movement began in 1929. Learning from his earlier mistake, Gandhi would not choose a religious issue for the new campaign. He selected British monopoly over the making and selling of salt in India as his symbol for mass mobilization. That Indians in their own country, he argued, were not even allowed to make and sell salt was a measure of British insensitivity to the Indians. The elemental message of salt *satyagraha* (civil disobedience) generated remarkable mass enthusiasm, but there was an asymmetry between the Hindu and the Muslim response. With one striking exception,[30] Muslim participation in the civil disobedience movement was, on the whole, not vigorous everywhere.[31] Communal consciousness, it would appear, had already gone quite far by the 1920s.

Between the two civil disobedience movements, when the masses were first mobilized on an unprecedented scale in India, enduring political trends in the various regions and towns emerged. Aligarh was a full participant in the larger trend toward communal rioting. Calicut also went through a shorter but concentrated period of communal violence. It was, however, soon overwhelmed by intra-Hindu politics, built around issues such as civil rights for the lower castes. The nationwide civil disobedience movements had sought to standardize politics all over India, but they could not completely overwhelm the salient local or regional issues in politics. The second civil disobedience movement was more successful than the first in challenging the British, but it could not really build

Hindu-Muslim bridges in Aligarh nor displace caste issues from the political agenda of Calicut. A new pattern was set in the 1920s for decades to come.

HOW COMMUNALISM EMERGED IN ALIGARH

Declining Muslim Aristocracy, Rising Hindu Merchants, and the British

Before the middle of nineteenth century, Aligarh was a military outpost manned by "the service gentry"—the class that served the Mughal Empire as its governing and security arm in areas outside Delhi. The gentry administered the area, performing the roles of the customary judge *(mufti),* the traditional police officer *(kotwal),* and the medieval recordkeeper *(kazi).* In exchange for services to the emperor the gentry received titles to land, which enabled its members to become feudal landlords *(zamindars)* and exercise a great deal of local power.[32] On the whole, the gentry was Muslim, and the elite culture of Aligarh was heavily influenced by Persia. Persian was the language of the Mughal court.

Recent historiography, especially the highly influential work of Chris Bayly, shows how communalism emerged in the sociopolitical structure outlined above.[33] As the Mughal Empire declined and the British took over northern India in the nineteenth century, a significant diminution in the power of the Muslim gentry took place, a decline that was accompanied by a corresponding rise in the wealth and power of merchants, who were mostly from the trading Hindu castes. Persian ceased to be the official language in 1836, hurting the class trained in that language to perform their official functions. And, with domestic and foreign trade rising under the British, merchants began to accumulate wealth. The arrival of railways quickened commercialization in the 1860s, making trade and commerce more mobile and less dependent on local power structures. Looking down on business as an inferior occupation and on commercial culture as far too plebeian an enterprise, the Muslim gentry was not ready for the exploitation of new economic opportunities.

Accepting British rule as a fact of life, Syed Ahmed, an aristocrat of Mughal ancestry, knighted later by the British government and fondly remembered as Sir Syed by Muslims all over the subcontinent even today, realized that Muslim decline would be irreversible unless Muslims gave up their traditional learning methods, participated in the modern education system, and sought British help for it. Taking to modern education sooner, the emerging Hindu middle class had already surged ahead educationally.

The British found it expedient to cultivate the Muslim aristocracy. For the stability of British rule, an alliance with the erstwhile aristocrats who still had considerable, though declining, social power seemed better than their persistent sullenness.[34] By the 1880s, when a nationalist movement surfaced, the need for such an alliance became only too obvious. The British calculated—rightly—that if the loyalty of Muslims, the second largest religious community in India, could be secured through its elite, it would make for an effective counter to the Indian National Congress, which claimed to represent all Indians.

The Aligarh Muslim University, which would have profound implications for India's Hindu-Muslim relations, was the child of this alliance. Under Sir Syed's leadership and with British collaboration, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, as AMU was called initially, was founded in 1877.[35] Its aim was to provide modern education to Muslims. Revenue-free land was provided in Aligarh by the British government.[36]

In the 1940s, AMU became closely associated with the Pakistan movement. "Often in a civilized history," writes Agha Khan III, a patron of AMU in the early twentieth century, "a University has supplied the springboard for nation's intellectual and spiritual renascence. . . . The independent, sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh."[37] And in the famous words of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, "the father of Pakistan," AMU became "the arsenal of Muslim India," training a large number of Muslim politicians, intellectuals, and activists.

Given its role as a center of modern Muslim education, its British links, and its intellectual leadership of the Pakistan movement in the 1940s, AMU became mired in passionate political disputes, both in Aligarh and beyond. For the Hindu nationalists, always in doubt about Muslim loyalty to India, AMU became an institution to be reviled, implicating in their view the entire Muslim community whose pride it came to symbolize;[38] for the Muslims who would become part of Pakistan, AMU became a center of liberation and pride;[39] for Muslims who stayed in India, it became a source of ambivalence, frustration, and often considerable pain,[40] and the same was true of the non-Muslim leaders of the Indian national movement, especially those who had sympathy for the problems of the Muslims.[41]

In the first half of the century, the biggest political product of AMU was a political party, the Muslim League. The League was born as a political organization in 1906. Its leaders were primarily AMU graduates. The aims of the League included promoting "among the Muslims of India feelings of loyalty to the British government" and protection and advancement of "the political

rights and interests of the Muslims of India."[42] Pleading with the British rulers for what we could call a consociational political arrangement today, the League sought a Muslim quota in the administrative and judicial services and in municipal boards and legislative chambers.

The League soon achieved an important victory. In 1909, the Morley-Minto reforms were unveiled, outlining the structure of electoral competition for legislative councils in India. Muslims would have *separate electorates,* more or less in accordance with their proportion in the population.[43] Moreover, Muslims would not only vote in Muslim electorates where only their co-religionists could contest, but also in general electorates where candidates of all religions could vote and run for office.

Separate electorates institutionalized Hindu-Muslim differences in politics, leaving a trail of bitterness. To the Muslim League, however, separate electorates simply recognized the differences that already existed and were a response to genuine Muslim anxieties about getting electorally drowned in a majoritarian Hindu sea. Be that as it may, they began to privilege religious distinctions in electoral politics. It was a victory for the Aligarh ideology of Muslim politics.

Impact on Civic Life

With this background, it is not surprising that the collapse of the Khilafat movement, which had sought to build Hindu-Muslim bridges, would lead to a cleavage between a Muslim *university* and a Hindu-majority *town.*[44] Two kinds of organizations started playing a significant local role: Hindu organizations such as the Arya Samaj and Muslim organizations such as the Muslim League and Tabligh.

The Arya Samaj found a solid constituency in the commercial classes of Aligarh. In institutions of local power such as the municipal government, the rising Hindus merchants had clashed with a declining Muslim aristocracy. They resented Muslim aristocrats who, though land-based and economically eroding, wished nonetheless to hold on to the political power and social position inherited from Mughal rule.[45] Moreover, having a Muslim university, Aligarh was in many ways an ideal venue for Arya Samaj activity.[46] The Arya Samaj grew tremendously in the town, becoming the focus of civic life of middle-class Hindus and trying to make headway into poorer classes, too, through a campaign of proselytization.

Muslim civic life moved in a parallel direction. One could, in fact, speak of two different kinds of civic lives for the Muslims—at the elite and the mass levels. The gap between the elite and masses in Aligarh was considerably greater

among the Muslims than among the Hindus. Muslims had an upper and a lower class: Hindus had developed a substantial middle class through trade. Both Muslim groups moved in the communal direction.

