

CHAPTER IV

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STATE SPONSORED COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND GENOCIDE : A CRITIQUE

Genocide is a very discrete term that refers to savage and ruthless crimes perpetrated against groups with the purposive strategic intent to wipe out the existence of the group. This intentional act is inherently a political phenomenon. It is meant for securing and maximizing power and control for hegemonic expansion. The victims are taken for economic, religious, existential or strategic obstacle, therefore, must be eliminated somehow or other. Catherine Barnes in “The Functional Utility of Genocide” has justly argued that ‘political motives are closely entwined with implementation of the perpetrator’s ideological goal to reconstruct the civic polity in conformity with the regime’s ideals’ (Barnes 312).

The term ‘genocide’ was coined by Raphael Lemkin¹ who used the word in his text *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe : Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (1944) that ‘documented patterns of destruction and occupation throughout Nazi-held territories’ (Arora 5). Besides the Nazi holocaust, in history there are also several instances where thousands of people have been massacred in the hands of the dominant group. Mention can be made of Armenian genocide by Ottoman Turks, East Timorese in the 1970s by the Indonesian military, the Rakhines in Myanmar, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the ethnic Uighurs in China etc. To resist this barbarian, inhuman act the United Nations in 1948 even approved the *Convention on the prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. But the sad thing is that even in this postmodern world this crime against humanity has not ceased. It is still being pursued and practised. And in many

ways neo-imperial policies are widely responsible for this. Since the 1990s, with the dissolution of the USSR, US foreign policies have been playing obviously an authoritarian rule the world over. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, several trade related treaties are but the tools and tentacles of US imperialism. They serve to fulfill the purpose of US's coveted hegemonic ambition. Afghanistan and Iraq are but the classic examples of the devastating consequences of US imperialism. Millions of people – men, women and children have been massacred, mercilessly killed and wiped out.

While in India we experience how globalization and corporatization are making deep inroads into the sustained plurality and diversity of India. Modern India has virtually been turned into a fragmented society where the rich oppress and exploit the poor blatantly. Since independence 'about 50 million people have been displaced' (Salve), forced to live elsewhere to make room for the big development projects. On the other hand, there is the fabulous accumulation of wealth and money in possession of the capitalist class thereby demonstrating a picture of gross economic disparity throughout the country. However, what is even more worrying – more insidious and sinister is that with the striking rise of *Hindutva*-based political party and its active associates, state and non-state activists are on the spree of demolishing over liberal and traditional values together. At this point it is to be noted that it may appear to us that patriotism and nationalism are synonymous terms, but closer observation reveals a vital difference between the two. According to the dictionary meaning patriotism is, quite simply, love for one's country. Nationalism, on the contrary, is its visible demonstration. The two can interface in harmony, or they can be posited against each other. Patriotism includes a sense of pride, but does not require that proof be given for it. Normally, it can be restricted to the respect

reserved for symbols like the national flag or the national anthem. Nationalism, on the contrary, often demands aggressive expression, public articulation and the assertion of superiority, going beyond the rites due to national symbols. And here lies the danger. Hyper-nationalism or ultra-nationalism requires an event, an external stimulus to periodically invoke it. There is every possibility that this heightened nationalism would degenerate into jingoism or xenophobia. The last two are irrational mindsets. It is very difficult to counter them with logic, because the very attempt to be logical rather than emotional is perceived as an act of betrayal. Unfortunately this is what is happening at present in India. The political leadership is breeding and feeding hatred and outsourcing violence to the mob so as to polarize the people to such an extent where they would gain political mileage through jingoism. The so-called enthusiasts are creating a climate in which people are feeling stifled. The metamorphosis of the mob is really scaring as anyone who has witnessed a riot would know how perfectly normal people could turn into blood thirsty beasts, looting and killing with mindless abandon in the space of a few hours or a few days. The sad thing is that these ‘programmed’ people are ‘whole-heartedly proud of what they did, and can’t see it any other way’ (Bunsha xvi).

Another significant deviation is that this mob is no longer the faceless groups of lumpens and thugs – these ideologically radicalised mob is part of our very own middle class – men and women, who have now become aggressive advocates of the macho ‘new’ India.

