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Chapter 4

Religious Hatred and Religion-Based Violence

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Abstract

Notwithstanding the fact that the world's major religions espouse the principle of inter-religion tolerance, religion has, arguably, replaced ideology in the 21st century as the main destructive force in human affairs. This is because religion, more than a set of theological beliefs, is an outward signifier of group identity; underlying differences in religious beliefs and practices, are differences of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and nationality. Consequently, religious hatred represents more than simply an intellectual aversion to a rival set of beliefs. It transcends this aversion to embrace a hatred of everything that a person from a different religion represents. This chapter examines violence and restrictions in the context of religious tensions between Muslims and Hindus in India. Using a novel set of data this chapter analyses the geographical dispersion of these riots across India. It also looks at the effect of laws disadvantaging Muslims which have been passed by the majoritarian Hindu government in India. The enforcement of these laws has been carried out by Hindu vigilante groups who have seized the opportunity to attack Muslims suspected, rightly or wrongly, of transporting cattle for slaughter. The result is that that official policy has coalesced with anti-Muslim violence.

4.1 Introduction

The evidence from happiness studies is that being religious does make people happier (Pew, 2019). Firstly, religion encourages civic engagement. Regular attendance at a place of worship leads to developing social connections, expanding one's network of friends and acquaintances and, in general, building "social capital" which serves to increase happiness (Lim and Putman, 2010). Secondly, religious beliefs give people a purpose to life beyond one's current existence and install in them a sense of moral behaviour, based upon religious precepts and engendered by one's prospects in the after-life – whether through rebirth (as with Hindus) or through a notion of heaven and hell (as with Christians and Muslims). And yet religion has the remarkable capacity of creating great unhappiness through the forces of religious hatred and religion-inspired violence unleashed by adherents of one faith upon those of another. Unhappiness so generated is the theme of this chapter.

According to a large-scale study undertaken in 2010, close to 80 per cent of the world's population are adherents of one of four major religions: Christianity (2.2 billion Christians, or 32 per cent of the global population in 2010); Islam (1.6 billion Muslims, or 23 per cent); Hinduism (1 billion Hindus, or 15 per cent); and Buddhism (500 million Buddhists, or 7.7 per cent).¹ Each of these religions advocates tolerance of those who do not subscribe to its beliefs.

In the Christian Bible, the Book of Exodus 22:21 says: "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt". The Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13: 24–43), which relates how servants eager to pull up weeds were warned that in so doing they would also root out the wheat, has been interpreted as advising tolerance of other faiths until God's judgement.

Islam accepts religious pluralism and gives legitimacy to the existence of religious differences in society (Alabdulhadi, 2019). As the Quran states: "do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, we have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do" (6: 108).

¹ The figures are from Pew (2012).

Unlike Christianity and Islam, Hinduism is polytheistic and does not have organised worship. Spinner-Halev (2005) writes that, nonetheless: “as a syncretic religion, Hinduism is quite tolerant of other religions. If you are not a Hindu or descended from one, then Hinduism makes few claims on you. Hindu practices and rituals are for Hindus; at times non-Hindus can join in these practices, but Hindus rarely if ever feel a need to compel others to join in their rituals. Hindu toleration allows other groups to live by their religious practices” (p. 36).

The fourth largest religion in the world, Buddhism, is derived from the teachings of Gautam Buddha and stresses the principle of *ahimsa*, the “non-injury” of other living things. When Buddhism was established as a state religion under King Ashoka (304–230 BCE), founder of the Maurya Empire, he was eager to see growth in the essentials of *all* religions, at the heart of which lay restraint in speech, exercised through not praising one’s own religion or condemning the religion of others (Jayatillake, 1998, Allen, 2002). Religious tolerance in Buddhism stems from what is referred to as the thesis of “spiritual universalism”: the view that all the great religions, at their core, espouse essentially the same truth, merely clothed in different modes of expression (Bodhi, 2010).

Notwithstanding this background of the world’s major religions espousing the principle of inter-religious tolerance, Jenkins (2002) was led to observe that: “the 21st century will most certainly be regarded by future historians as a century in which religion replaced ideology as the prime animating and destructive force in human affairs, guiding attitudes to political liberty and obligation, concepts of nationhood and, of course, conflicts and wars” (p. 54). This is because, while all the world’s major religions profess tolerance towards adherents of other religions, religious ideologies and institutions have provided the springboard for much of the hatred expressed by individuals and groups towards others.² As Corrigan (2007) has argued, this derives from the fact that religion is an outward signifier of group identity, and underlying differences in religious beliefs and practices are differences of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and nationality. Consequently, religious hatred

² It is important to stress, as Hedges (2021) does, that religions do not have agency, only their adherents do.

represents more than simply an intellectual aversion to a rival set of beliefs. It transcends this aversion to embrace a hatred of everything that a person from a different religion represents.³

The basis for such hatred is the process of “othering” which, as Keen (1986) described it, involves “staining the stranger with the sinister hue of the shadow” (p. 9). Those who are not “us” (that is, who are the “other”) are burdened with all the negative attributes of an all-encompassing enemy. Religious rhetoric is especially fertile ground for the process of “othering”. Jones (2008) observed that “the over idealisation of one’s tribe, tradition, or gender in the name of religion provides a ready rationale for violence against a [demonic] ‘other’, who having been dehumanised, and died a social death, can now be slaughtered with impunity” (p. 44).

Religious hatred is visceral in its rage, and this rage is most effectively and most commonly expressed through violence perpetrated by members of one religion upon those of another, where this violence is often abetted, either actively or passively, by official agencies. A second expression of hatred is through governments enacting legislation which curtails the activities of certain religions. As Majumdar and Villa (2020) report, there has been a substantial rise in the level of government restrictions on religion – meaning laws, policies, and actions that impinge on religious beliefs and practices – in the period 2007–2018, and this is reflected in a rise in the number of governments using force to coerce religious groups.

Majumdar and Villa (2020) list several countries which experienced intense religion-based social hostilities in 2017 and 2018 – *inter alia* Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Egypt, India, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan. To this list, one could, more contemporaneously, add Indonesia and Myanmar. This chapter first provides two case studies of religious strife between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. It then turns to an examination of violence and restrictions in the context of religious tensions between Muslims and Hindus in India. These long-standing tensions were exacerbated by the partition of British India into India and Pakistan and have frequently resulted,

³ For example, the decades-long civil war in Sudan is often depicted as one between the Muslim north and the Christian south. But, as Smock (2008) pointed out, the north and south differ in terms of several features other than religion – language (Arabic in the north versus English as the official language in the south); allegiances (the north with the Arab world in North Africa, the south with sub-Saharan Africa) – and the north–south conflict is the result of an amalgam of all these factors.

in India, in religious riots involving extensive loss of life and property. Using a novel set of data this chapter analyses the geographical dispersion of these riots across India.

It also looks at the effect of laws disadvantaging Muslims which have been passed by the majoritarian Hindu government in India (Jaffrelot, 2019a and 2019b). An important change introduced by India's ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), after it formed a government in 2014, was the ban on the slaughter of cows and on the sale of beef in India. This policy has consequences for Muslims, for example those who have lost their traditional livelihood of slaughtering cattle to sell hides to the leather industry. It also has consequences for both Hindu and Muslim farmers who must suffer from stray cattle – released by farmers who could no longer afford their upkeep after they became unproductive, but which they could not slaughter for commercial gain – laying waste to their crops by foraging in their fields. The enforcement of the ban on cow slaughter has been carried out by Hindu vigilante groups who have seized the opportunity to attack Muslims suspected, rightly or wrongly, of transporting cattle for slaughter. The result is that official policy has coalesced with anti-Muslim violence.

4.2 Buddhists and Muslims: Case Studies of Sri Lanka and Myanmar

Notwithstanding the fact that Muslims comprise only a small part of the population of their countries, Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and (to a lesser extent) Thailand express alarm that their religion will be driven out by Islam. This anxiety is based partly on the historical perception that Buddhism, which was once a flourishing religion in India under the Emperor Ashoka (see above), declined rapidly after the Muslim invasion of India.⁴ The fact that, in more recent times, Islamic fundamentalism has been spreading in the world and that the Taliban destroyed the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan in March 2001, brought these atavistic anxieties to the fore. Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka and in Myanmar have led the way in articulating these anxieties and, in so doing, fomented inter-communal conflicts both as propagandists and protagonists.

⁴ Though the story of the demise of Buddhism in India is a complex one and, some would argue, predates the arrival of Islam (Dalrymple, 2002).