Aligarh Muslim University was the focus of Muslim elite life. Unable to break the hold of Muslim communalists and British loyalists on the levers of power in the university, the AMU-based leaders of the Khilafat movement decided to establish a new university, the Jamia Milia Islamia. It would later be called the home of *nationalist* Muslims,[47] and Aligarh the home of *separatist* Muslims. The nationalist Muslim university later moved to Delhi. It is possible counterfactually to argue that if the Khilafat leaders of Aligarh had continued to stay in the mainstream of AMU, a different atmosphere would have resulted. Feeling pessimistic about the possibilities of a less communal politics, however, they left AMU. Some students and teachers continued to be part of nationalist politics, supporting the Congress. Moreover, in the 1930s, socialism and communism also began to influence students and faculty, leading to the emergence of some of the finest left-wing Urdu poets and literary figures of India.[48] On the whole, however, the older ideology of loyalty to the British returned.[49] The organizations and tendencies promoting Muslim communalism and Muslim loyalty to the British simply could not be displaced.

Increasingly in the 1930s, AMU became the intellectual and political headquarters of the League.[50] The trends after the mid-1930s depleted the reserves of intellectual, political, and cultural dissent in the university. In 1939, backed by the university administration, the All India Muslim Student Federation was founded in the university, inaugurating a new phase of ideological correctness on campus. The 1940 Pakistan Resolution of the Muslim League—which declared that Muslims were a separate nation and needed an independent state of their own—was accepted by the Students Union as its official ideology. Dissenting teachers were dismissed by the university, veiling of the female staff and students was introduced, college magazines began to censor articles, and a youngsters' league was formed to train children. The strong winds of political and ideological correctness thus reduced the civic life of the Muslim elite to a communal ghetto, leading to a rupture of links with the Hindu elite of the town. In the 1945–46 elections, AMU students vigorously campaigned for the League in Aligarh and several other parts of India. In 1946, ideological and communal fury came together to produce the worst pre-partition rioting in Aligarh. University students attacked the visiting national president of the Congress Party, Maulana Azad, who, despite being a Muslim, had never supported the Pakistan movement. They also "burnt the local cotton and *gur* (un-

refined sugar) market and became a terror to the Aligarh Hindus."[51] The town was awfully polarized. Several small riots earlier had taken place: in 1925 and 1927[52] and also in 1931, 1936, and 1937–38. But the 1946 riots were unparalleled in their fury and destruction.

At the mass level, too, this kind of politics did not lead to the creation of intercommunal associations and organizations. Unlike Calicut in this period (as explained below), Aligarh did not witness the emergence of labor unions, caste associations, or reading clubs for the masses. Nor were Aligarh's cadre-based political organizations mobilized across the religious divide. The Arya Samaj, an organization with a solid middle-class base in the town, was openly communal, and so was the Tabligh on the Muslim side. Involved in mass politics in the 1920s, these two organizations promoted competitive proselytization for years, escalating communal bitterness all around. The Muslim League, an elite organization in the 1920s, also took to mass politics in the late 1930s. It developed a cadre of workers and networks reaching down to the lower middle classes. Given the separatist ideology of the League, these cadres were engaged in aggravating Hindu-Muslim differences, not in bridging them.

In principle, the Congress Party could have stemmed the communal trends in politics and civic life. Of the cadre-based organizations with a presence in the town, it was the only one ideologically committed to Hindu-Muslim unity, and it could have created civic institutions that brought communities together. Aligarh Congress, however, did not rise to the challenge. Founded in 1920, the party did participate in the noncooperation movement.[53] And by the time the second civil disobedience movement was launched in 1929, the Congress in Aligarh had expanded into the countryside, becoming a large cadre-based political organization. But factionalism between the urban and the rural wings rocked the party. The city faction was dominated by the urban trading community, in which Arya Samaj enjoyed considerable influence.[54] Since the Congress was both a party and a movement, it did not disallow simultaneous membership of Congressmen in the Arya Samaj on one hand and Muslim League on the other. The argument simply was that all kinds of people had to be brought together under a common umbrella, and the more people joined the Congress movement, the greater would be their commitment to a composite nationality. The strength of this argument in different places depended on whether the Congress ideology of a composite nation or groups subscribing to a communal view of the nation dominated the local wings of the party.

In Aligarh, a considerable intersection developed between Hindu national-

ists and Congress activists. The factionalism was so strong and the drive to build a movement bringing Hindus and Muslims together so weak that a leader of the stature of Nehru was asked to investigate the affairs of the party in Aligarh. From his inquiries, Nehru emerged pessimistic about the reconstructive possibilities of Aligarh Congress.[55] The local realities of Congress politics and organization were far away from the ideals sketched out by the national leadership of the party.

CASTE INJUSTICE AS A MASTER NARRATIVE IN CALICUT

Muslims and Islam in Kerala

The state of Kerala, where Calicut is located, has three parts: the north is called Malabar, the midlands Cochin, and the south Travancore. Calicut has been the leading city of Malabar. Long part of a multireligious land, Muslims in the 1990s constituted about 23.3 percent of Kerala's population,[56] 36 percent of Malabar, and 38 percent of Calicut. The Christians, concentrated in Cochin and Travancore, make up about 19.3 percent of the state's population. The Hindus, spread all over the state, form approximately 57.3 of Kerala's population.[57] Malabar Muslims are called *Moplahs,* sometimes also written as *Mappillas.* In Malayalam, the language of the state, the term means "the great child."

In occupational terms, the Moplahs have evolved into two large groups. In the coastal areas and towns, trading has been their main economic activity. Vaishyas, the traditional commercial castes in Hinduism, were absent in the Hindu society of southern India. Moplahs, Jews, and Christians filled that gap. The Moplahs came to be viewed as *the* business community of Malabar (the Christians occupying the same place in the midlands and southern Kerala). Indigenous conversions to Islam, especially of lower castes, created a second group of Moplahs, a group on the whole poorer, comprising small farmers and agricultural workers. Depending on the class and location, thus, the Moplahs are rich as well as poor and part of both urban and rural life.

There are several differences between Moplahs and the northern Indian Muslims that bear on the Aligarh-Calicut comparison. Unlike northern India, where Aligarh is located, Kerala was never ruled by the Moplahs.[58] Moreover, northern Muslims never developed a business class, whereas, for centuries, Moplahs have been the leading business community of Malabar. Northern Indian

Muslims were either the ruling elite, who developed their own highly influential Persian cultural styles, or, alternatively, the poorest of the poor speaking local dialects and participating in the syncretistic rural cultures.

Moplah immersion in the culture of Kerala goes beyond Hindu-Muslim *rural* syncretism.[59] Moplah integration is also linguistic. Unlike the court-based northern Muslim aristocracy, rich urban Moplahs did not develop a distinctive language. Urdu, the language of urban Muslims of northern India, never acquired popularity in Kerala. The Moplahs adopted not only the language of Kerala but also the indigenous script. Even the religious texts of Islam were translated into Malayalam.[60]

The story of Moplah integration contains an awkward subplot, however. As India's national movement reached Malabar in the 1920s, a horrendous turn in Hindu-Muslim relations took place. An insurgency against the British was transformed into a Hindu-Muslim conflagration, leading to a large number of killings, forced conversions, and desecrations of holy places. Yet, instead of suffering a permanent legacy of bitterness, Malabar overcame the aftermath of animosity.

Calicut, the city in our study, is just north of the center of Malabar rebellion. Exogenous shocks such as this one have often transformed Hindu-Muslim relations elsewhere in India. Why did they not in Calicut and Malabar? It is this anomaly, a happy one, to which I turn.

The Malabar Rebellion of 1921

Like elsewhere in India, a joint Hindu-Muslim mobilization was launched against the British at Calicut in early 1921. By the middle of 1921, however, Congress leaders had lost control over the movement, and Muslim clerics *(tangals),* who participated in the movement to protest against the British treatment of the caliph in Turkey, had become the principal leaders of the Moplahs. Motivated by religious concerns, they fought to revive the Turkish caliphate.