Gravely concerned as a writer, Roy has also, time and again, raised her vigorous voice against communal violence and genocide, engineered by the dirty politicians for their dirty politics. In her essay, “Democracy : Who’s She When

She's at Home" she has vehemently criticized the 2002-Gujarat Pogrom, which was in many ways, a state sponsored genocide of the Muslims by the fanatic Hindus. For Roy it was an orchestrated violence - planned, co-ordinated and executed by the political leaders, state bureaucracy and the police with lethal precision to terrorise and subjugate the minority Muslim people so that they would live in continual fear in the coming days.

It is to be noted that the violence in Gujarat was not the first of its kind; in India there were several instances of communal violence. Mention can be made of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, the 1992 anti-Muslim violence after the Babri Masjid demolition episode etc. However, what made it the stand alone instance is the complicity of state machinery from the highest to the lowest level. Roy's genuine concern is also echoed in the voice of Dionne Bunsha² who says :

Gujarat's violence wasn't a spontaneous Hindu versus Muslim conflict. It was politically engineered violence with a communal excuse. A planned, deliberate attempt to wipe out as many Muslims as possible. The targeting of Muslims had shades of the persecution of Jews by the Nazis in pre-Second World War Germany. (Bunsha xx-xxi)

The dirty politics also gets authenticated in a recent report that clearly states that the 'instantaneous reaction' (Khetan C1) excuse as generated by the government regarding the post-Godhra massacre appears to be a 'fanciful construct if police control room messages and state intelligence bureau reports of February 27, 2002 are factored in' (Khetan C1).

Contextually, let us hark back to the ghastly Godhra train burning incident which took place on the morning of 27 February 2002. On the ill-fated day several Hindu pilgrims i.e. *kar sevaks*, after having performed some religious rituals at the dismantled site of Babri Masjid, were returning to Gujarat by Sabarmati Express. In the Godhra station, under contentious state of affairs, four coaches of the Sabarmati Express caught fire. In the ensuing inferno about 60 people, including 26 women and 12 children, were charred to death.³ As per reports published in newspaper, prior to this grim tragedy, the *kar sevaks* were creating much inconveniences to the co-passengers by creating ruckus. They even forced them to chant *Jai Shriram*.

Several reasons were fore grounded behind this Godhra train burning tragedy. Retired Supreme Court judge G.T. Nanavati led Commission concluded that the ghastly train burning incident was deliberately perpetrated ‘by a mob of 1000 – 2000 local people’ (Jaffrelot). Maulvi Hsuain Haji Ibrahim Umarji, a local cleric of Godhra, and suspended CRPF personnel, Nanumiyan were repeatedly pointed out as the culprits behind the arson.⁴ The Concerned Citizens’ Tribunal (CCT), however, arrived at the decision that the ‘fire had been an accident’ (Citizens for Justice and Peace 14) . Some other versions also pointed out that the conflagration was to all intents and purposes a mishap. Because of these conflicting narratives the inceptive spawning of the fire has never been decisively defined.

However, the BJP led Gujarat government whose avowed mission is to bolster Hindu nationalism, seized the opportunity ‘to whip up communal frenzy’ (Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* 26). ‘It was decided there should be a model for reprisals. The Hindu community in Gujarat would teach a lesson that Hindus can emulate elsewhere in case they are attacked again’ (Datta *Telegraph* P1). Chief