Since the end of a brutal civil war, which lasted from 1983 to 2009, Sri Lanka has experienced intermittent violence. The end of the war came when the government, dominated by Sinhalese Buddhists who make up 70.2 per cent of Sri Lanka's population of 23 million, defeated the rebel Tamil Tigers drawn from the Tamil minority – mainly Hindu but with a sizeable Christian component – in the north of the country. The demographic composition of minorities in Sri Lanka was, as of 2021, 12.6 per cent Hindu, 9.7 per cent Muslim, and 7.4 per cent Christian.⁵

In 2014, Buddhist–Muslim sectarian violence erupted in several towns in the south, triggered by racist speeches by a Buddhist monk, Galagodatte Gnarasara. In March 2018, anti-Muslim riots were sparked in the town of Ampara when a Sinhalese man died after being assaulted by four Muslims youths, following a traffic accident. In the aftermath of this death, Sinhalese mobs began attacking Muslim properties in the Kandy district. The riots were quickly brought under control with minimal loss of life but with extensive damage to property.

Then on Easter Sunday 2019, nearly 10 years after the end of civil war in Sri Lanka, more than 250 people were killed, and hundreds more injured, as explosions from bombs planted by Islamic terrorists ripped through three churches packed with worshippers, and three five-star hotels. Two years after these bombings, Muslims in Sri Lanka continue to suffer from the backlash that they generated. In addition to Muslims losing their livelihoods because the Sri Lankan public boycotted their businesses (Ethirajan, 2019), there are proposals to ban the face coverings worn by Muslim women, shut down thousands of Islamic schools, or *madrassas*, and prohibit burials of Muslims who died from COVID-19 (Siddiqui and Nozell, 2021).

Of Myanmar's population of 57.3 million, 88 per cent are (Theravada) Buddhist, 6 per cent are Christian, 4 per cent are Muslim (mostly Sunni), alongside a small number of Hindus. There is, moreover, a considerable overlap between ethnicity and religion. Buddhism is the dominant religion among the majority *Bamar* group; Christianity – in a variety of forms – is the dominant religion

⁵ Population figures are from the US State Department (2022). Sri Lankan law recognizes four religions: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. Buddhism is accorded the “foremost place” among the country's religious faiths, with a government commitment to protecting it while simultaneously respecting the rights of the other religions (US State Department, 2022).

among the *Kachin*, *Chin*, and *Naga* ethnic groups; and ethnic *Rohingya* in the state of Rakhine are Muslims.⁶

As in Sri Lanka, Myanmar's constitution establishes Buddhism as the State religion, and Buddhist monks and interest groups play a major role in setting government policy towards promoting the rights of the majority Buddhists/*Bamars* vis-à-vis other religious minorities/ethnicities. This is most evident in Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law which granted citizenship to those who could trace their residence in Burma (as Myanmar was then called) to 1823.⁷ Although, in addition to the majority *Bamars*, several other ethnicities were included in the list eligible for "first class" citizenship, a glaring omission was the *Rohingya* Muslims – a group of about 1.1 million Bengali-speaking Muslims living on either side of the Bangladesh–Myanmar border in Rakhine state – who were rendered stateless by being denied citizenship.⁸

The impetus for the Buddhist/*Bamar* majority's opposition to, and indeed violence against, the Muslim minority has come from the ultra-nationalist Buddhist organisation, *Ma Ba Tha* (the Burmese acronym for Organisation for the Protection of Race and Religion), founded in 2013, headquartered in Mandalay, and led by the monk Ashin Wirathu. *Ma Ba Tha* argues that Muslims, by stealing Buddhist women, out-breeding the Buddhist majority, and plotting terror attacks, pose the biggest threat to the *Bamar*'s culture and religion (McPherson, 2017).

Following Buddhist–Muslim violence in 2012 in Rakhine state, July 2014 saw further violence between followers of the two religions in Mandalay, after a local Muslim was accused of raping a Buddhist girl (McPherson, 2017). The culmination of this violence occurred in August 2017 when the Myanmar military, provoked by an attack by *Rohingya* insurgents on military bases which killed 12 officers, embarked on a programme of killing Muslims and burning their villages, leading to nearly 700,000 Muslims fleeing Myanmar to seek sanctuary in Bangladesh. According to Frydenlund and Jerryson (2020), the human rights violations against the *Rohingya* "will stand in world history as

⁶ Population figures are from the US State Department (2022).

⁷ This was the year of the first British campaign in Burma which began the wave of immigration from India.

⁸ Harvard Divinity School, <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/burma-citizenship-act#:~:text=The%20Burma%20Citizenship%20Act%20of,immigration%20from%20India%20and%20China>. (accessed 28 July 2022).

a grotesque reminder of how adherents of a religion – Buddhism – justified ethnic cleansing and horrific acts of violence against an ethnic and religious minority community” (p. 21).

4.3 Background to Hindu–Muslim Violence in India

Although it is customary to trace tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India to the bloody aftermath of the partition of British India in 1947 into India and Pakistan, violence between Hindus and Muslims in India has, in fact, a much longer history extending back into the 18th and 19th centuries. As Bayly (1983) notes, there were riots between the two groups in Ahmedabad in 1714, in Kashmir in 1719–20, in Delhi in 1729, and in Vidarbha in 1786, while the 19th century saw communal riots in Varanasi (1809–15), Koil (1820), Moradabad and Kanpur (1833), Allahabad, Bareilly, and Kanpur (1837–52). In August 1946, a year before the partition of British India, there were riots between Hindus and Muslims in Kolkata – graphically described in White-Spunner (2017) – which left 5,000 dead and 10,000 injured.

However, it is the history of Hindus and Muslims killing each other post-1947 that haunts independent India: over the period 1950–2006, there were over 2,000 violent incidents in India between Hindus and Muslims, resulting in the loss of over 10,000 lives. Many of these clashes have faded from memory but two of them – the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December 1992, and the killing of Muslims in Gujarat between February and March 2002 – have become iconic events in India’s political and social life: they have divided communities, sowed mistrust and enmity between them, and facilitated the coming to power in India of a political party with an avowedly communal agenda.

Since violence between Hindus and Muslims – constituting, respectively, around 80 per cent and 12 per cent of India’s population – threatens the stability of the Indian state and its socio-economic development, and erodes its identity as a pluralist country tolerant of all beliefs, it is important to examine the reasons for Hindu–Muslim violence. Gupta (2011) points out that Hindus and Muslims in India – akin, arguably, to Jews and Arabs in Israel – rather than living side by side in amicable tolerance, co-exist in a state of “antagonistic tolerance”. In this atmosphere of mutual suspicion of the “other”, violence lurks beneath the surface and, from time to time and with varying

degrees of seriousness, erupts.⁹ Notwithstanding the seeming spontaneity of such eruptions, however, they would not occur without the guiding hand of agents who have a vested interest in communal violence.

Who are these agents? In a worldwide study of ethnic violence, Human Rights Watch (1995) concluded that ethnic riots are often caused by politicians who “play on existing communal tensions to entrench their own power or advance a political agenda” (pp. 65–66). In the context of India, this political agenda is very often electoral victory, and violence is instigated when it is felt that electoral advantage will follow in its wake. Wilkinson (2004) sets out the conditions for this to happen. Political parties will use violence to polarise communities when they think that it will mobilise persons belonging to the majority group to vote *en bloc*, based on (religious) identity, in favour of their party.

An alternative strategy, employed by the Congress Party until its fall from power in 2014, was to mobilise the minority (Muslim) vote in the face of a fragmented majority (Hindu) vote. The post-independence failure to bring Muslims into mainstream life in India disregarded the broader interests of Muslims but rewarded the Congress Party politically.¹⁰ One of the reasons for the Congress Party’s assiduous protection of Muslim identity – in large part by allowing Muslim lives to be regulated by Muslim Personal Law – was that it relied on the pro-Congress Muslim “vote bank” to win elections (see Engineer, 1997).

Against this background, this chapter serves as a complement to Varshney’s (2002) qualitative, ethnographic analysis, specific to particular cities in India, and Iyer and Shrivastava’s (2018) econometric analysis of electoral outcomes, by revisiting the question of whether literacy and urbanisation are correlated with the frequency of Hindu–Muslim violence. It does so by marrying data

⁹ Many instances of Hindu–Muslim violence arise when the dates of Hindu festivals fall on a Friday, the day that Muslims congregate for communal prayers, or when they coincide with Muslim holy events like Muharram or Ramadan. Most recently, during the holy month of Ramadan, a procession to celebrate the birth of the Hindu deity Hanuman (*Hanuman Jayanti*) sparked riots in Delhi (on 16 April 2022) when it passed through the Muslim neighbourhood of Jahangirpuri, while another procession to celebrate the birth of the Hindu deity Ram (*Ram Navami*) caused violence between Hindus and Muslims (10 April 2022) in Khargone in Madhya Pradesh (see also Iyer and Shrivastava, 2018).

¹⁰ The Sachar Committee (2006) in its report to the government of India quantified and highlighted the backwardness of Indian Muslims.

on incidents of such violence with a rich set of data relating to the districts in which the violent incidents occurred. Contrary to Varshney's (2002) findings, the analysis here suggests that both the "modernist" and the "antimodernist" views provide significant and compelling explanations for Hindu–Muslim violence.

