

Communalized Violence in Gujarat Riots: A Discourse Analytical Lens to Firaq and Parzanias

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Abstract

The role of state in safeguarding human life has been recognized across constitutional and legislative settings of countries. Particularly in the context of conflict ridden territories the state's active role in diffusing violence is very critical. South Asian history is marred with political, ethnicized, religious, and communal violence which is practiced, projected, and reasoned by the majority who feed on majoritarian and universalizing religious ideology against the minorities residing in different territories. Gujarat riots is one of the instances of communal violence which broke out in 2002 in contemporary India. Based on this subject, two films, Firaq and Parzanias were produced and released in cinemas. The paper has critically analyzed these two feature films using the tool of critical discourse analysis. This research, through textual, social, and discursive deconstruction of two films, explains the facilitator role of Indian state in 2002 Gujarat Riots. The existing scholarship is assertive that Indian state played an active part in premeditating violence against Muslim minorities residing in Muslim dominated areas of rural and urban Gujarat. The research explains that the state not only premeditated the communal violence but also exercised brute force, physical and coercive forms of power against Muslim communes with an intention of demolishing the Muslim identity from the politico-religious landscape of Gujarat. Regarding communal violence, the themes of networked hate, political economy of conflict, and militarised and sexualised violence against women are also identified.

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India as a Politico-Religious Space for Minorities

According to Wagley and Harris (1958) there are five characteristics that define minorities including relative powerlessness when compared to majority groups, distinct cultural and/or physical characteristics, self-consciousness, the transmittance of membership by descent rules, and inter-marriage. India is fraught with practicing structural discrimination against minorities and religious intolerance which is grounded in the partition of 1947 when religious minorities were promised of their political and civil rights (Punathil, 2019). In this regard, a National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was set up by the government to recognize the prevalence of religious minorities including Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists, among others in India. Viewed in this light, India at least on the surface, seems to be less discriminatory and more embrative in their constitution than its neighboring countries. Despite being constitutionally declared as a secular state, rampant incidents of prosecution for non-Hindu population have been witnessed in the political history of India. Forceful Christianity to Hinduism conversions (Sudhir

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Selvaraj, 2025), the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 (Ranjan, 2024) and 2008 attacks on Christian dominated areas of Orissa (Augustine, 2011) are some of the many episodes of violence disrupting the secular core propagated in the constitution of India. The purpose of the current research is to document textual, social, and discursive deconstruction of two films on Gujarat Riots to explain the themes of State complicity in violence against Muslims, networked hatred, and sexualized and militarized violence against minority women as an act of power.

Contextualizing Gujarat Riots

On February 27, 2002 two train cars were set on fire killing 58 Hindus. The incident took place in a small town of Gujarat, Godhra. The victims were coming back to Ahmedabad from Ayodhya which is the birth place of a Hindu God, Rama. This incident was followed by Muslim genocide that took all over Gujarat for four months engulfing sixteen of Gujarat's twenty-four states and killing over 2000 people. The state in its systematic and premeditated modus operandi, attacked Muslim communities of Gujarat destroying their properties, religious places, and businesses. The Sangh Parivar, a Hindu organizational body polity actively participated in orchestrating this architecture of violence through acts of structural violence against Muslims and justified it by calling it a natural reaction to the Godhra train incident. Sangh Parivar is a family of organizations committed to promoting Hindutva ideology and cause. Its aim is to transmogrify India into nation-state based on Hindu nationalism and thereby declaring all other minorities as second rate citizens. According to Sangh Parivar Hindu killings in Godhra station were pre-planned by Muslims. Besides Sangh Parivar's interpretation, there are various accounts of what triggered the Hindu killings. According to one version some Hindus molested a Muslim girl who was saved by Muslim vendors who used to work on the railway station resulting in the act of retaliation between the two groups. Another version asserts that Hindus after having consumed tea from Muslim vendors refused to pay, leading to a confrontation between them. Another version claims that some Hindus who were sitting on the train roof stripped themselves and showed their genitals to the Muslim women living in the nearby areas. Gujarat state government stated that the train cars were caught by fire when Muslims residing in proximal areas launched an attack on train by throwing fireballs on the train. As a response to this incident, Muslims were called out as terrorists by government officials and local media. Hindu gangs from religious fundamentalist groups retaliated against Muslims by killing them, confiscating their properties, attacking their businesses, and places of worship (Human Rights Watch, 2002).² Women were gang-raped and their bodies mutilated before setting dead bodies on fire (Punjabi, 2012). Children were also burnt alive. According to Mishra (2002) the most brutal violence was witnessed in the city of Ahmedabad between February 28 and March 2 when Hindu mobs in thousands arrived in trucks, clad in the signature uniform of Hindu nationalist groups, saffron scarves and *khaki* shorts ran a killing spree against Muslims men, women, and children. Gujarat riots were not the first incidence of communal violence in India, although the magnitude and the scale at which it occurred were huge and intense.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Gujarat Riots