In August 1921, what started as a peaceful protest turned into a violent rebellion against the British and, subsequently, degenerated into prolonged Hindu-Muslim strife. It took the British six months to suppress the rebellion. By the time the smoke cleared and British rule was reestablished, according to official figures, 2,339 rebels had been killed, 1,653 wounded, 5,955 captured, and 40,000 had surrendered.[61] The numbers should indicate the depth of the rebellion. The rebels managed to reach the outskirts of Calicut several times, but British control over the city remained intact.[62] Urban Moplahs, the merchants, did not participate in the rebellion, but such a large upheaval breaking out only a

few miles south of the city could not but affect feelings in Calicut. A large number of Hindu families took refuge in Calicut, telling tales of "Moplah atrocities."[63]

Moplah violence had several aspects. First, the rebels attacked British government offices after the British entered an important Moplah mosque—the Tirurangadi mosque—which had, according to the British, become a hideout for Khilafat activists and their violence-inciting clerics.[64] Another event, known as the "train" or "wagon tragedy" of November 1921, has acquired the status of a legend. About a hundred Moplah prisoners were put in a goods wagon for transportation to a prison camp. When the wagon was unlocked at a train station ninety miles away, prisoners were found dead and others seriously ill. Suffocation was the cause of the deaths. The train was unfit for human transportation owing to lack of ventilation. "Beyond a few chinks in the walls and flooring, there [was] no other entrance for air," making the van "practically a closed box."[65]

The landlords constituted the second object of Moplah attacks. Rural Moplahs in southern Malabar were primarily poor tenants, landless agricultural workers, and small traders. The lords were mostly upper-caste Hindus.[66] Third, and most important for our purposes, many Hindus were forced to convert to Islam, and those who resisted were put to death.[67] Desecration and displacement accompanied the rebellion. At least one hundred Hindu temples were attacked or broken.[68] It is generally agreed that the rebellion acquired an unambiguous Hindu-Muslim edge as it progressed, despite its anti-British origins in the Khilafat movement.[69]

Why Did the Malabar Rebellion Not Leave a Legacy of Communal Violence?

The Malabar rebellion was the first big blow to the Hindu-Muslim unity being constructed by the Indian national movement under Gandhi's leadership.[70] The Congress feared more communal violence and began to develop cold feet about mobilizing the Muslims. Moreover, as already stated, campaigns for competitive proselytization, in which the Arya Samaj and several Muslim religious groups participated, also came into being in the 1920s.

Ironically, Malabar, which was instrumental in touching off the new period of communalization and communal violence, did not experience any more Hindu-Muslim riots. In Malabar, a Hindu-Muslim divide did emerge,[71] but religious bitterness progressively declined. From an all-India perspective, the developments in Malabar were counterintuitive. Communal rancor and vio-

lence increased in many parts of India, but not where violence originated. Why?

The principal reasons have to do with the pre-existing social hierarchy of Hinduism, its grave caste injustices, and an emerging lower-caste mobilization. India's freedom movement did not introduce mass politics to Malabar. Mass politics there had already taken the form of intra-Hindu struggles over caste, led by lower-caste organizations. Civil rights of the lower castes, especially with respect to pollution, temple entry, and greater access to educational institutions and government employment, were the key issues. Hindu-Muslim issues simply could not match the passions aroused by caste inequalities and injustice. A restructuring of mass politics took place. Communal bitterness increasingly disappeared from the political space. Politics, memory, and emotions were reconfigured.

How this happened can best be illustrated by cataloguing the failed efforts of the Arya Samaj in Calicut. In both towns, as the noncooperation movement collapsed and as the Congress party withdrew temporarily from mass politics, communal organizations such as the Arya Samaj stepped into the void. The Samaj, matched by Muslim organizations of a similar kind, caused great communal rivalry and bitterness in Aligarh. In Calicut (and Malabar), the Samaj did make a determined entry, but its campaign was stillborn. Given the British suppression of Moplah clergy, a Muslim proselytization campaign such as the tabligh had no chance in the aftermath of the Malabar rebellion. The Samaj, in other words, had a whole political terrain to itself. Yet it failed to communalize Malabar.

A Stillborn Arya Samaj

The scholars and observers of the Arya Samaj agree that the Malabar rebellion was a turning point for the Samaj: it directly led to the reclamation *(shuddhi)* and Hindu unity (*sanghthana)* campaigns.[72] Forced conversions in Malabar revived Samaj fears that Hindu society was far too "disunited" and "tolerant" to withstand the proselytizing streak in Islam. The fact that traditional Hinduism did not subscribe to the concept of proselytization was, to their minds, a weakness, not a strength. Proselytization, the Samaj argued, was necessary, and so was greater Hindu unity. "Hindus are comparatively weak and cannot protect their religion and women. Unity and goodwill can exist only between two equally strong parties."[73] For Malabar Hindus, the Samaj pledged to "start a movement for the reclamation of forcibly converted Hindus and persuade the caste groups to receive them back. Moreover those persons who have been

forcibly converted and whose homes have been destroyed have to be given adequate help."[74]

The Samaj headed toward Malabar for the first time. It "reclaimed" several recent converts to Islam, but it was unable to establish a stronghold. Language was part of the problem. In northern and western India, where Hindi was widely understood, the Samaj's emphasis on Hindi was adequate for its religious work. The language of Malabar was Malayalam, not Hindi. The Samaj did not have the adequate literature or personnel for a campaign in Malayalam.

Given its linguistic inadequacy, the Samaj needed powerful indigenous support groups. In Aligarh, the rising Hindu commercial classes provided a base for Samaj activities. In Malabar, the situation was different: Moplahs were the *merchant* class. The Hindu merchant castes of the north were generally absent in the deep south, where Hindu social structure had the Brahmins on one end of the spectrum and lower castes on the other. Christians were the merchants of southern Kerala, the Jews and the Christians the merchants of the midlands, and the Moplahs the merchants of the north. With its message of Hindu unity, the Samaj could not have possibly created a base among the Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

A non-Muslim option was in principle available in the trading sector. Paradoxically, it turned out to be the biggest stumbling block for the Samaj. A large Hindu caste, the Ezhavas, traditionally engaged in "toddy tapping" (production of fermented liquor) and therefore considered "polluting" by the Brahmins, had experienced considerable economic mobility in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.[75] The upwardly mobile Ezhavas had left their traditional occupation behind and formed a sizeable business class in Malabar cities, including Calicut.[76] A self-respect movement had already come into existence. The Ezhavas were rebelling against the indignities of Hindu social order and fighting for their civil rights. They could not be mobilized for Hindu unity.

A Battle for Civil Rights

Sociologists agree that caste hierarchies did not acquire the same rigidities in the north as in the south; lower-caste humiliations were never as extensive in the north, and Brahminism was rarely as ritualistic, hegemonic, and overpowering. The Ezhavas were not only considered untouchable but also "unseeable"; northern India did practice untouchability but not unseeability. Indeed, the catalogue of everyday humiliations for the Ezhavas was painfully long in Kerala:

> They were not allowed to walk on public roads. . . . They were Hindus, but they could not enter temples. While their pigs and cattle could frequent the premises of

> the temple, they were not allowed to go even there. Ezhavas could not use public wells or public places. . . .
>
> An Ezhava should keep himself at least thirty-six feet away from a Namboodiri and twelve feet away from a Nair. . . . He must address a caste Hindu man as Thampuran [My Lord] and woman as Thampurati [My Lady]. . . . He must stand before a caste Hindu in awe and reverence, assuming a humble posture. He should never dress himself up like a caste Hindu; never construct a house on the upper caste model. . . . [T]he women folk of the community . . . were required, young and old, to appear before caste Hindus, always topless.[77]

By the time the Malabar rebellion broke out, the Ezhava protest movement was already in existence. Led by a famous Ezhava saint, Sri Narain Guru, sometimes called the Gandhi of Kerala, the movement aimed at self-respect and education. Self-respect entailed withdrawal from toddy tapping, a movement into modern trades and professions, and a nonviolent attack on the symbolic order. Since they were denied entry to temples and were only allowed to worship "lower gods and spirits," the Ezhavas, the Guru said, would have their own temples, in which they would worship "higher gods" to whom they would offer flowers and sweets, not animals and liquor reserved for the "lower gods." To improve their economic and social status, they would educate themselves. And to facilitate all of these activities, they would set up an organization. "Strengthen through organization, liberate by education" was the motto.