4.4 Data on Hindu–Muslim Violence in India

The data on violent incidents between Hindus and Muslim are from the Varshney-Wilkinson (VW) dataset on Hindu–Muslim Violence (hereafter, H MV) in India 1950–1992, Version 2.¹¹ There were a total of 1,080 incidents on the VW data with the last recorded incident being on 7 December 1992 in the town of Sholapur, Maharashtra. These data were extended up to 2006 by Iyer and Shrivastava (2018), using a methodology and format identical to that used by the VW data, to yield a total of 2,233 incidents for the major Indian states (identified in Table 4.1), the last of which was on 11 July 2006 in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).¹² The combined dataset from 1950 to 2006 is referred to in this chapter as the Varshney-Wilkinson-Iyer-Shrivastava (VWIS) data and I am immensely grateful to Sriya Iyer for making this extended data available to me.

Based on a reading of the *Times of India* daily newspaper, the VWIS data (described in Varshney, 2002, and Iyer and Shrivastava, 2018) record every incident of Hindu–Muslim violence for the period 1950–2006 in terms of *inter alia*: where the incident occurred; the number of deaths, injured, and arrests from the incident; a short description of the proximate cause of the incident.

<Table 4.1>

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of the 2,233 incidents of H MV between the 20 major Indian states (which for the purposes of this analysis includes Delhi). What is noticeable is that, of these 2,233 incidents, 1,580 (or 71 per cent) occurred in just four states, which collectively accounted for less than one-third of India's population: Jammu & Kashmir, with 1 per cent of India's population (691 incidents, or 30.9 per cent of total incidents); Gujarat, with 4.8 per cent of India's population

¹¹ Available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR):

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>

¹² See also Iyer (2018).

(372 incidents, or 16.7 per cent of total incidents); Uttar Pradesh, with 17.4 per cent of India's population (275 incidents, or 12.3 per cent of total incidents); and Maharashtra, with 9.3 per cent of India's population (237 incidents, or 10.6 per cent of total incidents).

It is worth noting that the Muslim majority state of J&K – which, with 68 per cent of its population listed as Muslim according to the 2011 Indian Census, had the highest proportion of Muslims of all Indian states – experienced the largest number of incidents. On the other hand, other states which also had large proportions of Muslims in their populations experienced comparatively few incidents: Assam (40 per cent Muslim) had just 23 incidents; West Bengal (28.9 per cent Muslim) had 75 incidents; and Kerala (26.6 per cent Muslim) had 24 such incidents. So, on the face of it, is implausible to explain the number of incidents of HVM in the states purely by the size of their Muslim populations.

However, it is worth emphasising that several incidents of HVM in J&K have stemmed from the desire of some in the state to preserve its Muslim majority. There are two facets of violence between Hindus and Muslims: sometimes, they result from a spontaneous combustion of latent tensions, with little coordinated direction, sparked by relatively trivial events or even by rumours of events; but, on other occasions, they are the result of careful planning and coordinated actions and the resultant killings are tantamount to cold-blooded murder.

Relative to the rest of India, more incidents of HVM in both J&K and Gujarat have emanated from planned and coordinated violence. For example, on 20 March 2000, 35 Sikhs in Chittisinghpura village in Anantnag district of J&K were shot in cold blood by terrorists from the Lashkar-e-Taiba group. Since the early 1990s, over 100,000 Kashmiri Hindus have, through a series of systematic and planned murders, assaults, and destruction of property, been driven out of the state, largely because they did not support the Muslim majority's demand for a J&K that was independent of India.¹³

In March 2002, Gujarat witnessed some of the worst killings of Muslims since the Partition of British India in 1947.¹⁴ Over 700 persons, mostly Muslim, were killed in riots which engulfed the

¹³ The exodus of Kashmiri Hindus and their planned killing is described in Pandita (2017).

¹⁴ Prior to 2002, the 1969 riots in Ahmedabad left approximately 630 dead.

state.¹⁵ Running parallel with the killings were widespread rape and the destruction of Muslim property and businesses. Although the killing of Muslims was portrayed in official circles as retaliation against the killing, on 27 February 2002 near Godhra station in Gujarat, of 57 Hindus (including 25 women and 14 children) – part of a larger group of Hindus returning home on the Sabarmati Express after going to Ayodhya to help in the building of a temple dedicated to the god Ram – the subsequent slaughter of Muslims in Gujarat bore all the hallmarks of an event that “had been orchestrated by well-organised actors with plans that been prepared prior to the events in Godhra” (Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 5).

Another interesting feature of the data is that the number of post-incident arrests varied greatly by state. As Table 4.1 shows, J&K reported only 1,482 arrests from 691 incidents, or only 2.1 arrests per incident, while in Maharashtra 237 incidents led to 19,868 arrests, or 83.8 arrests per incident. This may be connected to the fact that while J&K had the largest number of incidents, it also had the lowest number of incident-related deaths – 691 incidents resulted in 1,687 deaths (or 2.4 deaths per incident) while Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh – with, respectively, 372, 237, and 275 incidents – reported 6.4, 7.4, and 5.2 deaths per incident.

The mean duration of incidents was 1.6 days for the 20 states in their entirety although again this varied by state: it was highest in Rajasthan, where 37 incidents lasted on average 3.2 days, and in Assam, where 23 incidents lasted on average 3.1 days, and lowest in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh where they lasted on average for just a day.

<Table 4.2>

Not only was the number of incidents of HMV unequally distributed *between* states, but it was also unequally distributed *within* states – even states in which a comparatively large number of incidents occurred had several districts¹⁶ which were relatively trouble free, with much of the violence

¹⁵ The official numbers were 536 Muslim and 95 Hindus dead, though Jaffrelot (2003) claims that the total number of casualties exceeded 2,000.

¹⁶ A district is the smallest geographical unit for which a consistent set of data is available. As of August 2022, there were 766 districts in India with a District Commissioner (or District Collector) acting as the administrative head of each district.

concentrated in a few districts.¹⁷ Of the 626 districts in the major Indian states, 331 districts (52.8 per cent of all districts) did not experience *any* incidence of HMV over 1950–2006. Table 4.2 shows the distribution of HMV incidents for the 295 districts that experienced *at least one* incident over this period of 56 years. Of these, 248 (or 84.1 per cent of the 295 districts affected by violence) witnessed less than 10 incidents; 22 districts (7.4 per cent of the total) experienced 10–19 incidents while, at the other end of the spectrum, two districts, Ahmedabad (126 incidents) and Srinagar (118 incidents) had over 100 incidents each.

<Table 4.3>

Table 4.3 lists the 47 Indian districts (out of a total of 626 districts in the states listed in Table 4.1) in which, between 1950 and 2006, 10 or more incidents of HMV occurred; in other words, it was in only 7.6 per cent of the total number of districts in India that violent incidents between Hindus and Muslims occurred “frequently”. Of these 47 districts, 11 were in Jammu & Kashmir (out of a total of 22 districts in the state), and another 11 were in Gujarat (out of 33 districts in the state). Thus 22 of the 47 districts (46.8 per cent) in which incidents of HMV occurred frequently were in just two states. If one adds to this number the six districts in Maharashtra (out of 36 districts in the state), and the nine in Uttar Pradesh (out of 75 districts in the state), then 37 of the 47 districts (78.7 per cent) which witnessed frequent clashes between Hindus and Muslims were in just four states and even in those states, they comprised a fraction (except for J&K) of the total number of the states’ districts.

One measure of the severity of incidents of HMV could be the number of persons killed per incident. In this respect, Mumbai (18.1 deaths per incident), Ahmedabad (12.4 deaths), Aligarh (11.8 deaths), and Surat (10.1 deaths) presented the deadliest face of HMV, closely followed by Meerut (9.6 deaths) and Moradabad (9.1 deaths). By contrast, although 617 of 1,512 incidents shown in Table 4.3 (41 per cent) occurred in J&K, the number of deaths per incident in the state’s districts was comparatively low – 1,491 deaths from 617 incidents or 2.4 deaths per incident.

<Table 4.4>

¹⁷ There were 66 incidents recorded in the dataset which were identified by state but without any reference to district, town, or village. Dropping these variables from the data for the district-level analysis, there were a total of 2,167 incidents that could be associated with districts.

<Table 4.5>

A commonly used measure of “industrial concentration” is the *concentration ratio*: the share of total industry sales accounted for by the four (C4) or eight (C8) largest firms in the industry. Analogously, for communal incidents in districts, we define the *incident concentration ratio* and the *death concentration ratio* as, respectively, the proportion of total incidents and total incident-related deaths accounted for by the 30 districts (approximately 10 per cent of the 316 affected districts) which had the largest number of incidents and deaths. These districts are identified in Table 4.4 (incidents) and Table 4.5 (deaths): Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show, respectively, that 1,300 of the 2,166 incidents in India’s districts (60 per cent), and 7,593 of the 10,030 deaths following incidents of HMV (76 per cent), occurred in these 30 districts.