In India the causes for ethno-communal conflict and violence are predominantly economic, broadly classified as macro (class structure, under-developed economy, uneven development, and rivalry between business elites) and micro (number of people of minority

² <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/india/gujarat.pdf>

status, competition between rival communes, historical trajectory of communal violence, political economy of elections, politics of hate and propagation of religious intolerance) spurring communal violence against minorities (Engineer, 1984). Varshney (2002) does not deny the omnipresence of communal riots in India but for granular interpretation, critical understanding of politico-religious contexts, structural factors underlying the relational dynamics of communities and their political representatives, ideologies and power relations are mandatory. The temporal and spatial variations can be explained by civil society organisations creating unrest and valorizing people towards violence. In addition, Brass (2003) explains that geographic areas where violence is the most brutal, omnipresent and therefore institutionalised is because of state's active involvement. Lastly, Dutta and Pal (2024), document the networked nature of anti-Muslim hate on digital platforms in India in which offensive naming, online targeting, and perpetuation and instigation of sentiment of violence and hatred against Muslims on social media were identified. The political economy approach by Engineer (1984) is relevant for this research as it describes if riots in Gujarat were the systematic attempts to abolish businesses of Muslim community. Varshney (2002)'s analysis is relevant for its propensity to explain if Gujarat riots were escalated by the civil society organizations functioning under Hindu nationalist organizations. Brass (2003)'s institutionalist lens is significant in its detailing of Gujarat State government's active role in violence against Muslims. Finally, Dutta and Pal (2024)'s survey also helps understand the networked nature of systemic violence, hatred, complicity of state.

Methodology

For this research, films were analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA was used because it assesses the function of discourse in the creation of inequalities in the social structures. The Hindutva ideology created socio-economic, political, and discursive inequalities against Muslim minorities, which justifies CDA's application. Secondly, CDA helps identify the reasons of how a discourse is harming the marginalized. For the current research the discourse of institutionalized coercive state power functioned as a dominant discourse to dominate, subjugate, and marginalize Muslim minorities of Gujarat. Thirdly, CDA draws meanings from linguistic analysis and tends to relate them with linguistic features to a broader context of social, sociopolitical and socio economic structures. In the textual, social and discursive analyses of the paper, certain words and phrases have been deconstructed to explain their contexts on the broader social and discursive formations. Lastly, CDA illustrates how the languages work and learn from broader political and social perspectives of the society. This feature has also been detailed in the following text where it has been explained that how language in the context of majoritarian politics of Sangh Parivar plays out in asserting its political agenda and absolutist form of Hindu nationalism in the context of Gujarat. Fairclough's CDA was used to analyze scenes from the two sampled films, as this tool is vastly used for deconstruction of filmic and media contents to articulate social realities with data deconstructed textually. The social and discursive practices attributed to filmic text aid in understanding lived-in realities, which is another reason why CDA was used as a tool of analysis.

Following transcription conventions have been used while transcribing and translating dialogical data from the two films to explain vocal, non-vocal, and emotionally responsive contextuality of conversations.

- Underlined text means emphasis or stress.
- CAPITALS means loudness of voice.
- // means overlapping conversation.

- ((*text*)) italic texts between double round brackets means bodily expressions and emotional overtones (laughing, crying, gazing, sniffing, head nodding and shaking, gasping).
- <text> texts between angle brackets means that the words spoken were faster than the rest of the conversation.
- [] additional explanations or add-ons.

Results and Discussions

Firaaq

Firaaq is a 2008 film based on 2002 Gujarat Riots and its aftermaths. The film was a directorial debut of Nandita Das, an acclaimed Indian actress of parallel cinema. The film stars, Nawazuddin Sidique, Shahana Goswami, Sanjay Suri, Tisca Chopra, Paresh Rawal, Deepti Naval, Naseeruddin Shah, and Raghubir Yadav in principle characters. The film follows an anthological format in which four stories each covering people of different socio-economic classes who had been affected by the riots, have been interwoven by the director. Sidique and Goswami's track is about a Muslim family which was rescued by a Hindu family when the riots broke out. Sanjay and Chopra's track is about the identity crisis which the former's character has been shown facing at the wake of riots, Rawal and Naval's track focuses on the guilt of a housewife (Naval's character) who shut a door to a mob-lynched Muslim woman when she cried out to her for help, and Shah and Yadav's track is about idealism of a Muslim musician at the face of adversity of and havoc created by the riots. The film garnered critical acclaim and ignited public discourses on Hindu nationalism, minority status in the Indian secular nationalism, state accountability and its premeditation in the Muslim massacre, and politics of hate and extremism. In the following text have been deconstructed seven scenes from the film and those have been analyzed using CDA. The text details the characters, dialogues converted into English transcriptions, and additional details encompassing emotional under- and over-tones, physical depictions of spaces and persons, and non-vocal conversations, all of which have been included by using stylistic notes and transcription conventions which are used while doing conversational analysis.