An organization called the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana-yogam (SNDP) had been set up in 1903. It would play important roles in social, educational, and political affairs. In 1916, an Ezhava temple was built in Calicut, financed by prospering Ezhava traders and consecrated by the Guru. In 1918, an Ezhava conference in Calicut called on the Ezhavas to boycott all temples and shrines that prohibited their entry. The movement gathered further strength in the 1920s. By that time, the Ezhava middle classes "had very consciously defined themselves as a community apart, centered on their own circuits of worship, rather than as Hindus."[78]

The Samaj plea for Hindu unity made no sense to the Ezhavas. Overcoming quotidian insults inflicted by Hindu upper castes, especially the Brahmins, was much more important to the Ezhavas than fighting a battle with the Muslims. The Ezhavas were the largest Hindu group. The Arya Samaj could not earn their respect and admiration.

Seeking other local patrons, the Samaj sought to cultivate the erstwhile Calicut princely families, the Zamorins, thinking they would help propagate its message of Hinduism in danger. The Zamorins in turn summoned the Brah-

mins for help.[79] The Samaj was right in thinking that Malabar Hindus were awfully divided. But the Brahmins were not the agents of unity. They were precisely the principal objects of Ezhava anger. The Samaj could not have built Hindu unity through the Brahmins.

In the end, the Arya Samaj was unable to put down roots in Calicut and Malabar, for caste antagonisms occupied the same place in Malabar as religious antagonisms in the north. The best summary of why the Samaj failed is provided by the most formidable mobilizer of lower castes in twentieth century Kerala:

> The Arya Samaj and other Hindu communal organizations came and started their work in Malabar, first by way of affording relief to Hindu refugees fleeing from the areas of the rebellion, then by reconverting those Hindus who had been forcibly converted to Islam by the rebels and ultimately going to the extent of converting Muslims to Hinduism. The Muslim intelligentsia was terror-stricken because of the post-rebellion repression. . . . They could do nothing but remain sulking for the time being. . . . It is true that this did not lead to communal tension and communal riots so familiar to the people of North India. [The Arya Samaj] did not catch the imagination of the people here. . . . The main reason is that the Hindus here are so caste-ridden, the caste-rules regarding their mutual social relations so rigid, it is extremely difficult to create a real sense of Hindu solidarity. The low-caste people felt more at home with the Muslims and Christians than with their co-religionists. . . . *The main form of communalism [here] was caste against caste, and not Hindu versus Muslim.*[80]

A Restructuring of Mass Politics and Its Impact on Civic Life

With the Samaj unable to find a niche in Malabar, the region's politics was decisively restructured in the 1930s. The key issue was social justice, defined in terms of the civil and economic rights of the lower castes. Entry into temples—for all lower castes, including the Ezhavas—and an attack on the social deference system concerning dress and access to public roads and more equal access to education drove the civil rights campaign. Simultaneously, tenancy rights and greater lower-caste access to government employment spurred the mobilization for economic rights.

The two campaigns—social and economic—could be merged in Malabar because the social and economic hierarchy had a clear correspondence. The Brahmins and the Nairs were more educated and held most of the land and government jobs. In Malabar, for all practical purposes, the caste and class narratives of social justice were two sides of the same coin.[81]

The foundations of a new civic order in Calicut, described above, were laid in the 1930s and 1940s. The left wing of the Congress Party created a remarkably large number of peasant unions, labor unions, and lower-caste associations that became the locus of education and struggle. They educated lower-caste peasants and workers through reading clubs and night classes and also preached a message of struggle against oppression.[82] These mass-based organizations brought a large proportion of Kerala's non-Brahmins under their umbrella.

By 1940, the Communist Party of Kerala was born in Malabar.[83] It was an outgrowth of the left wing of the Congress. In the 1946 elections, the Communists won 25 percent of popular vote in Malabar.[84] Although still not as popular as the Congress, they were a rising force and had clearly established a large presence. Most important, by repeatedly emphasizing the issues of social and economic justice, mobilizing the subaltern, organizing networks of education and camaraderie among them, and exerting pressure on the Congress, left-wing politicians reshaped the discourse of Malabar politics and forged an array of civic institutions—unions, associations, and clubs—incorporating the masses.

CONCLUSION

Given the social hierarchies of Kerala, caste injustice and civil rights of lower castes became the master narrative of Kerala politics, in contrast to Aligarh, where Hindu-Muslim differences took on the same importance. In Calicut, the upper- versus lower-caste construction of politics triumphed over the Hindu versus Muslim construction, whose theoretical possibility had been created by the Malabar rebellion. A large number of civic associations and cadre-based organizations were spawned by the votaries of lower-caste politics in Calicut, whereas the civic organizations of Aligarh took an increasingly intracommunal form. Hindu-Muslim civic engagement was given a solid associational foundation in Calicut's new organizations, which attacked the hegemony of upper castes, not of a Muslim elite, as was the case in Aligarh. Intercommunal civic life flourished as a by-product of the caste-based framework of mass politics. Contrariwise, intracommunal links became deeper and deeper as mass politics in Aligarh took a communal form. The varied civic orders in the two cities, thus, had very different political foundations.

Chapter 11 Endogeneity? Of Causes and Consequences

The preceding two chapters have presented two rather different profiles, disjointed in time. Our first profile came from the period between the 1920s and the 1940s (Chapter 9). The intercommunal civic structures of Ahmedabad and Surat were sturdy, and communal riots by and large did not take place; and if riots did break out, their spread in the two cities was successfully contained. Our second profile shifted attention to the 1980s and 1990s (Chapter 10), when we noticed that the integrative strength of civic structures had declined and riots took place frequently in Ahmedabad and managed to break the peace of Surat as well.

One could argue that these two profiles do not illustrate the larger point about the role of integrated civic structures in keeping peace at all. Indeed, rather than such structures containing or pre-empting riots, one could suggest that riots undermined the civic structures, especially in Ahmedabad. If so, my analysis must plead guilty to what methodologists call endogeneity: that is, the presumed causes were, in fact, the consequences, and vice versa.[1] What is considered a cause should be exogenous, not endogenous. It must precede the consequence.

If I have indeed mixed up the causes and consequences, the correct conclusion would be exactly the opposite of what I have argued thus far. The civic structure—associations and everyday life—would be intercommunal in a city that did not have communal riots for a long time; and if riots did take place, they would tear the integration apart. In such an analytic scenario, riots would be exogenous, and the civic structure endogenous: riots would precede the weakening, or disappearance, of integrated civic organizations, not vice versa.

If we advance further along this line of methodological reasoning, we could also say that the other cities examined so far were not good sites for sorting out the problem of endogeneity, even though that has been my claim so far. For, between the 1920s and 1990s, those cities did not substantially change in aspects that would matter. Either riots took place quite frequently both before and after independence (Aligarh and Hyderabad), or peace prevailed in both phases (Calicut and Lucknow). At no point were the integrated civic structures of the latter challenged by riots. How can we be so sure that the civic structures preempted riots when they were not challenged by the outbreak of one? Perhaps the dogs did not bark because there was nothing to bark about.