4.5 Hindu–Muslim Violence and Social Loss

There can be little doubt that ethnic violence leads to social loss. In the first instance, there is the loss of life, the injuries, and the damage to (and, in many cases, destruction of) property. Then there is the wider economic damage of livelihoods being lost as business and industry is brought to a standstill. And, lastly, there is the damage to social relations as groups that previously tolerated each other and lived together in reasonable harmony now find themselves living in a state of active mutual hostility.

A feature of ethnic violence – as seen from the case of India, described above – is that it is often concentrated in certain parts of the country, with the bulk of incidents occurring in few areas, with the rest of the country remaining trouble-free. The question is whether this is a desirable situation in the sense that the social loss from a *given* number of violent incidents is *reduced* through their geographic concentration. This chapter argues that more geographical equality in the distribution of violent incidents would have led to greater social loss and that, by corollary, confining violence to a limited number of areas would, from a social loss perspective, be a “good thing”.

If one accepts this argument, set out below, then the question arises as to the extent to which the social loss from HMV in India was reduced by it being a localised rather than a widespread phenomenon. To answer this question, this section employs a methodology developed by Borooah (2002) in the context of unemployment. This asks whether the social loss from a given amount of

unemployment would be different, depending on how it was distributed across a country's labour force. If, for example, at the census date of December 2022, 24 out of 144 persons in the labour force were unemployed, then the unemployment rate for 2022 would be reported as 16.7%. However, the 24 persons unemployed in December 2022 could also have been unemployed in each of the other months in the year. On the other hand, each of the 144 persons in the labour force could have been unemployed for one month in the year. In between these two extreme scenarios, several other scenarios for the distribution of unemployment experiences between persons in the labour force are possible. The point is that all these scenarios, embodying different distributive outcomes, result in the same value for the unemployment rate: 16.7%.

In a similar vein, the 2,167 incidents of HMV that occurred in 295 districts over the period 1950–2006 could have been equally distributed across the districts, for a per-district rate of 7.3. Alternatively, the same rate would have resulted if the 2,167 incidents were spread across the districts according to, for example, the distribution shown in Table 4.2. This section applies results, developed in the context of income distribution and the relation between social welfare and inequality, to compute the difference in social loss between equally and unequally distributed inter-district incidents of HMV.

The Social Loss Function

The starting point of the analysis is the concept of a social loss function.¹⁸ This says that the social loss from incidents of HMV depends not just on the total number of incidents in the country but also on how they are distributed across its geographical areas, taken in this analysis as districts. Suppose that there is a total of D incidents of HMV in a country with N districts such that d_i is the number of incidents in district i , $i=1\dots N$. The average number of incidents per district is represented by $\bar{d} = D / N$. So, for example, Table 4.2 shows the distribution of the 2,167 (D) incidents of HMV by 295 (N) districts for an average of 7.3 incidents per district.

¹⁸ The analysis in this section is an adaptation of Atkinson (1970).

Formally, let L denote the *social loss* from incidents of HMV resulting from a total of D incidents, distributed as d_1, d_2, \dots, d_N over the N districts. Larger values of L denote greater levels of loss, with L being a function of the $d_i, i=1 \dots N$:

$$L = L(d_1, d_2, \dots, d_N) \quad (4.1)$$

Suppose that the social loss function (SLF) of equation (4.1) can be written as the sum of the losses in the individual districts:

$$L = \sum_{i=1}^N F(d_i) \quad (4.2)$$

The function $F(.)$ in equation (4.2) represents the society's valuation of the loss arising from district i having d_i incidents of communal violence. The sum of the district-specific losses is the social loss associated with D , the given total of communal incidents.

It is assumed that the additional social loss resulting from another communal incident in the i^{th} district *diminishes* with the number of incidents in a district. To put it differently, the greater the notoriety of a district for HMV, the more the sense of *déjà vu* when yet another such incident occurs. The policy implication of this is that the social loss function $L = L(d_1, d_2, \dots, d_N)$ is *minimised* when *all* the communal incidents occur in *a single* district, the other districts being *entirely free* of such incidents, or, when $d_j = D$, for some $j, d_i = 0, i \neq j, i = 1, \dots, N$. Consequently, there is a connection between the social loss from a given number of incidents and the degree of inequality (or concentration) in the distribution of this total between the districts: the *greater* the degree of inequality (or concentration), the *smaller* the social loss from a *given* number of HMV incidents.

How close this connection is will depend upon society's *aversion to equality* in the distribution of incidents of HMV between the districts: the greater this aversion, the more it will seek to corral communal incidents into a small number of districts leaving the remaining districts incident-free. Equality aversion can be represented by values of the parameter, $\varepsilon \geq 0$. At the extreme, when $\varepsilon=0$, society is *not at all* averse to equality – it doesn't care how the total number of incidents is

distributed between districts. In the face of this indifference, the social loss from incidents of HMV depends *only* on the total number of incidents and not on their geographical distribution.

If, however, $\varepsilon > 0$, then society *is* averse to equality and this aversion will be greater, the larger the value of ε . In the presence of equality aversion, the social loss from incidents of HMV will depend not just on the total number of incidents but *also* on their geographical distribution. If $\varepsilon > 0$, an egalitarian redistribution of incidents (from incident-heavy to incident-light districts) would raise social loss and, conversely, an inegalitarian redistribution of incidents (from incident-light to incident-heavy districts) would lower it.

Let $d^* \leq \bar{d}$ represent the number of incidents which *if it was the number occurring in every district* – that is, $d_1 = d_2 = \dots = d_N = d^*$ – would represent the *same* level of social loss as the existing distribution of incidents, $d_1, d_2, \dots, d_N, \sum d_i = D$. Then d^* may be termed “the equally distributed equivalent” (EDE) number of incidents because, distributed *equally* across the districts, it is *equivalent* (in terms of social loss) to the actual number of incidents distributed *unequally*.

When $\varepsilon=0$, so that society is indifferent about inequality in the inter-district distribution of incidents, $d^* = \bar{d}$. When, however, $\varepsilon > 0$, society is averse to inter-district equality in the distribution of incidents and $d^* < \bar{d}$: if incidents are to be equally distributed between districts, then society will demand a smaller number of incidents to compensate for the social loss from an egalitarian distribution.

The above points can be represented diagrammatically. In Figure 4.1, each point on TT represents a (d_j, d_k) combination that yields the same number of incidents: the slope of TT is -1. Superimposed upon TT is an indifference curve associated with the loss function of equation (4.1): each point on the curve represents a (d_j, d_k) combination that yields the same level of social loss. For a given total of incidents, social loss is minimised when either $d_j=1, d_k=0$ or $d_j=0, d_k=1$ – that is, all the incidents are concentrated in a single district. The dashed line OC is the 45° line on which $d_j=d_k$. The equally distributed equivalent number of incidents is $d^* = AB$ and this is smaller than the mean number of incidents, $\bar{d} = CD$.

<Figure 4.1>

Sen (1998) showed that if μ is the mean level of achievement for a country, and I the degree of inequality in its distribution, then the level of social welfare, W , may be represented as $W = \mu(1 - I)$: “this has the intuitive interpretation as the size of the pie (μ) corrected downwards by the extent of inequality ($I-I$)” (p. 129). Pursuing this line of reasoning, the social loss, L , associated with a given number, D , of incidents of HVM, distributed between N districts with a degree of inequality, I , is given by:

$$L = \bar{d}(1 - I), \text{ where } \bar{d} = D / N \quad (4.3)$$

Equation (4.3) has a very natural interpretation. It suggests that two factors contribute to the social loss from communal violence: first, social loss increases with a rise in the number of violent incidents (\bar{d}); second, the social loss from a *given* number of incidents is larger for a *greater spread* of these incidents over the districts (smaller I).

Empirical Results

The average number of incidents per *affected* district was $\bar{d} = 7.34$: 2,167 incidents in 295 districts. If society was indifferent about how this total of 2,167 incidents was distributed between the districts – whether they were concentrated in a few districts or spread widely between districts – then $\varepsilon=0$, and $d^* = \bar{d} = 7.3$. When $\varepsilon>0$, society begins to care about how incidents are distributed. If it prefers that incidents largely occur in a few districts, with other districts experiencing such incidents only infrequently, then it is prepared to trade a larger number of incidents for a greater concentration of incidents.

When $\varepsilon=1$, $d_{\varepsilon=1}^* = 3.0 < \bar{d} = 7.3$, society regards *each* of the 295 districts experiencing 3 incidents as welfare equivalent – that is, yielding the same amount of social loss – as an average of 7.3 incidents per district distributed unequally (that is, distributed as shown in Table 4.2).¹⁹ When there is milder equality aversion, say $\varepsilon=0.5$, so that society has less desire for inter-district inequality in the

¹⁹ When $\varepsilon=1$, d^* is the geometric mean of the d_1, d_2, \dots, d_N (see Anand and Sen, 1997).

distribution of incidents of HVM, $d_{\varepsilon=0.5}^* = 4.5 > d_{\varepsilon=1}^* = 3.0 < \bar{d} = 7.3$. Now society regards *each* of the 295 districts experiencing 4.1 incidents of HVM as welfare equivalent to the observed average of 7.3 incidents per district. To put it differently, when $\varepsilon=0.5$, 1,328 incidents of HVM, distributed equally between the 295 affected districts – so that each district experienced 4.5 incidents – generated the same amount of social loss as the observed distribution of 2,167 incidents over the same 295 districts.