Minister Narendra Modi in the State Assembly himself stated that his government is 'firm to take symbolic steps and to punish in such a way that such an incident may not repeat in the future' (Dayal). Little did people know at that time what Modi had in mind! Following the train-burning incident, the ally of BJP – Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) called for a state-wide strike. Rumours were spread that the attack on the train was an act of planned conspiracy carried out by the Pakistani undercover agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) with the active cooperation of local Muslims. Gordhan Zadaphia, the then Gujarat Home Minister stated that the barbaric train burning incident is none other than an act of the radical hardliners reminding us of the terror 'attack on the American Centre in Kolkata' (Varadarajan 6). The perpetrators in either case were terrorists. Home Minister, Lal Krishna Advani also stressed on the conjecture of terrorist involvement. He remarked that 'the needle of suspicion points to those elements which attacked Parliament on 13 December 2001' (Varadarajan 6). This is to be noted that by immediately connecting the possibility of a wider terrorist plot linked to Pakistan, the BJP was fanning its own propaganda – its own chauvinist discourse of portraying the Muslims of India as disloyal citizens and, therefore, must be eliminated. Even false news were circulated by the local newspaper stating that some Muslim miscreants had forcibly abducted and brutally assaulted some women of Hindu community.⁵ The government did nothing to ease the tension. Independent reports rather indicated that Rana Rajendrasinh, the BJP state president had validated the strike, and that both, Chief Minister Modi and Rana, had used rousing and provocative words to instigate the people.⁶ Not only this the ruling government even allowed the VHP to bring the bodies of the Godhra victims to Ahmedabad despite the high-level repeated warnings of violent consequences. This decision was indeed a major

provocation for the subsequent communal violence. Moreover, under the pretext of the strike violent mobs were mobilized. Such activities worsened the already volatile situation.

Preplanned and synchronized onslaught against the Muslim people started to take place on the very next day. Men, wearing saffron robes, armed with swords, guns, petrol bombs and gas cylinders began the carnage. The grim picture is poignantly narrated by Bunsha :

Muslim houses, shops and masjids were systematically burned and destroyed. At places like Naroda and Chamanpura in Ahmedabad, Sardarpura village in Mehsana, and the Best Bakery in Vadodara, people were burned alive. They gang raped women and hacked little children to death. In Naroda Patiya, which saw one of the worst massacres in Ahmedabad, they made a human bonfire. (Bunsha 8)

Even the renowned Congress MP, Ahsan Jafri, also a lawyer and a poet, was not spared. Nobody came to his rescue. He was dragged out of his house, stripped and paraded naked. Later he was tortured brutally; his fingers were chopped off and eventually thrown into fire. It was suspected that as he campaigned ‘against Narendra Modi, who was seeking election to the state assembly’ (Bunsha 38) – he became one of the prime targets.

Here it is noteworthy that one of the most peculiar features of this predatory violence in Gujarat, following Godhra, was the detailed information about Muslim habitation and businesses that the goons of BJP, RSS, VHP Bajrang Dal seem to have had. Very evidently the detailed information was collected from the officially conducted surveys of the government.

The tragedy lies in the fact that the police, the so-called law and peace keepers did not intervene or imprisoned the rioters rather the administrative apparatus was hand-in-glove with the organized gangs of VHP – Bajarang Dal. Indeed there were instances where the state police force acted more like the assassination squad of the government than the peace and law keepers. Over ‘2000 people were killed and around 150,000 were displaced in this premeditated violence’ (Rubin 172-73).

In the aftermath of the violence several national and international organizations criticized the Vajpayee government and accused the state government of Gujarat for being the main perpetrator of this violence. A cosmopolitan high powered inquiry panel, comprised of all women connoisseurs from several European and American countries, pointed out in unambiguous terms that deliberate brutal sexual assault and violence were perpetrated to terrorize ‘women belonging to minority community in the state’(Press Trust of India).

The Concerned Citizens’ Tribunal described the use of rape and sexual assault ‘as an instrument for the subjugation and humiliation of a community’ (Khanna 144). The members of the panel pointed out :

A chilling technique, absent in pogroms unleashed hitherto but very much in evidence this time in a large number of cases, was the deliberate destruction of evidence. Barring a few, in most instances of sexual violence, the women victims were stripped and paraded naked, then gang-raped, and thereafter quartered and burnt beyond recognition... The leaders of the mobs even raped young girls, some as young as 11 years old ... before burning them alive ... Even a 20-

day-old infant, or a fetus in the womb of its mother, was not spared.