By this logic, Ahmedabad should provide the true test for my argument, for the city, Gandhi's home for years, had a solid intercommunal civic structure in the pre-independence period, but the integrative forces later weakened and riots took place regularly.[2] One may also add that the intercommunal fragility of the civic structure in the 1980s, to which the preceding chapter drew attention, is not sufficient for the purposes of showing cause and effect, for the civic weaknesses of the 1980s came *after* the 1969 riots in the city, not before. Could it be that that Ahmedabad's 1969 riots undermined the city's intercommunal organizations, namely, the Congress Party, the labor unions, the business associations, and the Gandhian social institutions? If so, the causation in the argument should be reversed. What I call a cause is in fact a consequence.

I argue below that such a conclusion, if drawn, would be entirely incorrect. It is not simply that the integrated organizations began to lose their character in the 1980s, but they did so *before* the 1969 riots. To make this point in adequate empirical detail, this chapter concentrates on showing the deepening fragility of Ahmedabad's integrated civic organizations in the 1960s and also seeks to locate its causes.

The Ahmedabad riots of 1969 took place because the two most formidable mass-based organizations, the Congress Party and the labor union, had lost their civic vibrancy and Gandhian social organizations had also declined in the 1960s *for reasons that had nothing to do with riots.* Riots took place because of the

crippling weakness of the integrated civic organizations, long in the making; riots did not break up organizations that were as strong as they used to be before independence. Although the main purpose of this book is to explain why riots take place, not why integrated civic structures decline, I will also identify—in a necessarily brief way—the causes of Ahmedabad's civic decline and demonstrate that such decline both preceded the riots and was independent of them.

THE AHMEDABAD RIOTS OF 1969: WHAT HAPPENED?

The immediate cause of the Ahmedabad riots was no different from the provocations or triggers witnessed so often elsewhere in the country. Characteristically, the event that led to the 1969 riots was small, but the repercussions were entirely out of proportion, primarily because it was seen as a symbol of larger forces and plans.[3]

On September 18, 1969, a large number of Muslims had assembled for an *urs* (celebration) at the tomb of a Muslim saint, as they always had on that date. The tomb is located near the Jagannath temple, a place of considerable importance for the local Hindus. At about 3 P.M., the *sadhus* (holy men) of the temple were returning with their cows, as they did every single day at that time. When the cows, led by the sadhus, tried to make their way through the crowd, a skirmish ensued. A few cows as well as some Muslims were hurt. In the confusion that ruled, the sadhus were apparently attacked for being unmindful of Muslim religious sentiment. Also damaged later were the windows of the temple. Realizing that an unnecessary attack on the sadhus had been made, some Muslim leaders issued an apology the same evening, blaming thoughtless and unduly excitable Muslim youths for the attack.

The next morning, the local newspapers reported in detail how the temple was attacked but did not report the apology. Later on that day, angry that a nearby grave had been desecrated, some Muslims gathered in front of the temple and shouted slogans. About the same time, a false rumor began to circulate in the town that the head priest *(mahant)* of the Jagannath temple had been attacked.

By the afternoon of September 19, rioting and killings had begun, primarily in the working-class neighborhoods. The violence worsened immeasurably the next day, the police admitted their complete failure to restore order, despite a curfew, and the army was called in. By September 23, the rioting had ceased, but in four days of violence, more than 600 people had been killed, many more

injured and made homeless, and a large number of businesses destroyed. Muslims had suffered a great deal more than the Hindus.

The number of deaths was staggering. Since India's partition, no other riot in the country had led to so many deaths, nor indeed has any single riot in a city reproduced such a large number of casualties since 1969. The destruction of lives and property was deadly and wanton. For four to five days, utter mayhem ruled Gujarat's premier city, also the capital of the state at that time.

More than 600 lives lost in just a few days of uncontrolled rioting would be an awful development for any government responsible for law and order. What made the riots symbolically even more chilling was that 1969 was also the centenary of Gandhi's birth. The city had been preparing for a gala celebration on October 2, Gandhi's birthday. The riots took place barely a fortnight before the planned celebrations. Morarji Desai, India's second most powerful politician at that time, a well-known Gandhian and a native of Gujarat, expressed the horror thus:

> The orgy of violence that the city of Ahmedabad witnessed during the last four days is a matter of shame for any city, society or civilization. . . . Was the sacrifice of the father of the nation at the altar of non-violence in vain? . . . Bapu [Gandhi] lived here for about two decades and gave his message of peace to the world from here. Can this very city . . . stain his message in blood and that too when we are celebrating his centenary?[4]

The rioters also damaged Gandhi's ashram and assaulted its Muslim inmates. The rioters clearly wanted to attack the spirit of the occasion as well as what was once an inviolable site and the greatest symbol of harmony in the city.

Tensions had been building for some time. The literature notes the following background to the riots: the India-Pakistan war of 1965, when the plane carrying the state's chief minister was shot down by Pakistan and he was killed; an agitation against cow slaughter by Hindu religious leaders in 1967; a big rally of Hindu nationalists led by the RSS in 1968 in which speeches on why India was a Hindu nation were given, with large audiences listening; a huge Muslim procession to protest the attack on the Al Aqsa mosque, located in the Middle East, in 1969; the episode in which a Hindu police officer pushed a Muslim cart-puller, which led to the Quran that was placed in the cart falling in a ditch, also in 1969; and finally, in some sort of reverse replay, an incident a week before the riots when a Muslim police officer, in the process of implementing the law, ended up hitting the Ramayana.[5]

Seen as provocations and triggers for riots, these incidents cannot be called

any more serious or significant than the build-up for India's partition in 1947, when Ahmedabad in fact did not have riots, or the events leading up to the Ayodhya mobilization of 1990–92, when it did. By themselves, these events can not explain why Ahmedabad had riots in 1969.

We need to know what the civic organizations and associations did when faced with such "shocks," for in 1947, these organizations, especially the Congress party and the TLA, were able to stave off riots when many other cities had them. After the India-Pakistan war of 1965, they had enough time to anticipate a worsening of Hindu-Muslim relations: Gujarat was, after all, one of the fronts where the war was fought. And as more incidents accumulated after the war, they had even greater reason to prepare for the worst.

Did they? What did the Congress Party and the TLA, the two biggest mass-level organizations of pre-independence years, as well as the other integrated civic organizations, do? What explains their inaction, if they indeed were passive and uninvolved?

STATE POWER AND GRASSROOTS WORK: HOW A PARTY LOSES ITS CIVIC EDGE

The customary account of the organizational decline of the Congress dates back to the middle of 1969, when the party formally split. One faction went away with Indira Gandhi, another with those who had control over the organizations.[6] Does the split of the Congress a couple of months before the Ahmedabad riots have any significance for our analytic purposes?

The faction that dominated Gujarat was not with Mrs. Gandhi. In her bid for the national leadership of the party, she had in fact locked horns with stalwarts from Gujarat. As shown in Chapter 10, in order to defeat her opponents in the party, Mrs. Gandhi went over the heads of organizational bosses to appeal directly to the masses. Thinking her charisma enough to win power for her party, she abandoned the Congress tradition of having internal elections for party offices. She also gave up the well-established principle of decentralizing power within the party and dispersing it to the state and district levels. Instead, to ensure that no alternative source of power emerged, she started nominating state-level party leaders who were, as a consequence, beholden to her.

With this strategy, it is argued, commenced the organizational decline of the Congress Party, even as it continued to win elections owing to the charismatic appeal of its leader. The state-level leaders were now politicians who had no independent base of their own, who had not risen through the ranks, who had no

long or distinguished experience of political work at the grassroots level. They were adept at "backroom politics" and at constructing alliances of convenience. As a consequence, the party, despite winning, lost its organizational coherence and vibrancy at the local level.