Scene 1

Sanjay: She forgot the salt again. GET THE SALT!

Sanjay's father: Wish these riots got over then the vegetable seller would come or else we will be stuck with onions and potatoes.

[Arti comes in and hands over salt]

Sanjay: Where is your mind these days?

[She looks at the entrance door and reaches out to it to open it]

Sanjay: No one is knocking! She has gone crazy ((laughing))

[Their son steps down the ladder]

Son: I am off to Ritesh's place.

Arti: School is closed, but should not you be studying?

Son: Then what is this schoolbag for?

[He leaves]

[Background-Televised reporter saying: This is an astounding statement of the security situation in Gujarat especially the remote areas which are away from the media gaze....]

Sanjay: These English channels are bloody liars. When Hindus are killed, these pimps keep silent. You will see, the whole world will give it to these Muslims.

[Sanjay's cell phone rings, he checks the number and shows the screen to his friend who is with him on his dining table]

Friend: What will happen, Sanjay *bhai* [brother]?

Sanjay: I told you. Settle it with a bottle of Black Label then you did not listen. Now you want my help.

Friend: What if they come with a warrant?

Sanjay: No report has been filed. They cannot shit a warrant out of their arse. Stop eating or he may leave.

[Addressing to his wife]

Sanjay: We will be back by eight. For once cook something nice.

Sanjay's father: Are you leaving?

Sanjay: No. I like to stand by the door twirling my school scooter keys. Hurry up!

Friend [to Arti]: There is a vegetable seller down the lane. Buy something fresh. What? Lost again?

[They shut the door and leave]

[Knock at the door. Arti opens the door and finds no one outside. She runs back to the kitchen, lights the stove which has a deep pan with hot oil in it]

[More knocks on the door]

An unknown woman in the background screaming: PLEASE! SWORDS! THEY WILL SLAUGHTER ME. OPEN, OPEN THE DOOR. THEY WILL BUTCHER ME! THEY WILL KILL ME.

[Arti takes out a spoon from the hot oil and drops the boiling oil on her right wrist. Her wrist has three wounds already. The moment the drop touches her skin, the voice from the background tails off].

Scene 2

[Sameer and Anu enters their friend's house]

Ketki [to her maid]: Kavita, hurry!

Raman [in the background]: Give the phone to the inspector.

[Sameer, Anu and Ketki's kids meeting each other]

Ketki: Hi Sameer. The CD isn't here yet. Raman has been waiting for the last two hours.

Sameer: Typical!

Ketki: Please sit!

Raman: So who has my CD? Sir the payment was discussed. Now why the fuss? You are selling me my own CD?

[Background-Televised reporter saying: It is cruel to imagine these children recounting those horrors. But activists here are saying the option may be just as bad.

The reporter to a woman: What did you hear?

Woman: They beat, stripped, raped, slaughtered and burnt everyone.]

[The scene cuts to Arti's house where she is listening to the same news reporter while massaging her father-in-law's foot]

Reporter: Was your daughter also there?

Woman: Yes, she was.

Reporter: What was her name?

Woman: Afsana. Anwar *bhai* was sitting outside here. Poor man was a cripple. When he opened the railing they stabbed him. They also grabbed the girl standing behind him. They screamed, <Kill them! We don't want Muslims in India> They used swords, petrol, chemicals on us]

[Arti looks visibly upset listening to the report]

Father-in-law [in response to Arti's aggressiveness in massaging his feet]: What is wrong with you? Go slow!

[Woman in the televised report in the background: They even used water pistols to spray petrol.

Another witness [male]: Some were well armed with rifles.

Another witness [female]: As I wear sari and speak Gujarati I was spared]

Father-in-law [to Arti]; Shut the TV and draw the curtains.

[Woman in the televised report in the background: We cleaned walls splattered with blood. They dragged people out, poured petrol to burn them]

[Arti switches off the TV and tends to drop the curtain down]

[A burnt woman draped in black shawl appears on her window: SISTER, I BEG YOU, [and] PLEASE OPEN. THEY WILL KILL ME. OPEN THE DOOR ((pleading))]

[Arti hastily shuts down the curtains and leaves off]

Scene 3

Ketki: You know; I just can't get over it. How did they know that Sameer was a silent partner?

Anu: Because big brother is watching.

Ketki: What?

Anu: Didn't you read? They have got databases of all Muslim-owned businesses?

Ketki: Yes, but apart from some bank papers and legal documents Sameer's name shows up nowhere.

Anu: Forget it, Ketki. I don't want to think about it.

Ketki: Let it be.