(Khanna 144)

One woman who prepared the female bodies for burial at a mass grave near Dariakhan Ghummat Camp stated before the Human Rights Watch that :

I washed the ladies' bodies before burial. Some bodies had heads missing, some had hands missing, some were like coal, you would touch them and they would crumble. Some women's bodies had been split down the middle. I washed seventeen bodies on 2 March, only one was completely intact... (Sundar 105)

The Gujarat violence thereafter gave BJP the tactical advantage of consolidating the Hindu vote as opposed to the Muslim vote. It proved to be the most effective means to BJP as the elected executive head of the state government of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, widely held accountable for having perpetrating the riots, was re-elected as the CM in the next assembly election with an exclusive public mandate.⁷

It is interesting to note that Bunsha has made an interesting comparison between the burning of the Reichstag, the German government's headquarters on 27 February 1933 and the burning of the Sabarmati Express in Godhra on 27 February 2002 :

Unlike the Reichstag fire, the burning of the Sabarmati Express might simply have been an accident. Yet, the fallout of both bears some resemblance. Both tragedies were used as an excuse for 'retaliatory' violence. Political leaders immediately built up the fear of the

‘terrorists’/communists. Soon after both events, the hysteria which was generated helped to win an election. (Bunsha 21)

It is an open secret that the *Hindutva*’s ideologues were inspired by European fascism. As their deep yearning is to reshape India into a cultural monolith, which they project as quite essential for national progress, therefore, their motto is ‘to create a uniform citizenry on tried and tested European nationalist principles – a shared language, an authorized history, a single religion and a common enemy’ (Bunsha 21). Gujarat was BJP’s ‘Hindutva Laboratory’ and it was regarded a victory for Hindutva’s hardliners. The VHP’s international president, Praveen Togadia, hailed it as ‘the start of the Hindu Rashtra’ (Bunsha 12). The unfortunate human tragedy of the burning train episode was, therefore, politically manipulated to serve as Modi’s ticket to victory.

The tragedy, however, does not end there. The Gujarat brand of established fear is now haunting the whole India as the then Chief Minister, riding on the wave of Hindu nationalism, is now the Prime Minister of India.⁸ He has already established the new rules of the game, that desired results can still be achieved without going through formal and legal declaration that invite unnecessary furor from the people and opposition of a democratic country. Moreover, the successive elections have reinforced his mandate in such a way that any doubt on the absolute infallibility of his reign is projected as either anti-national or evidence of other grievous inadequacies. Crackdowns on the right to freedom of expression have not just become a threat but also a norm in new India. Impunity for violation of human rights continues to flourish. Sedition laws are being used to criminalize freedom of expression. The members of minority community hardly feel secure here. The

questions asked by Jalaluddin Khan, the father of slain Junaid Khan⁹ to Prime Minister Narendra Modi are classic examples of this growing fear : ‘Why is there so much hatred against Muslims in the country? Was not my son also an Indian? When will the Prime Minister break his silence on the lynching of Muslims?’ (Siddiqui C1)

Roy’s concern is thus genuine.

However, it must be said that there were also instances where the Hindus were attacked by the Muslims and Roy has completely been silenced about that. *The Times of India* divulged that ‘over 10,000 Hindus had been displaced’ (Riots Hit all Classes) in the subsequent Gujarat riot. According to the state police files, ‘157 riots subsequent to the Godhra incident were started by the Muslims’ (Gautier). In the ‘police firing 254 Hindus were killed.’¹⁰ Not only this even ‘the Human Rights Watch has reported on acts of exceptional heroism by Hindus, Dalits and tribals who tried to protect Muslims from the violence’ (Rosser 356). Some police officers and administrative persons like ‘Himanshu Bhatt¹¹ and Rahul Sharma¹² showed outstanding courage to save the lives of the riot-affected people’ (Gupta 34). An *Indian Express* report of February 2015 even said about Rahul Sharma that he –

...was among the officers who took on the state government in the 2002 Godhra riot cases and collected critical evidence as an investigator in the Naroda Patiya, Naroda Gaam and Gulberg Society massacre cases while assisting the probe in 2002. (Ayyub 104)