This standard account of the Congress Party requires amendment. As an *electoral* body, its organizational decay may have become transparent after the 1969 split, in India as well as Gujarat, but as a *civic* organization, its decline goes back much further. We need to ask what happened to the civic activities of the party if we wish to understand why it was so helpless in preventing the 1969 riots in Ahmedabad.

As we know from our previous discussion, after the party's turn to mass politics in the 1920s, Congressmen were involved in two arenas: governmental politics and social reconstruction. The former often required electoral politics so that governmental power—at the local and, subsequently, state levels—could be captured; and the latter, a child of Gandhian ideology, entailed civic activity such as grassroots work for Hindu-Muslim unity, *swadeshi* campaigns, nationalist education, and the uplift of women, tribals, peasants, and untouchables. The civic tasks were undertaken by all Congress leaders at some point or the other, and a large band of cadres committed to the ideology was thus created.

After independence, Gandhi wanted the Congress to give up its governmental role and focus entirely on social reconstruction. But those who had fought for independence for three decades were unlikely to heed the call, and they did not. Admiring Gandhi but not particularly inclined toward his call for self-abnegation, they thought that after the British left, they deserved to be in power. The top leadership of the Congress firmly believed that, even after independence, the party could continue to perform both roles: civic and governmental. The party chose to run governments and sought to build cadres, taking up the unfinished task of social change.

Gandhi's insight, however, turned out to be prophetic. *The decline of the party as a civic body accompanied its rise in power.* The more the party ran governments, the more it attracted people interested in sharing the spoils of power, not cadres committed to ideology and grassroots work. Those who joined the Congress when it was fighting the British against all odds did not do so because power was readily available. If anything, a jail sentence was more likely than a stint at ruling. An ideological commitment to the goals of the movement was an important motivating factor, and a great deal of social mobilization and work with the masses followed as a corollary. In contrast, those who joined the party after independence could see power within their reach. Governmental

power was not precariously perched on distant horizons, realizable only after months or years in jail. Being a Congressman now meant enjoying the fruits of power. Reaping the harvest of its pre-independence political struggle, the party now was running all governments at all levels virtually all over the country.

As time wore on, the new Congressmen did not have to engage in "constructive activities." They could rise in the party if they delivered votes at the time of elections through manipulation of "vote banks"—making of shrewd alliances with caste and community leaders by promising them what they wanted, regardless of ideological considerations.[7] After independence, the party increasingly became a patron-client machine, not an organizational vehicle of ideological and social change.

Because the civic aspects of Congress activity were so pronounced in Gandhi's home state, the process outlined above was first sharply noticed in Gujarat. The ways in which rising power and declining civicness were integrally related became transparent as early as the mid-to-late 1950s. In Gujarat, a wide array of civic bodies were formed during the national movement, in which Congressmen had participated in large numbers. In the heartland of Gandhian ideology, a deviation from the civic projects of Congressmen was simply sharper than elsewhere and more manifest.

Indeed, watching the civic decline, the Congress Party had felt so concerned that in 1957 a committee was constituted to investigate the problems of party organization in Gujarat, where, after all, "some of the epoch making events of the . . . freedom movement were launched," and where Gandhi and Patel had "created a solid flank of Congress workers devoted to constructive work as well."[8] The committee did not deem it "proper to measure the strength or weakness of the Congress merely by the yardstick of the results of elections,"[9] for organizational health was analytically distinguishable from winning elections.

After extensive interviewing with party workers, the committee noted that "circumstances have changed after the achievement of independence"; that "the craze . . . for power and position [has vitiated] the atmosphere"; that "Congress workers at the base have lost contact with the people, . . . their discipline has become loose, . . . they indulge in mutual rivalries for occupying offices and . . . their . . . mode of living has considerably changed."[10] And with respect to "constructive activities," the findings of the committee were unmistakable: "During the struggle for independence under the guidance of Gandhi constructive activities were . . . made part and parcel of the movement. . . . The state of affairs today is that many Congress members believe that the sphere of

activity for the Congress is restricted to its organizational and parliamentary activities only."

What, then, could be done? What were the normative conclusions that the committee drew? And what were its predictions? Arguing presciently, the committee said that " if this tendency is not checked, it will prove dangerous to the stability and efficiency of the organization." In particular, the committee warned that "*to combat the evils of communalism,* it is necessary to establish properly functioning village, Ward or mohalla [neighborhood] Congress committees."[11]

A restructuring at the grass roots and a re-emphasis on civic activities were thus necessary. They did not take place. Like many reports of the Congress Party after independence, this one too gathered dust. The short-term attractions of power simply overwhelmed the long-term need for ideological and organizational reinvigoration. Corrective action, even if intended, was not finally taken.

It should now be clear why the Congress Party played very different roles in the city during the 1941 and 1946 riots on one hand and the 1969 riots on the other. During the 1941 and 1946 riots in Ahmedabad, Congressmen had worked hard to prevent the spread of violence, and they had the cadres and commitment to succeed (see Chapter 9). Even more striking, working with the TLA, they were able to ensure that no riots took place in Ahmedabad at the time of India's partition. In contrast, when the riots broke out in September 1969, Congressmen were nowhere to be seen. Neither the leaders nor the cadres were active in containing communal violence. It was the first such episode of inactivity in a city known for Congress politicians' commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity.

At the level of leadership, a split in the Congress had already taken place in July 1969. As we know, the right-of-center Congress faction had broken away from Mrs. Gandhi and had also taken most of the cadres with it in Gujarat. Moreover, to keep itself in power after the split, the right wing had actually struck an alliance with the Hindu nationalists. Thus, the leaders were hopelessly compromised: they were dependent on Hindu nationalists, who had led the mobilization against the Muslims for having violated the sanctity of the Jagannath temple. Morarji Desai, Gujarat's main leader after Gandhi and Patel and Mrs. Gandhi's rival in Delhi, arrived in the city only on the fourth day of riots, when nearly 400 lives had already been lost. In the past, as shown in Chapters 9 and 10, either the leaders would organize campaigns against communalism or, even if the major leaders were busy elsewhere, as in 1946, the lo-

cal leaders and cadres were well enough trained to fight communal violence. More than a few lives simply could not be lost in riots.

Desai's arrival was too late, and it was also rather disingenuous, at that point, to announce an indefinite fast until violence stopped.[12] After taking its full bloody course, violence was already on its way out under the army's supervision.[13] Other leaders of the Congress were no better; most were ministers in state government. In more activist and committed times, they would have resigned for having failed to save hundreds of lives in the state capital. In 1969, they hung on to power.

With leaders unable to give up the temptations of state power, it was left entirely to the cadres to do something. There is, of course, no evidence that Congress cadres were actively involved in killing. But the acts of omission were all too obvious. It is highly unlikely that a horrendous act such as the one described below could have taken place—of all places—at Gandhi's ashram if the ideological and organizational strength of the Congress had still been intact:

> A gang armed with axes, rods and stones stormed the world famous Sabarmati ashram. . . . The target of this blood-thirsty gang was 70-year old . . . Ghulam Rasul Qureshi, a [Muslim] inmate of Sabarmati ashram, an old associate of Gandhi. . . .
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> The gang was crying for blood of a man who had worked all his life for communal harmony and independence of India, and who was assaulted by Muslim League members in 1939 as he had pleaded for a nationalist measure in Ahmedabad municipal [government]. The sanctity of this historical Ashram was of no use to this gang. . . . The doors of the . . . Ashram were damaged and the house of [Mr.] Qureshi . . . stoned, but his life was saved as other inmates of the Ashram rushed to his help. But the houses of two sons of Mr. . . . Qureshi were set aflame in Navrangpura.[14]

Saving Gandhi's ashram and the house and family of a lifelong Muslim Gandhian from attack does not take military preparation on the scale of war. A few committed cadres, with their organizational might, have often saved prominent buildings and key men in many riots in India. Congressmen, both leaders and cadres, were entirely missing from the scene.