The social loss from communal incidents in India in the period 1950–95 can be computed using equation (4.3) by inserting a value for I , the inequality index. Following Sen (1998), the Gini coefficient, G , was used as the inequality index. Applied to the distribution of the number of incidents, d_1, d_2, \dots, d_N over the N districts, this is defined as:

$$G = \frac{1}{2N^2\bar{d}} \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^N |d_i - d_j| \quad (4.4)$$

In other words, the Gini coefficient is computed as half the mean of the difference in the number of incidents between pairs of districts, divided by the average number of incidents (\bar{d}).²⁰ The value of the Gini coefficient, computed on 2,166 incidents distributed over 295 districts, was 0.69: this implies that the *difference in the number of incidents between two districts chosen at random* will be 138 per cent of the average; since $\bar{d} = 7.3$, this difference will be 10.13 incidents.

Using this information, the social loss from communal violence in India was 2.3 ($=7.3 \times (1 - 0.69)$) as compared to its maximum possible value of 7.3 ($G=0$, so that each district had 7.3 incidents). The unequal distribution of incidents of HVM across the 295 affected districts in India between 1950 and 2006, therefore, reduced social loss by 68 per cent from its maximum possible value.

4.6 Econometric Analysis

The analysis of incidents of HVM in this chapter was based on the VWIS data, described in section 4.4. For the purposes of the econometric analysis reported in this section, the stated location of the

²⁰ $\left(\sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^N |d_i - d_j| / N^2 \right) = 2 \times G \times \bar{d}$

incident was cast in terms of the district in which it occurred. The data from VWIS on incidents of HMMV was then merged with another dataset which provided information on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the districts, including the position of Muslims within the districts. The latter dataset is described in Borooah (2008) and in Government of India (2006). This merger resulted in 281 districts that were affected by HMMV, and which also had associated demographic/socio-economic data.

The dependent variable in the econometric estimation was the number of incidents of HMMV in a district, and the variables used to “explain” inter-district variations in the value of this variable were:

1. The location of the district in terms of its region: the Southern part of India (54 districts); the Western part (45 districts); the Central part (114 districts); the Northern part (33 districts); the Eastern part (35 districts).²¹
2. The proportion of the district’s population that lived in urban areas (average).
3. The proportion of Muslims in a district’s population.
4. The district’s male literacy rate.
5. The district’s female literacy rate.

The results from estimating the regression equation with the number of incidents of HMMV as the dependent variable and 1–5, above, as the explanatory variables are shown in Table 4.6. This table shows that the explanatory variables collectively explain 49.4 per cent of the inter-district variations of incidents (Adjusted-R²=49.4).

<Table 4.6>

The average number of incidents of HMMV, computed over all the 281 districts in the sample, was 7.6 over the period 1950–2006. In regional terms, the average number of incidents over 1950–2006 was 5.6 in the South (which is the reference region), 14.7 in the West, 3.9 in the Central region,

²¹ In terms of states these regions were defined as follows. Southern Region: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka; Western Region: Gujarat, Maharashtra; Central region: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh; Northern Region: Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab; Eastern Region: Assam, Orissa, West Bengal.

17.1 in the North, and 5.1 in the East. Thus, the marginal increase in the number of incidents in the North and the West compared to the South (respectively, 9.1 and 11.46) was significantly different from zero but the marginal change in the number of incidents in the Central region and the East compared to the South (respectively, -1.67 and -0.51) was not significantly different from zero. Neither the difference in incidents of HMV between the Central and Eastern regions, nor the difference in incidents of HMV between the Northern and Western regions, was significantly different from zero.

The average proportion of Muslims in the 281 districts was 16.6 per cent and Table 4.6 shows that a percentage point increase in this proportion would lead to 0.41 more incidents. So, the regression equation predicts that districts in which the proportion of Muslims was, respectively, 5 per cent and 30 of the population would, other things being equal, have had 2.9 and 13.9 incidents, respectively, over 1950–2006.

The district's male literacy rate did not significantly affect the number of HMV incidents, but its female literacy rate did. The average female rate in the 281 districts was 68.6 per cent and Table 4.6 shows that for every percentage point increase in the female literacy rate, the number of incidents would *fall* by 0.41. So, comparing two districts, one with a female literacy rate of 65 per cent, the other with a female literacy rate of 75 per cent, the regression equation predicts that the number of incidents of HMV would have been 9.1 and 4.9, respectively, in the district with the lower and the higher female literacy rate.

Varshney (2002) explained the prevalence of Hindu–Muslim violence in some parts of India, and its absence in other parts, in terms of civic engagement: bearing in mind that such violence in India is largely an urban phenomenon, towns and cities in which there was an absence (presence) of HMV were characterised by high (low) levels of engagement between the communities, both in terms of contact between *individuals* from different communities and, more importantly, in terms of contact between *associations* representing the two communities.²² The results reported in Table 4.6 suggest that female literacy made a contribution to inter-community civic engagement.

²² Varshney (2002) studied three pairs of cities with the first and second city in each pair being, respectively, low and high violence cities: Calicut and Aligarh; Hyderabad and Lucknow; and Surat and Ahmedabad.

Sen (1993) also argued that literacy and the absence of HMV could plausibly be linked. In his view, militant obscurantism – “the political use of people’s credulity in unreasoned and archaic beliefs in order to generate fierce extremism” – is an important component of India’s anti-secular movement and such obscurantism, in turn, is underpinned by illiteracy. From this perspective, one might expect there to be a systematic relation between high levels of violence and low levels of literacy.

4.7 Ethnic Democracies

The title of this chapter could have been *cuius regio, eius religio* – whose kingdom, their religion. Several non-democratic countries which have a dominant religion impose restrictions on adherents of minority religions living under their jurisdiction. As Majumdar and Villa (2020) have pointed out, the highest level of restrictions was found in countries of the Middle East and North Africa, with all 20 states in that region imposing some form of restriction on religious groups that were not from mainstream Sunni Islam.²³

In other countries, restrictions have included a ban on the wearing of religiously motivated clothing or symbols, and these restrictions have been imposed in both non-democratic and democratic countries. In France, as part of its secular principles, headscarves are banned in schools; in the Presidential election of 2022, the losing candidate, Marine Le Pen, campaigned for a complete ban on headscarves being worn in public. In Australia, a judge forbade the wife of a defendant from wearing a *niqab* in the court’s public gallery²⁴ and in India, in the southern state of Karnataka, a “hijab war” rages as the state’s government decided, in January 2022, to ban the wearing of the *hijab* (headscarves) in schools and colleges, arguing that it was not part of “essential religious practice” for Muslim girls to wear them – a decision upheld by the Karnataka High Court and currently under appeal with India’s Supreme Court.

²³ In Qatar, for example, non-Muslim groups were forbidden from public worship and in Egypt, Shia Muslims were not allowed access to the tomb of Imam Al-Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammed and revered figure for Shias (Majumdar and Villa, 2020, p. 31).

²⁴ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/terror-accused-s-wife-banned-from-wearing-niqab-in-court-20180717-p4zrxw.html#:~:text=A%20Supreme%20Court%20judge%20has,the%20garment%20dismissed%20in%20court> (accessed 6 September 2022).

In terms of restricting minority rights, however, it is the rise of what Smooha (1967, 2002) terms “ethnic democracies” that is the most insidious. Such democracies are the product of ethnic nationalism in which a democratically elected government appropriates the state and make it a tool for advancing the interests of the majority ethnic group, where this group could be defined in terms of religion, race, language. In most cases – for example, Israel, Slovakia, Estonia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh – ethnic bias is built into the countries’ constitutions, so that they are *de jure* ethnic democracies.²⁵

However, with the election of the BJP government in India in 2014, and again in 2019, it is argued that India, although remaining a secular state constitutionally, has become an ethnic democracy *de facto*.²⁶ In ethnic democracies citizenship is layered, with the ethnic majority enjoying more rights – whether *de jure* or *de facto* – than minority groups. In both Israel and India, the minority group happens to be Muslims and their second-class status, *de jure* in Israel and *de facto* in India, stems from a number of beliefs: firstly, that Muslims are potentially disloyal to the state; secondly, that some of their cultural practices disrespect the majority way of life; and thirdly, that their higher fertility rates pose a demographic threat to the majority group.²⁷

The fear among Jews is that it is the wider Palestinian cause, rather than the state of Israel, that commands the primary loyalty of Israeli Arabs, while the common suspicion among Hindus is that the sympathies of Indian Muslims lie more with Pakistan than with India. Dhulipala (2015) has argued that Muslims in India played a critical and enthusiastic part in the creation of Pakistan despite their awareness that they would not be part of it.²⁸ These fears are reflected in the fact that in both

²⁵ Slovakia declares that it is the state of the Slovak ethnic nation rather than of all its citizens, many of whom are of Hungarian ethnicity (van Duin and Polackova, 2000). Estonia also defines itself as a state of a single ethnic nation (Jarve, 2000; Smith, 1996), while Pakistan and Bangladesh are constitutionally Islamic states. Sri Lanka (as discussed earlier) accords Buddhism the “foremost place” among the country’s religious faiths.