The 2002 Gujarat riot, though an epitome of the spiral of communal violence orchestrated by BJP, VHP and Sanga Parivar, however, has to be understood in its larger perspective of the complex Hindu-Muslim relationship dating back to the

days of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb¹³ who unleashed violence and torture on the Hindus. Since then the hostility remains. The partition and the subsequent communal violence climaxed in genocide abetted from both quarters. 'It led to the death of 800,000 people, as more than 9 million people crossed borders and violence erupted' (Shiva, *India Divided* 33). Again Pakistan, the nation which has been created for the Muslim people, since its very birth has the principal pre-occupation of inflicting deep territorial and great human damage on India, whenever, wherever and by whatever means possible. It has engineered several wars, orchestrated several proxy wars and numerous terrorist attacks. The December 2001 Indian Parliament attack is a case in point.¹⁴ This hostility has only provided the *Hindutva*-based parties an ideal atmosphere to nurture grievance and hatred towards the Muslim Community. The 2002 Gujarat Pogrom was, therefore, in many ways a retaliation of the Hindus, instigated by the political leaders. During the volatile days P.C. Pande was the designated Police Commissioner of Ahmedabad. His remark regarding the Gujarat violence is worth quoting here :

...there were riots in 85, 87, 89, 92 and most of the times the Hindus got a beating. And the Muslims got an upperhand. So this time in 2002, it had to happen, it was the retaliation of Hindus. Also post – 1995, people felt that the government was theirs, especially because it was a BJP government. (Ayyub 132)

The tragedy, therefore, lies in the fact that while earlier only the perpetrators of the attacks were denounced as radicalized individuals, their communities were not vilified – now the entire community to which the attackers belong are facing the violence.

In another essay, “Listening to Grasshoppers” Roy was once again vocal about state sponsored genocide but this time against the Armenian genocide in Turkey. The fact is that the Armenians are the largest Christian minority living in Turkey under the Islamic regime. Besides their religion, they have also retained their distinct use of language. Therefore, they were conceived as ‘a threat to the unity of an emerging “Turkish” nation-state that would rejuvenate the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in a new Pan-Turkic form’ (Barnes 315). That is why instead of allowing the minority Armenian-Christians to live amicably with their Kurdish neighbours – they are systematically murdered in the name of extermination and ethnic cleansing. The minority Armenian-Christians are subjected to violent torture, periodic robbery and deportation to create a scar in their minds. It is hard to forget that over one and a half million Armenians were methodically butchered by the Ottoman regime authority in the ghastly massacre in Anatolia¹⁵ in 1915. The gruesome mass murder reminds us of the Nazi holocaust where millions of Jews were persecuted in the concentration camps.

However, since 1915 the oppression, extermination and ethnic cleansing of the Armenians in the hands of the ultra-nationalist Muslim people continued. Hrant Dink, the editor-in-chief of the Turkish-Armenian tabloid *Agos*, was well regarded in Turkey for his pro-Armenian stance.¹⁶ He had also spoken several times about this state-sponsored genocide of the Armenians. Quite naturally by mentioning this he had incurred the wrath of the people in power and also of the radical Muslim people. Even when Dink was assassinated he was undergoing legal proceedings for disobeying ‘Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code which makes publicly denigrating ‘Turkishness’ a criminal offence’ (Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* 141).

Dink was not only facing the trial he had also received several death threats from the radical Turkish flag-wavers for his assertion and articulation on Armenian specification and the Armenian holocaust. In his last *Agos* article which was published on 10 January 2007, Dink wrote that false narrative was constantly being circulated and that incentivized many Turkish people to regard him an adversary of their nation :

It is obvious that those wishing to alienate me and make me weak and defenseless reached their goal. Right now they have brought about a significant circle of people who are not low in number and who regard me as someone “insulting Turkish identity” due to dirty and false information. (Dink)

Dink also accused the Turkish authorities of indifference for they deliberately ignored his complaints regarding the death threats:

My diary and the memory of my computer are full of messages from citizens of this circle full of rage and threats. (Let me note that I regarded one among them posted from Bursa as an imminent threat and submitted it to Public Prosecutor’s office in Sisli but got no result.) (Dink)

However, what makes Roy curious about Dink is that he spoke in favour of a society where there would be the harmonious co-existence of people belonging to different religions. In other words, Dink was in favour of a pluralistic society. He, therefore, renounced the state-sponsored genocide and clamoured for the rights of the minority Armenian-Christians in the Muslim-majority Turkey. And by doing this he became one Turkish voice of dissent.