Similarly, lurid, offensive, and provocative rumors, falsely printed by local newspapers, were also not neutralized in time. As other chapters have shown, this is something quite easy if an organization with networks in the neighborhoods is available and decides to investigate the rumor.[15] Such civic activities

were traditionally an integral part of being a Congressman and used to come naturally after enough grassroots-level organizational work had been done.

To conclude, the civic decline of the Congress did not begin with the split of 1969 but in the 1950s, and it was not caused by communal riots. Instead, it was driven by the increasing association of the Congress with state power and the decreasing significance of constructive activities in the party's political priorities. The more the Congress allied itself with the state, the smaller became its role as a builder of civil society. The spark that triggered riots in 1969 only showed how much the Congress had already deteriorated.

THE OTHER SIDE OF CORPORATIST PRIVILEGES: HOW A MIGHTY UNION DEVELOPS FEET OF CLAY

In addition to the Congress, the TLA was the other great mass-based civic organization in pre-independence Ahmedabad. We know, however, that working-class neighborhoods suffered some of worst rioting in 1969.[16] The TLA did post-riot relief work but played no pre-emptive role. This was quite contrary to its historical role. In the pre-independence period, it had kept workers away from communal violence.

Throughout the 1960s, the TLA had been deteriorating as a civic body. The reasons for its decline were internal as well as external. Internally, the consequences of the TLA's monopoly of labor representation, rarely challenged, were disastrous for its civic vigor; externally, the impact of new migration of workers into the city in the 1950s and the economic downturn in the 1960s had a deleterious effect. Unlike those who had come in the previous decades, a large proportion of the migrants who entered the textile workforce in the 1950s and 1960s came from outside the state of Gujarat, especially from the non-Gujarati-speaking areas of the country.[17] Their assimilation into the union culture required special efforts on the part of TLA. Its organizational monopoly of labor representation, however, made the TLA too self-assured of its own power and too ill-equipped to undertake its customary civic tasks.

As discussed in Chapter 9, the TLA was the only "representative union" in Ahmedabad textiles by law. According to the Bombay Industrial Relations Act (1946), applicable to the entire Bombay Province, of which Gujarat was a part, there were three kinds of "approved" unions: representative, primary, and qualified. Any union was "approved" if its membership was "regular" (meaning sta-

ble), if it kept a record of its meetings, and if it was willing to allow the government to audit its accounts. If, following the above rules, a union could enlist 5 percent of workers in an industry to its membership, it would also be a qualified union; if the proportion enlisted was 15 percent, it would become a primary union.

But when would a union become representative? The criteria were predictably more stringent. A representative union was one that (a) had 25 percent of workers in an industry as its members, (b) committed itself to conciliation and arbitration as the routine methods of dispute resolution between workers and employers, turning to strikes only if legal recourse had been exhausted, and (c) agreed that strikes would be called only after a majority of its members in a secret ballot had voted in favor of the extreme measure. Only a representative union had the legal authority to represent workers in courts and in negotiations with employers and government.

Power essentially belonged to a representative union, not to others. Since the formulation of the law in 1946, the TLA had been the only representative union in Ahmedabad textiles. Indeed, the legislation was aimed at giving the TLA an advantage over the Communist-inclined unions when the latter seemed to pose a challenge, first in the 1930s and then in the 1940s.[18]

The TLA's monopolistic status, a case of corporatism if we use the language of interest representation,[19] turned out to be its undoing. It progressively became a hollow giant, for the size of its membership was no reflection of its civic vibrancy. Even if the TLA attracted as many as 70 to 80 percent of all textile workers, as it actually did through the 1950s and 1960s, peaking in the early 1960s with more than 100,000 members in a workforce of 130,000, its mammoth size could be quite deceptive.[20]

The workers did not have any realistic option except to join the TLA, for no other unions could easily become representative unions.[21] The issue was not simply that a sizable proportion of workers would have to be enrolled, but also that unions had to demonstrate commitment to conciliation and arbitration as methods of dispute resolution and abjure the use of strikes. Typically, a new union would show its strength and popularity by staging a successful strike. That was the best way to attract members, but if it did so, it would lose the chance of becoming a representative union for having encouraged strikes.

Thus, workers had very little incentive to join anti-TLA unions because they could not legally represent them; social and welfare services are all they could normally provide. In comparison, the TLA could provide both welfare services

and legal representation. Alternative unions could flourish only against all odds.

Under the best of circumstances, organizations are rarely a perfect expression of their guiding ideologies. So long as the TLA had to compete with other unions, as in the 1930s, it was forced to undertake organizational work for survival. Once corporatism ruled the scene, only an unflinching ideological commitment by its leaders could keep its ethos of work alive. The union's popularity no longer depended on organizational work and ideological dissemination. The TLA could attract members even if the gap between its commitments and actions widened, for other unions were badly disadvantaged.

As the first generation of truly committed leadership passed away, the TLA became a victim of its own success. Its new leaders did not have to work as hard, and the bureaucratized top and middle of the organization increasingly lost touch with the base.[22] By the 1960s, much against the Gandhian principles, some of its leaders had started living lavish lives; in the name of conciliation, they had also developed collusive relations with mill owners; and they were no longer responsive to workers' interests.[23]

Associational vitality was further weakened by the new migration in the 1950s, when Ahmedabad's textile sector was still booming. In 1961, 50.9 percent of the city's population consisted of migrants, the highest proportion ever.[24] The new migrants came increasingly from areas that did not speak Gujarati, had inherited traditions of Hindu-Muslim tensions and violence, and had not developed commitments to Gandhian ideology with the same intensity as Gujarat had.

Moreover, a commitment to Gandhian methods in industrial relations was something specific to Gujarat, especially Ahmedabad. Outside Gujarat, Gandhi's influence marked nationalist activity in general, not industrial relations per se. In a mobilization for political independence and self-rule, it is one thing to take the blows of a policeman and not hit back; to be hit or abused by an employer or workplace boss, and yet follow the principles of nonviolent resistance, is another matter altogether. The new migrants needed adequate socialization into the Gandhian ideology of labor unionism, which included, among other things, a commitment to communal unity. But, having secured a monopoly status, the TLA leadership had few incentives to undertake the arduous task of socialization.

The year 1963–64 provided compelling evidence of the TLA's organizational weaknesses. It suffered a humiliating defeat in its own bastion. Aware that dis-

satisfaction with the TLA was mounting, a left-wing union, led by Indulal Yagnik, who had been at the helm of the movement for a Gujarat state in 1956–57, started mobilizing workers for higher, inflation-based allowances and bonuses.[25] Support for the Yagnik-led union increased rapidly. A strike call was given in August 1964 that began to attract considerable popular attention.[26] Yagnik's ideological thrust was Marxist, not Gandhian: "There is fire in the hearts of workers. The fire is getting deeper and deeper. . . . The workers will take law in their hands and create a revolution just as there were revolutions in Russia and France. . . . Unless workers do something nothing will be gained. Nobody is prepared to give you [anything] unless you show your power."[27] Violent clashes took place between Yagnik's supporters and TLA activists, the latter trying to ensure that the strike was unsuccessful. The police opened fire, leading to six deaths and many injuries. Yagnik and other leaders of the movement were jailed for inciting workers, but in the process they also became the new heroes of Ahmedabad's working class.