²⁶ For an account of how India morphed from a secular to an ethnic democracy, see Jaffrelot (2019b).

²⁷ Yasser Arafat, who led the Palestinians for three-and-a-half decades, famously described “the womb of the Arab woman” as his “strongest weapon” (The Economist, 18 August 2022, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2022/08/18/in-israel-birth-rates-are-converging-between-jews-and-muslims>, accessed 10 September 2022). Referring to Muslims in India, the then Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat is alleged to have remarked in 2002, “*Hum panch, humaare pachaas*” meaning “we are five [a Muslim husband with four wives] and we have 50 children” (The Hindu, 5 July 2017, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/books/scars-of-memory/article9749694.ece> (accessed 12 September 2022)).

²⁸ Including relatively trivial incidents like cheering for Pakistan when it plays India in cricket. “India Arrests Muslims for Cheering Pakistan Cricket Team”, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-59059494> (accessed 15 September 2022).

Israel and India, Muslims are grossly underrepresented in the military and in security services.²⁹ The fact that Muslim Personal Law, which applies to Indian Muslims, allows for polygamy, easy divorce,³⁰ and no requirement to pay alimony³¹ raises Hindu hackles. Moreover, since Hinduism regards the cow as a sacred animal (*gau-mata* or cow-mother), the fact that Muslims eat beef offends the sensibilities of many Hindus.

The Ban on Cow Slaughter in India

To protect the sacred cow, several Indian states – the exceptions being Kerala and the states of the North-East (excluding Assam) – have banned cattle slaughter in one form or another.³² States including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh completely forbid the slaughter of *all* cattle (including water buffaloes), while others such as West Bengal allow it in the case of old or unfit cows after the acquisition of a “fit for slaughter” certificate (Deol, 2021).

This ban has had two effects. First, it provided the context for “cow-protection” vigilantes to attack Muslims on the pretext that they were eating/selling beef or transporting cattle.³³ On one estimate, there were 34 instances of bovine-related acts of violence in 2017, 25 in 2016, and 13 in 2015 (Jaffrelot, 2019a). Moreover, many of these vigilantes had official protection. In the state of Maharashtra – which in 2015 had banned the slaughter of animals belonging to the cow progeny and made it, alongside the possession of beef, a criminal offence – the government appointed “Honorary Animal Welfare Officers” to enforce the criminalisation of cow slaughter and beef consumption (Biswas, 2016).

²⁹ Smootha (1967) and Jaffrelot (2019a).

³⁰ Prior to it being made illegal by a judgment of the Indian Supreme Court on 22 August 2017, a Muslim man in India could divorce his wife by simply saying *talaq* (divorce) thrice – hence the *triple-talaq* system.

³¹ Notwithstanding court judgments to the contrary, Muslim husbands who divorce their wives are not required to pay them alimony. This is due to the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, which gave Muslim women the right to maintenance for only three months after divorce, after which the onus of their maintenance was on their relatives.

³² Although there is no constitutional ban on cow slaughter, Article 48 of the Indian Constitution directs the state – as a “Directive Principle” – to make efforts at banning the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle.

³³ For details of these attacks, see Human Rights Watch (2019). Implementing official policy by “outsourcing” responsibility for its implementation to outside agents is not unique to India: South Korea and China are exponents of this method (Ong, 2022).

Second, the ban on the slaughter of cows, which in many states includes *all* cattle – bullocks, water buffalo, oxen – has seriously damaged India’s economy. There is the problem, first, of stray cattle. Once cattle become unproductive, their owners who, under the ban, can no longer sell them for slaughter (which was an important source of income for them), abdicate responsibility for their upkeep (estimated at Rs. 40,000 per year³⁴) by setting them loose. In 2019, there were over 5 million stray cattle in India and many states which had enforced the most stringent bans saw the largest rises in their stray cattle population between 2012 and 2019: Punjab (38.7 per cent), Rajasthan (34.5 per cent), Chhattisgarh (33.9 per cent), Gujarat (17.6 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (17.3 per cent) (Sadana, 2021). Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh together accounted for nearly two-thirds of the 5 million stray cattle in India in 2019 and if one adds to this list Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, and Haryana, then nearly 90 per cent of stray cattle are from these nine states.³⁵ Stray cattle cause various types of damage: (i) by foraging in fields they destroy crops; (ii) they attack people;³⁶ (iii) they cause traffic accidents.³⁷

In addition to the problem of stray cattle, the ban on cattle slaughter and prohibition on eating beef in India has had several other unfortunate effects. The first of these is nutritional. What is termed “beef” in India is, in most cases, meat from water buffalos (“carabeef”) and not meat from cattle (cows and bullocks). Of total meat production in India in 2015–16, only 5 per cent was from cattle, 23 per cent was from buffalo, 46 per cent was poultry, 13 per cent and 7 per cent were, respectively, from goat and sheep, with pork contributing 6 per cent (Department of Animal Husbandry, 2016).³⁸ However, the ban on eating beef includes cattle and buffalo meat and so, effectively, takes 28 per cent of meat out of production.

³⁴ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/cattle-slaughter-economy-kerala-calf-beef-festival-979880-2017-05-29> (accessed 12 September 2022).

³⁵ <https://factly.in/data-the-number-of-stray-cattle-decreased-at-the-national-level-while-it-increased-in-certain-states/#:~:text=However%2C%20at%20the%20national%20level,per%20the%202012%20livestock%20census.> (accessed 12 September 2020).

³⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-60108274> (accessed 12 September 2022).

³⁷ In 2014–15, the number of cattle that were killed by being hit by trains was 2,000–3,000. In 2018–19 this number had increased to nearly 30,000. <https://thewire.in/government/railway-tracks-continue-to-be-hazardous-zones-for-indias-cattle> (accessed 12 September 2022).

³⁸ Later reports from the Department of Animal Husbandry omitted the detailed breakdown of meat production by type of meat.

This must be set against the fact that the proportion of beef eaters in India is likely to be close to 15 per cent and not far from the 20 per cent of Indians who might be vegetarian and whose dietary preferences are greatly respected (Natarajan and Jacob, 2018). Buffalo meat used to be cheapest source of animal protein in India costing, in 2016, Rs. 130–150/kg compared to Rs. 380/kg for mutton (goat/sheep) and Rs. 180 for chicken.³⁹ It was, therefore, an important source of nutrition for India's poor – not just for Muslims but also for members of India's Scheduled Castes (*Dalits*) and Tribes. No longer. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, the closure of at least 150 abattoirs and slaughterhouses has pushed up the price of buffalo meat from Rs. 140/kg in 2017 to Rs. 240/kg in 2022 and the price of mutton from Rs. 380/kg in 2017 to Rs. 600/kg in 2022. As a result, meat has all but disappeared from the diet of poor families in Uttar Pradesh (Moudgil, 2022).

The second impact is on livelihoods, especially of Muslims who are disproportionately involved in the meat industry. A combination of government policies of closing abattoirs and making it a criminal offence to trade in, or eat, “beef”, defined to include cattle and buffalo, in conjunction with vigilantes enforcing this policy by attacking persons suspected of such offences – who turn out to be mostly Muslims⁴⁰ – means that many of the 20 million people who work in and around the beef industry risk losing their livelihoods (Khan *et al.*, 2016).

The beef industry cannot be viewed in isolation from the leather and tanning industries. The hides of cattle account for approximately 10 per cent of the price of the animals, making hides the most commercial part of the carcass. Since selling hides is more profitable than selling meat, it is the leather industry which sustains the beef industry and not the other way round.⁴¹ The decision to ban cattle slaughter in Maharashtra will have an adverse effect on the leather industry, centred in Tamil Nadu, which supplies 40 per cent of the cattle hides (judged to be the finest in India) used in that state (Khan *et al.*, 2016). The consequence of this drop in the supply of hides is that the output of Tamil Nadu's leather industry has fallen, with a concomitant loss of jobs.

³⁹ Prices from Khan *et al.* (2016).

⁴⁰ In the 123 incidents of cow-related violence between 2010 and 2018, 56 per cent of those attacked were Muslim; of fatalities from these attacks, 78 per cent were Muslim (Saldhana, 2019).

⁴¹ <https://www.thealternativedaily.com/shocking-truth-leather/> (accessed 15 September 2022).