The tragedy, however, lies in the fact that instead of appreciating and embracing his ideas of an egalitarian society, the ultra-nationals – the radicals assassinated him in broad daylight. This was done not only to silence the voice of ‘dissent’ but also to terrify the Armenian-Christians so that they would live in perpetual fear. At the same time what is even more troublesome is the Turkish government’s sheer callousness and purported silence in safeguarding the rights of the minority people. It is to be noted that the 2002-Gujarat Pogrom was orchestrated to subjugate and terrorise the minority Muslim people in India whereas in Muslim-majority Turkey orchestrated communal violence and genocide have been systematically carried out to subjugate and terrorise the minority Armenian-Christians. In either case ‘the regime authorities were clear stakeholders’ (Barnes 313) in perpetrating the massacre of the minorities. The danger, however, lies in the fact that when the state power endorses this kind of assassination, it becomes the symptomatic reading of a society that has systematically embraced fundamentalism and fascism. The deliberate and purposive demolition of the artifacts that uphold the religious or historical heritage of Armenian culture unerringly point to the issue of state-sponsored ethnic cleansing. It also indicates that probably there is no difference between the militant organization, Taliban who has destroyed the Buddhas of Bamiyan¹⁷ and the state power, that endorses the destruction and ethnic cleansing of the minority community by the means of communal violence and genocide.

Roy, therefore, has justly argued that the genocide of the Armenians – their systematic annihilation is not one isolated example – an aberration or an anomaly rather it has been an old habit for the expansion of living space which the Germans famously called ‘lebensraum’ (Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* 151). And quite logically : ‘This impulse to expansion would naturally be at the cost of a less

dominant species, a weaker species that Nazi ideologues believed should give way, or be made to give way, to the stronger one' (Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* 151).

It must be argued that religious dictatorship that compels its followers to tie them down in rigid 'social and moral code' (Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* 183) – be it Islamic or *Hindutva*, will only destroy the diversity, plurality and tolerance of any society. It would lead the people towards militant nationalism purely based on religious identity; it would rob the people of their cultural spaces for assimilation. Such an autocrat, authoritarian society is never welcomed.

Besides the state sponsored genocides both in India and Turkey, Roy has also expressed her deep concern in her essays like - "Azadi", "How Deep Shall We Dig?", "Breaking the News" etc. about the pathetic plight of the numerous Kashmiri people caught in the crossfire of oppression, suppression, domination, militancy and terrorism.

The Kashmir contention is primarily a terrestrial dispute between the two arch rivals - India and Pakistan - engineered by the British government at the time of partition. The former British foreign secretary, Jack Straw himself admitted that 'the British were responsible for the violence of partition and the continuation of problems in Kashmir' (Shiva, *India Divided* 33). He acknowledged that :

India, Pakistan – we made some quite serious mistakes. We were complacent with what happened in Kashmir, the boundaries were not published until two days after independence. Bad story for us, the consequences are still there. (Shiva, *India Divided* 33)

Prior to 1947, during the colonial regime Kashmir was the largest princely state. Under the British rule, along with the other princely states, Kashmiri people

also enjoyed a degree of autonomy. The colonial masters ‘granted them external and domestic protection in exchange for revenue sharing’ (Datta, *Beyond Realism* 32). At the time of partition it had the options either to accede to democratic India or Islamic Pakistan, or remain self-reliant. Initially it remained independent as the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh was undecided. It is to be noted that during partition ‘neither the majority of Muslims, the Buddhists of Ladakh, nor the Hindus of Jammu wanted to join Pakistan’ (Shiva, *India Divided* 35). But the situation became volatile when Pakistan tried to occupy Kashmir by force. In October 1947, Pashtun tribal insurgents, backed and endorsed by the Pakistani army, invaded Kashmir and reached the outskirts of Jammu and Kashmir. Having no other option left to him, the Maharaja asked India for help in exchange for joining their union. It was something really unprecedented and Chandrashekhar Dasgupta¹⁸ has justly argued that :