A year later, in the 1965 municipal elections, the TLA's candidates lost badly. The TLA contested 27 of 78 seats, but it lost all of them. (In 1962, it had fought 31 seats and won 29.)[28] Yagnik's supporters won a majority and ran the municipal government.[29] "After a long time," said a stunned TLA, referring to the losses, "the voice of Ahmedabad labour ceased to be heard in the [municipal] council."[30] Officially, the union attributed the defeat to false "propaganda" on the part of the Communists. Internally, the TLA leaders knew that reinvigoration was necessary.[31] The revitalization, however, did not come about.

By far the biggest evidence of the TLA's failure was the widespread rioting in working-class neighborhoods. Textile workers killed one another on grounds of religion: "All his life my husband worked, fought and gave sacrifices for the textile workers of Ahmedabad. He was thrown out of employment several times for championing the cause of workers, Hindus as well as those belonging to other communities. But during this riot he was killed by his fellow workers just because he was a Muslim. Our house and all our belongings were burnt and today we are destitute."[32]

In the past, tensions and bitterness—and they occasionally were present—would never turn into an orgy of violence. Such tensions would be managed by union activists and their vast network; and if violence did ensue, it would be contained. It was because of such civic consciousness and involvement that the 1946 Ahmedabad riots had simply not been able to reach working-class neighborhoods. And no riots took place at the time of partition. A vigorous union at

that time knew what it meant to keep people together. By the late 1960s, it was strong enough to run relief camps after riots and persuade workers to return to work about a week after the riots had ceased[33] but not vibrant enough to *prevent* riots, even in working-class neighborhoods.

The TLA's problems were not simply organizational and migration-related. The obstacles that the TLA faced in its path of recuperation were also beginning to take economic form. In the mid-1960s, the downturn of the organized textile sector had begun. Although the crisis, as analyzed in Chapter 10, would come to a climax only in the 1980s, the problems in the late 1960s were serious enough to close down several mills. A sizable retrenchment of workers took place.[34] The ideological and organizational recuperation had also to take place in an adverse economic situation. The TLA was simply not up to the challenge. It had grown too used to its power and privileges.

To conclude, the riots did not cause the decline of TLA; its prior civic decline allowed the riots to take place.

GANDHIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS

At this point one could ask a question about the state of the other two associational pillars of Ahmedabad's civic life: the Gandhian social organizations and the powerful AMA. Could they have made up for what the TLA and the Congress had lost?

The deterioration of the Congress was accompanied by the decline of Gandhian civic activities in general. By the late 1960s, Gandhian ideology had lost much of its earlier power. As Chapter 10 noted, some of the activities, like the homespun movement, were, after independence, patronized officially by government subsidies, which made it unnecessary to launch campaigns and raise funds for sustenance. Others, like prohibition, were being overtaken by newer values in society, and bootleggers were beginning to make their presence felt.[35] Still other activities like nationalist education had lost their original rationale, because independence had already been achieved. Post-independence education was in any case nationalistic, and equally important, the bulk of primary, secondary, and higher education had been taken over by the government. Imparting the right kind of education did not require campaigns for raising finance and restructuring curricula, as was the case before independence.

The premier business organization, the AMA, still had most of the business

magnates and families that had earlier exerted such control over the city's life. The collapse of textiles, after all, came in the 1980s, not in the 1960s. The AMA in 1969 was a powerful association.

There were, however, two reasons why it could not wield the influence it had in the past. First, the large-scale migration of the 1950s had made the city bigger and more diversified. The business leaders did not have the same status for the new, non-Gujarati migrants as they did for the earlier migrants, who came from Gujarat. Second, the AMA was not a civic body of the masses but of the elite. It could play a powerful role if mass organizations shared similar interests and ideologies. The Congress Party and the TLA, in earlier times, used to be close to the AMA. After Gandhi and Patel, the Congress increasingly developed an anticapitalist and populist ideology. The earlier relationship between the Congress and business did not exist any longer. Gandhi's economic ideology was both pro-poor and pro-business; Nehru's was pro-poor but anti-business.

If the mass organizations were no longer working for Hindu-Muslim harmony, the AMA's peace-making abilities were entirely insufficient. As in Hyderabad (see Chapter 8), an integrated elite association is not as important for communal peace as mass-level organizations that successfully integrate the two communities. The declining vigor of integrated associations and organizations explains why, despite quite considerable everyday engagement between Hindus and Muslims, Ahmedabad had such ghastly riots. Neighbors still tried to save neighbors, irrespective of religion, but such human warmth and compassion was powerless in the face of organized gangs of killers who came from outside the neighborhood. The scene described below was typical.

> I met an old woman in a refugee camp. She was sitting in a corner with a blank face and murmured, Oh God, what a catastrophe *(Ya Allah Kya ghazab ho gaya)*. . . . With great difficulty she narrated her tale of woe. Only a few days back, we were a happy family of seven, but today I am the only person alive. . . . We were living happily. My husband and son were earning, my daughter was studying, and I used to look after my two grandchildren and my daughter-in-law used to look after our home. . . . We were staying in a mixed locality, our relations were so close. . . . We used to share our joys and sorrows; we used to attend each other's cultural, religious and social festivals. But on the night of September 20, a crowd attacked our house, poured petrol over it and set it to fire; they savagely threw my husband and son and the grandsons into the fire, and took away my daughter and daughter-in-law. In the meantime, some of my neighbors came to my rescue and saved me. My husband, son and son-in-law were roasted alive, and I have not heard of my daughter and daughter-in-law. I wish I had also been roasted alive.[36]

SURAT, 1969

A comparison with Surat in 1969 further highlights the importance of broad-based civic organizations. First, Ahmedabad's AMA had 100 large mill owners as members in 1969, whereas Surat's business associations were made up of thousands of small manufacturers. Second, the Congress Party of Surat was organizationally in a much better shape than in Ahmedabad and still had a much greater following. Although the party had declined in both cities, it is widely recognized that the deterioration in Surat was less serious.[37] It is also worth noting that in the 1950s and 1960s, the Congress vote in Surat was consistently higher than in Ahmedabad (see Chapter 10 and table 10.3). Finally, Surat in the late 1960s was still a small town, not full of migrants from all parts of India. The strength of both mass organizations, the Congress Party and the business associations, was enough to keep a city of Surat's size peaceful.

Thus, even as Ahmedabad was burning and had also touched off riots in several other Gujarati towns, Surat's mayor, confident of his organizational abilities and the business integration of the city, allowed a Hindu religious procession to take place. He was sure that he had little to fear. A religious procession of that size in Ahmedabad would have almost certainly led to violence. In Surat, it went off peacefully.[38] In 1992, when the Congress in Surat was no longer what it used to be, the much larger and still heavily integrated business associations were still able to ensure peace in the old city of Surat.

In short, although all integrated civic organization have a role to play, the mass-level organizations are a much more powerful bulwark against violence than are elite associations. Integrated Rotary and Lions Clubs can be helpful, but their capacities are not the same as those of trade unions, traders associations, small business associations, and cadre-based political parties (or mass-level film and reading clubs as in southern India).

CONCLUSION

In Ahmedabad, the post-independence decline of integrated associations was not a consequence of communal riots; riots were a consequence of a prior decline of organizations that bound Hindus and Muslims together in large numbers. These organizations deteriorated for reasons not related to riots. Of the two large mass-based organizations, the Congress Party declined because its association with the state led to a a de-emphasizing of its role as a civil society organization, which was one of its key tasks before independence. And the TLA

went down because, in the absence of any challenge to its monopoly of labor representation, it developed civic lethargy. A vibrant union would have socialized the new workers to the ethos of the city, but the TLA was no longer alert. Once the organizational sources of civic integration had so weakened, the sparks and skirmishes that used to be managed earlier through grass-roots work led to a ghastly communal conflagration.