The third impact of the ban on cattle slaughter is on Indian exports. India was the largest beef exporter in the world between 2014 and 2016 with exports amounting to nearly US\$4 billion per year, nearly all of it derived from sales of buffalo (and *not* cattle) meat; its worth was equivalent to nearly a third of the country's annual trade deficit.⁴² But after the BJP government came to power in 2014, exports declined by 7 per cent, from US\$4.35 billion in 2013–14 to US\$4.03 billion in 2017–18 (Human Rights Watch, 2019), and by 2022, India is forecast to be only the third-largest beef exporting country.⁴³

The leather industry tells a similar story. The industry employs 4.4 million people, nearly one-third of whom are women, and is the second-largest exporter of leather garments, the third-largest exporter of saddlery and harness, and the fourth-largest exporter of leather goods in the world. In 2017–18, India produced nearly 13 per cent of the world's leather and its leather industry exported US\$5.3 billion worth of goods with another US\$6.3 billion of goods produced for the domestic market (Human Rights Watch, 2019). In the wake of the ban on cattle slaughter, however, leather exports from India have declined by 30 per cent, from US\$5.3 in 2017–18 to US\$3.7 in 2020–21.⁴⁴

4.8 Conclusions

The 21st century has seen religious violence in several countries in the world with religious minorities under attack in the Central African Republic, as Christian militias hunted down Muslims;⁴⁵ Bangladesh, as Muslims attacked Hindu minorities;⁴⁶ Indonesia, as Muslims attacked members of an Islamic sect called the Ahmadiyya and earlier attacked Christians;⁴⁷ Myanmar, as the ethnic *Bamar*

⁴² *The Economist*, "India's Huge Buffalo Meat Industry is in Limbo", <https://www.economist.com/business/2017/06/24/indias-huge-buffalo-meat-industry-is-in-limbo> (accessed 15 September 2022).

⁴³ Global Beef Exports, <https://www.drovers.com/news/beef-production/global-beef-update-exporters#:~:text=The%20top%20four%20beef%20exporting,New%20Zealand%2C%20Canada%20and%20Uruguay> (accessed 15 September 2022).

⁴⁴ Leather Industry and Exports, <https://www.ibef.org/exports/leather-industry-india#:~:text=India%20is%20the%20second%2Dlargest,leather%20export%20in%202021%2D22> (accessed 15 September 2022).

⁴⁵ *The Economist*, 15 February 2014. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2014/02/15/sectarian-savagery>

⁴⁶ *The Economist*, 7 November 2021 <https://www.economist.com/asia/2021/11/06/bangladeshs-religious-minorities-are-under-attack>

⁴⁷ *The Economist*, 8 February 2011 https://www.economist.com/blogs/asiaview/2011/02/religious_persecution_indonesia

attacked Muslim *Rohingyas*.⁴⁸ Even in the absence of explicit attacks, as discussed earlier, several countries around the world impose restrictions on minority religions. When democratic countries have imposed restrictions on minority groups, by religion, language, race, it has led to a version of democracy, discussed above, labelled “ethnic democracy”.

The two most notable examples of ethnic democracies today are Israel (*de jure*) and India (*de facto*) since the election of a BJP government in 2014 and its re-election in 2019. In both countries the cleavage of the population is by religion – Jews versus Muslims in Israel, Hindus versus Muslims in India. Both claim possession of territory they regard as holy. In 70 AD, Jews were driven out of the Promised Land that is today’s Israel; beginning in 711 AD with the invasion of Sind by Mohamed Bin Qasim, Hindus suffered centuries of occupation of their sacred land (*punjabhoomi*), watered by seven holy rivers, by a succession of Muslim invaders.⁴⁹ Neither Israel nor India will easily relinquish the sovereignty that Jews assert over Arabs in the former and that Hindus assert over Muslims in the latter.

In India’s transition from a pre-2014 secular democracy to the ethnic democracy that it has become since then, the nature of HVM in the country has also changed. Pai and Kumar (2018) argue that the earlier model of major incidents of HVM has been replaced by a phenomenon which they term “everyday communalism” (p. 3). By this they mean frequent occurrences of “micro-aggressions” against Muslims, arising out of petty everyday incidents, that weave communal hostility into the fabric of quotidian life and stoke the fire of anti-Muslim feeling.

Instances of such common-or-garden aggressions are: (i) the bulldozing of Muslim homes and institutional buildings, either on allegations that they were built illegally (Uttar Pradesh)⁵⁰ or that they were centres of terrorist activity (Assam)⁵¹; (ii) attacks on Muslim men suspected of wanting to marry Hindu women with a view to converting them to Islam (what is popularly termed “love jihad” in India) (Cook, 2019); (iii) forcing Muslims to live in ghettos by denying them access to housing in

⁴⁸ *The Economist*, 27 July 2013 <https://www.economist.com/asia/2013/07/27/fears-of-a-new-religious-strife>

⁴⁹ These rivers are Ganges, Jamuna, Saraswati, Narbada, Godavari, Kaveri, and Shipra.

⁵⁰ <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/features/india-bulldozes-muslim-homes-amid-prophet-furore> (accessed 21 September 2022).

⁵¹ <https://scroll.in/latest/1031703/assam-third-madrassa-bulldozed-in-a-month-after-cm-claims-institutions-being-used-as-terror-hubs> (accessed 21 September 2022).

Hindu-majority areas (popularly referred to as “land jihad”) (Banerjee *et al.*, 2018); (iv) denying Muslims access to public spaces for public payers;⁵² (v) lynching of Muslims following the ban on cow slaughter and the sale/consumption of beef, discussed earlier.

Cuius regio, eius religio – whose kingdom, their religion. This principle, which was established at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, allowing rulers within the Holy Roman Empire to choose the official religion (Lutheranism or Roman Catholicism) of their domains, is alive and well today. The list of countries which promote the majority ethnicity, while simultaneously devaluing that of its minorities, is growing. Italy (through the Brothers of Italy) is the latest example of an expanding list of European countries that seek to assert their Christian identity.⁵³ The tragedy is, as this chapter has argued, that when identities clash, bloodshed results.

⁵² <https://thewire.in/communalism/muslims-should-not-offer-friday-prayers-in-gurugrams-open-spaces-haryana-cm-khattar> (accessed 21 September 2022).

⁵³ As Giorgia Meloni, Italy’s Prime Minister, had said, “Defending Christians, wherever they may be, also means defending our identity”. <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2022/9/18/giorgia-meloni-politics-and-faith-meet-italys-next-prime-minister-and-what-she-believes> (accessed 21 September 2022).

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Table 4.1: Violent Incidents in India Involving Hindus and Muslims, by State: January 1950–July 2006

	Number of Incidents	Number Killed	Number Injured	Number Arrested	Killed/Incidents Ratio	Killed/Injuries Ratio	Mean Duration Days
Andhra Pradesh	64	349	1,408	6,205	5.5	0.25	2.2
Assam	23	118	274	228	5.1	0.43	3.1
Bihar	82	644	404	1,384	7.9	1.59	1.8
Chhattisgarh	10	32	66	378	3.2	0.48	2.2
Delhi	70	240	1,385	1,882	3.4	0.17	1.3
Gujarat	372	2,374	5,878	14,032	6.4	0.40	2.3
Haryana	7	25	49	83	3.6	0.51	1.0
Himachal Pradesh	5	46	78	0	9.2	0.59	1.0
Jharkhand	28	284	517	1,550	10.1	0.55	1.6
Jammu & Kashmir	691	1,687	4,168	1,482	2.4	0.40	1.1
Karnataka	104	273	1,332	2,187	2.6	0.21	2.1
Kerala	24	29	381	111	1.2	0.08	1.2
Madhya Pradesh	75	324	1,641	9,470	4.3	0.20	1.6
Maharashtra	237	1,750	6,603	19,868	7.4	0.27	1.7
Orissa	20	82	125	153	4.1	0.66	1.9
Punjab	10	48	132	12	4.8	0.36	1.8
Rajasthan	37	122	538	190	3.3	0.23	3.2
Tamil Nadu	24	107	456	297	4.5	0.23	1.0
Uttar Pradesh	275	1,431	3,718	39,023	5.2	0.38	1.6
West Bengal	75	218	869	4,106	2.9	0.25	1.4
All-India	2,233	10,183	30,022	102,641	4.6	0.34	1.6

Source: Own calculations from VWIS data

Table 4.2: The Distribution of Violent Incidents Between Hindus and Muslims in India by District, 1950–2006

Number of Incidents	Number of Districts	Percentage of Affected Districts	Name
< 9	248	85.1	
10–19	22	7.3	Agra, Allahabad, Aurangabad, Banaskantha, Belgaum, Bharuch, Buldana, Dharwad, Ghaziabad, Jaipur, Junagadh, Kanpur, Lucknow, Mehsana, Nashik, North 24 Parganas, Panchmahal, Patna, Pune, Rajkot, Sabarkantha, Varanasi
20–29	10	2.8	Badgam, Bangalore, Indore, Kheda, Kolkata, Meerut, Moradabad, Sural, Thane, Udhampur
30–39	3	1.0	Aligarh, Jammu, Rajouri
40–49	2	0.6	Hyderabad, Kupwara
50–59	2	0.6	Poonch Pulwana
60–69	5	1.6	Baramula, Delhi, Doda, Mumbai, Vadodara
70–79	N/A	N/A	
80–89	N/A	N/A	
90–99	1	0.3	Anantnag
> 100	2	0.6	Ahmedabad, Srinagar
0–100+	295	100	