The conflict which broke out between India and Pakistan in 1947 was unique in the annals of modern warfare : It was a war in which both nationals of a third country led the opposing armies. British generals commanded the armies of the newly independent states of India and Pakistan. In India, moreover, Lord Mountbatten, not Prime Minister Nehru, chaired the Defense Committee of the Cabinet. Thus the course and outcome of the Indo-Pakistan conflict cannot be explained simply in terms of the political objectives and military capabilities of the antagonists. A crucial determinant was the role of the British officers at the helm of the two armies and, in the case of India, the British governor-general, Lord Mountbatten. (Dasgupta 9)

Indian armies were flown over to Srinagar immediately but the invaders were not pushed back to Pakistan because India wanted to avoid an all out war with Pakistan. Moreover, Prime Minister Nehru thought that ‘Sheikh Abdullah was popular only in the valley. In the region covered by Murmur, Ponch, Gilgit, Muzaffarabad etc. there was more support for the pro-Pakistani Mohammed Yusuf Shah at best’ (Datta, *Beyond Realism* 37). For an amicable solution, on Lord Mountbatten’s insistence, Indian leadership instead approached the UN Security Council.¹⁹

It is to be noted that at this time the United States was quite prepared to accept the legitimate claim of India’s sovereign rights over Kashmir. This is evident in a State Department record :

The U.S. representatives pointed out that they were disturbed by the possibly far-reaching implications of a Security Council resolution recommending the use of foreign troops from one party to a dispute in the territory of another party to the dispute... The British representatives at first attempted to minimize such an analogy by asserting that Kashmir was “territory in dispute.” The U.S. representatives agreed that Kashmir was a state about which a dispute had arisen between India and Pakistan but stated that they found it difficult to deny the legal validity of Kashmir’s accession to India. In the end, the British representatives agreed with the U.S. point of view that we had to proceed on the assumption for the time being. [A]t any rate India had legal jurisdiction over Kashmir (Shiva, *India Divided* 37).

Following the layout of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP), the UN Security Council immediately called for a cease-fire and asked the Pakistani government to withdraw its tribesmen and soldiers from Kashmir. It simultaneously asked the Indian government to remove the bulk of its troop deployment followed by the Pakistani withdrawal. It also proposed a 'plebiscite after the withdrawal of both the armies' (Varshney 195).

The adjudication of the apex body was welcomed by India but pretty nearly turned down by Pakistan. Since then the impasse has not been resolved as no withdrawal from any quarter was ever carried out. UN attempts at disposing of this conflict continued until 1958; but after repeated failures, the Security Council restrained themselves from playing any further role of mediator. Dasgupta has argued that :

...the western powers used the Security Council for their own security agenda. On the one hand, Pakistan had proximity to the oil-rich Middle East and was necessary to use as a free air base to defend these oil interests. On the other hand, Kashmir itself was strategically located, the meeting point between China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. (Shiva, *India Divided* 38-39)

From Indian perspective, Kashmir is an integral part of the Union of India and the only issue for them is to recover parts of Kashmir, illegally occupied by Pakistan and China. Pakistan, on the other hand, considers its claim on Kashmir is legitimate as the majority of Kashmiri people are Muslim. So Pakistan regards Kashmir as the core issue and without its settlement, there can be no peace in the sub-continent.

Pakistan's primary, better say its sole aim, therefore, is to snatch Kashmir from India. For this it has launched all out war against India - thrice in – 1948, 1965 and 1999. Moreover, not being 'able to match the [military] might of India; Pakistan has tried to maintain the pressure through periodic infiltrations in an effort to change the status quo in Kashmir' (Datta, *Beyond Realism* 42). Indeed its secret agency, Inter-Services Intelligence's (ISI) avowed mission is to inflict deep terrestrial and great human damage on India whenever, wherever and by whatever means possible. Not only this, Pakistan has also provided safe haven to several global terrorists like Osama-bin-Laden, Hafiz Saeed, Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, Ayman-al-Zawahiri, Ramzi Mohammad-bin-al-Sheibah etc. and extremist organizations like Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Jamaat-ul-Dawa (JuD), Tehreek-i-Taliban (TiT)²⁰ etc. It is to be noted that a recent study of the Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) pointed out the lurking danger of state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan. The report reveals that Pakistan still remains the breeding ground of *jihadis* and 'is responsible for three times the terror risk to humanity that Syria poses.'²¹

The convergence of so many issues and point of views has, therefore, made the amicable solution of Kashmir an elusive thing, a distant possibility. The Kashmiri people's lives are at stake because they don't know who represent the 'Kashmiri sentiment.'

Moreover, the rises of separatist groups, their increased militancy endorsed by the Pakistani army and its retaliatory response of the Indian army have systematically sidelined 'the pluralistic option of greater autonomy within the region (Shiva, *India Divided* 40). Radical Islamization has resulted in the ruthless massacre

of numerous Kashmiri Pandits and that ultimately compelled them to abandon their ancestral land and take refuge in other parts of the country.

Due to the ongoing continuous conflict and the subsequent escalating violence, Kashmir, which was once the heaven on earth, has become the most perilous place on earth. It has now become the most densely militarized zone in the earth. In the subsequent violence and counter-violence probably more than hundred thousand Kashmiri youths have lost their precious lives.²² Furthermore, ‘the emergence of India and Pakistan as nuclear powers in 1998 has added a new dimension to the Kashmir conflict’ (Shiva, *India Divided* 41).

Ramchandra Guha’s analytical study considering the violence of Kashmir with reference to the different historical trajectories of western liberal democracies led him to say that :

...many western countries had to pass through bloody civil wars before they could emerge as nations. The United States, Spain, Italy, France, the United Kingdom et al – all had to undergo decades, or even centuries, of civil strife and sectarian conflict before they could constitute themselves as nations with secure boundaries and a clearly demarcated territory, the residents of which had a willing allegiance to the state and its symbols. (Guha 100)

After assessing these historical evidences and the present ground reality he concludes with the firm conviction that ‘it is virtually impossible, in the short or long term ... an independent Kashmir to come into being’ (Guha 101).

Under the given circumstances then what are the best options of Kashmir? Here Roy, Guha, Shiva – all have argued in favour of promoting the values and

institutions of democracy in letter and spirit. India's hoary tradition of upholding pluralistic values must not succumb to the dictates of any religious community. But of late, in India, the Gandhian - Nehurian model of co-operative federalism is replaced by *Hindutva* which is being systematically implemented through state power. This *Hindutva*, with its rigid social hierarchies, is making deep inroads into India's valuable tradition of communal amity and solidarity. In the name of *Hindutva* the politics of fear is gripping the entire nation. Individual freedoms of various natures, so far enjoyed by the people, are being encroached upon and censored by the flag bearers of *Hindutva*. It is really ominous for India that has prided itself so far on its tolerance and non-communal character traditionally.

As far as the Kashmir conflict is concerned such militant *Hindutva* will only worsen the aggrieved situation because it will breed hatred and escalate humanitarian crisis, extremism and terrorism in Kashmir. The political leadership must understand that India needs to win Kashmir not by force but by all-embracing love and humanity. Before letting the valley once again spiral out of control, the crying need of the hour is 'a multi-pronged initiative, meticulously planned and uncompromisingly implemented' ("How to Salvage Kashmir"). Instead of merely upping the level of retributive violence, through the augmentation of military personnel or by implementing tougher law, the government has to send the message that it is willing for a meaningful peace process. In other words, the government must seriously get down to the task of finding, or creating interlocutors with whom a dialogue process could begin. Roy has justly pointed out:

Perhaps now that the threat of violence has receded and there is some space in which to debate views and air ideas, it is time for those who

are part of the struggle to outline a vision for what kind of society they are fighting for. Perhaps it is time to offer people something more than martyrs, slogans and vague generalizations. (Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* 183)

Besides taking up confidence building measures, the government has to take prompt initiative for economic development and investment for the creation of jobs on priority in the areas grossly neglected so long. Proper employment will channelise the Kashmiri youths towards a better future for it would isolate them from their militant activities. The other important initiative is that concrete steps must be taken to curb the menace of Islamic radicalization unfolding across the valley. And here the Indian Muslims have a significant role to play. The educated and sensible Indian Muslim community must come forward to sort out the Kashmir conflict. They must have to protect their fellow brothers from becoming pawns in the larger games of other nations.