Source: Own calculations from VWIS data

Table 4.3: Violent Incidents in India Involving Hindus and Muslims in Districts with 10 or More Incidents: January 1950–July 2006

State	District	Number of Incidents	Number Killed	Number Injured	Number Arrested	Killed/Incidents Ratio	Killed/Injuries Ratio	Mean Duration Days
Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad	46	290	870	5,303	6.3	0.33	2.3
Bihar	Patna	14	7	82	7	0.5	0.1	1.3
Delhi	Delhi	69	238	1380	1,882	3.4	0.17	1.3
Gujarat	Ahmedabad	126	1564	346	8,484	12.4	0.45	2.7
Gujarat	Banaskantha	10	17	49	244	1.7	0.35	1.1
Gujarat	Bharuch	19	28	7	266	1.5	0.37	1.3
Gujarat	Junagadh	14	34	71	155	2.4	0.48	1.4
Gujarat	Kheda	21	23	50	422	1.1	0.46	1.7
Gujarat	Mahasena	15	47	59	58	1.1	0.80	1.2
Gujarat	Panchmahal	14	131	129	110	9.4	0.8	1.2
Gujarat	Rajkot	11	11	112	83	1	0.1	1.3
Gujarat	Sabarkantha	11	37	11	81	3.4	3.4	4.9
Gujarat	Surat	22	223	676	848	10.1	0.33	2.4
Gujarat	Vadodara	67	173	836	2,640	2.6	0.20	2.4
Jammu & Kashmir	Anantnag	93	239	421	40	2.6	0.57	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Badgam	21	48	114	5	2.3	0.42	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Baramula	64	106	241	0	1.7	0.44	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Doda	69	210	139	55	3.0	1.5	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Jammu	37	101	411	737	2.7	0.25	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Kupwara	42	117	120	0	2.7	0.98	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Poonch	54	121	48	0	2.2	2.5	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Pulwana	54	118	335	0	2.2	0.35	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Rajouri	39	74	98	10	1.9	0.76	1.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar	118	282	1,806	592	2.4	0.16	1.2
Jammu & Kashmir	Udhampur	26	75	38	0	2.9	2.0	1.0
Karnataka	Bangalore	21	83	482	393	4.0	0.18	1.9
Karnataka	Belgaum	12	17	161	369	1.4	0.11	3.2
Karnataka	Dharwad	11	11	164	819	1.	0.07	1.6
Madhya Pradesh	Indore	21	59	443	2,045	2.8	0.13	1.8
Maharashtra	Aurangabad	15	32	205	1,754	2.1	0.16	2.5
Maharashtra	Buldhana	10	12	117	406	1.2	0.10	1.2
Maharashtra	Mumbai	63	1,142	2,772	6,621	18.1	0.41	1.7
Maharashtra	Nashik	17	49	514	2,154	2.9	0.1	1.9
Maharashtra	Pune	14	8	381	2,557	0.57	0.02	2.1
Maharashtra	Thane	28	288	679	2,927	10.3	0.42	1.7
Rajasthan	Jaipur	11	56	242	25	5.1	0.23	1.5
Uttar Pradesh	Agra	10	44	60	1,064	4.4	0.73	1.4
Uttar Pradesh	Aligarh	36	424	564	3,936	11.8	0.75	2
Uttar Pradesh	Allahabad	16	34	224	2,415	2.1	0.51	1.7
Uttar Pradesh	Ghaziabad	10	26	67	85	2.6	0.39	1.0
Uttar Pradesh	Kanpur	14	111	171	1,113	7.9	0.65	2.3
Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	19	17	86	1,204	0.89	0.20	1.6
Uttar Pradesh	Meerut	28	270	548	7,081	9.6	0.49	2.4
Uttar Pradesh	Moradabad	20	181	297	2,089	9.1	0.61	1.8
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi	17	59	367	2,720	3.5	0.16	1.0
West Bengal	24 Parganas (N)	17	62	213	1,158	3.6	0.29	1.4
West Bengal	Kolkata	26	70	436	1,286	2.7	0.16	1.6
Totals		1,512	7,369	17,642	66,243	4.9	0.42	1.8

Source: Own calculations from VWIS data

Table 4.4: The 30 Districts in India with the Largest Number of Incidents of Hindu–Muslim Violence: 1950–2006

State	District	Number of Incidents	Number of Persons Killed	Persons Killed to Incidents Ratio
Gujarat	Ahmedabad	126	1564	12.4
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar	118	282	2.4
Jammu & Kashmir	Anantnag	93	239	2.6
Jammu & Kashmir	Doda	69	210	3.0
Delhi	Delhi	69	238	3.4
Gujarat	Vadodara	67	173	2.6
Jammu & Kashmir	Baramula	64	106	1.7
Maharashtra	Mumbai	63	1142	18.1
Jammu & Kashmir	Pulwama	54	118	2.2
Jammu & Kashmir	Poonch	54	121	2.2
Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad	46	290	6.3
Jammu & Kashmir	Kupwara	42	117	2.8
Jammu & Kashmir	Rajouri	39	74	1.9
Jammu & Kashmir	Jammu	37	101	2.7
Uttar Pradesh	Aligarh	36	424	11.8
Maharashtra	Thane	28	288	10.3
Uttar Pradesh	Meerut	28	270	9.6
Jammu & Kashmir	Udhampur	26	75	2.9
West Bengal	Kolkata	26	70	2.7
Gujarat	Surat	22	223	10.1
Gujarat	Kheda	21	23	1.1
Madhya Pradesh	Indore	21	59	2.8
Jammu & Kashmir	Badgam	21	48	2.3
Karnataka	Bangalore	21	83	4.0
Uttar Pradesh	Moradabad	20	181	9.1
Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	19	17	0.9
Gujarat	Bharuch	19	28	1.5
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi	17	59	3.5
West Bengal	24 Parganas	17	62	3.6
Maharashtra	Nashik	17	49	2.9

Source: Own Calculations from VWIS data

Table 4.5: The 30 Districts in India with the Largest Number of Persons Killed, Following Incidents of Hindu–Muslim Violence: 1950–2006

State	District	Number of Persons Killed	Number of Incidents	Persons Killed to Incidents Ratio
Gujarat	Ahmedabad	1,564	126	12.4
Maharashtra	Mumbai	1,142	63	18.1
Uttar Pradesh	Aligarh	424	36	11.8
Bihar	Bhagalpur	405	6	67.5
Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad	290	46	6.3
Maharashtra	Thane	288	28	10.3
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar	282	118	2.4
Uttar Pradesh	Meerut	270	28	9.6
Jammu & Kashmir	Anantnag	239	92	2.6
Delhi	Delhi	238	69	3.4
Gujarat	Surat	223	22	10.1
Jammu & Kashmir	Doda	210	69	3.0
Jharkhand	Purbi Singhbhum	214	7	27.7
Uttar Pradesh	Moradabad	181	20	9.1
Gujarat	Vadodara	173	67	2.6
Gujarat	Panchmahal	131	13	10.1
Jammu & Kashmir	Poonch	121	54	2.2
Jammu & Kashmir	Pulwama	118	54	2.2
Jammu & Kashmir	Kupwara	114	40	2.9
Uttar Pradesh	Kanpur	111	14	7.9
Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal	108	9	12.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Baramula	106	64	1.7
Assam	Nowgong	92	4	23
Karnatka	Bangalore	83	21	4.0
Karnataka	Mandya	80	4	20.0
Jammu & Kashmir	Jammu	101	37	2.7
Jammu & Kashmir	Udhampur	75	26	2.9
Jammu & Kashmir	Rajouri	74	39	1.9
West Bengal	Kolkata	70	26	2.7
Maharashtra	Solapur	66	9	7.3

Source: Own Calculations from VWIS data

Table 4.6: Regression Estimates for the Number of Incidents in Districts*

Variable	Coefficient Estimate	t-value
District part of Western region	9.10	3.86
District part of Central region	-1.67	-0.73
District part of Northern region	11.46	4.36
District part of Eastern region	-0.51	-0.20
Proportion of district's population which is urban	0.416	9.54
Proportion of district's population that is Muslim	0.405	9.44
District's male literacy rate	0.130	1.29
District's female literacy rate	-0.414	-4.07
Intercept	6.49	0.90
<i>Number of observations</i>	281	
<i>Adjusted-R²</i>	0.494	
<i>F(8,272)</i>	35.18	

* The equation was estimated for only those districts which had experienced *at least one* violent incident involving Hindus and Muslims over 1950–2006.

Southern Region: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka

Western Region: Gujarat, Maharashtra

Central Region: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh

Norther Region: Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab

Eastern Region: Assam, Orissa, West Bengal

Figure 4.1

The Equally Distributed Equivalent Number of Incidents