Anu; I promised Sameer I will learn to make tea from you. See, now it is the last day!

Ketki: He is quite a tea addict.

Anu: So, are the rest of his family. Infact father says Muslims are allowed more tea because they are not allowed alcohol.

Ketki: But Sameer drinks. And I have never seen him do *namaz* or anything like that. Really, he is so not a Muslim.

Anu: But he is Ketki. He is. Somewhere on a list in big bold letters is Sameer Arshad Shaikh. I was not joking when I said Big Brother is watching.

Ketki: Tell me honestly, Anu. Do you ever regret marrying a Muslim?

Anu: No. When I got married I knew it wasn't going to be easy but this last month has taken that to a totally different level.

Scene 4

Mohsin: There were so many of them. They were all shouting. They burnt my mother and also my brother. They even killed my little sister, my uncle, my aunt.

Arti: You saw all this?

Mohsin [nodded]: Some even with swords. They made my aunt naked and killed her but they didn't take off the men's clothes.

Arti: Where were you?

Mohsin: I was hiding inside a garbage bin.

Arti: Then?

Mohsin: Then Yusuf uncle took me to Shahpur camp. But I want to go to my father.

Arti: Where is he?

Mohsin: I don't know. When they came, father had gone to the market.

Arti: Maybe your mother got saved. Was she wearing a black scarf?

Mohsin: No, mother always wore a sari.

[Arti mixes turmeric powder with ghee, asks Mohsin to come near to her, and applies the mixture to the bruise on his forehead]

Mohsin: My name is not Mohan, it is Mohsin.

Arti: In the kitchen Mohsin and outside Mohan, Okay?

[Mohsin nodded]

Mohsin: I don't want to go back to the camp.

Arti: Will you live here as Mohan?

Mohsin: First will you help me find my father?

[Arti caresses him]

Mohsin [while looking at Arti's wrist burns]: You were also burnt?

[Arti hugs him]

[Sanjay and his friend reach home]

Sanjay's friend: Please say something.

Sanjay: Say what? Is there anything left to be said?

Sanjay's friend: Bhai, I really didn't know.

Sanjay: Then you should have found out, idiot. Had I known of the police report, we wouldn't have stood there like fools.

Sanjay's friend: But Barot told me/

Sanjay: / Hell with that Barot. This bloody new DCP is looking for suckers he can nail. One or two will do. The rest will go scot free.

Sanjay's friend: I know everybody's names.

Sanjay: Ae *Bhagwan* (O Lord)! Idiot, in such matters you cannot be a witness. You know that in rape cases they lock you up for seven years. Now because of you, I am stuck.

Sanjay [to Arti]: GET SOME WATER!

[Sanjay switches the TV on]

[A woman in the television: You say there are cases of rape. That's not true. What violence? All women are safe. In that society, all are safe]

Sanjay to his friend: Ay! Was it fun having the fruit? It's okay you can tell me.

Sanjay's friend: I wasn't the only one ((*smiling*)).

Sanjay: Are you getting water or digging a well?

Mohsin: I am scared.

Arti: Don't worry. No one comes to the kitchen. You sit, sit here quietly. Nothing will happen. I swear.

[Woman survivor of violence in the television report: They didn't think twice before killing my young girls. They dishonored them]

Sanjay's friend: How can you dishonor those who have no honor?

Arti: And you have honor?

[Sanjay stands up from his chair looking at her angrily]

Arti: I meant.

[Sanjay asks her to come to bedroom]

Sanjay: Come in.

[She follows him to their bedroom and he slaps her]

Sanjay [to Arti]: I don't really enjoy violence.

Sanjay [to his friend]: I am leaving. Are you coming or not?

[Mohsin petrified from this scene exits from the main door and runs away]

Scene 5

[Henna function in a suburbs of Ahmedabad. Muneera and Jyoti are applying mehndi on women's hands]

First woman [chanting in joy]: That's nice. Now it feels like a henna night.

Second woman: Hardly! Remember Sonia's wedding? Just for the henna night, there were 50 people.

Third woman: I don't want to remember. Aunty, Vineet and his friends did a fab dance.

First woman: Really?

Third woman: Just like Shahrukh!

First woman: So you guys also dance.

Third woman: Oh God! I had so many plans. These bloody riots have ruined everything.

Fourth woman: But there is nothing in our area.

Third woman: It is all the same.

Fifth woman: Aunty, let us not take that too lightly.

First woman: Actually, that is true. Yesterday I got an email from a friend that had a list of all Muslim rickshaw numbers to be avoided. I find these Muslims damn scary. What if they kill you?

Second woman: Anyways, forget it please. Let us have some fun.

Third woman [to Jyoti]: What are you doing? She has ruined everything.

Sixth woman: Manasi, come on, let us dance. No it is just getting done.

[The women get up and start dancing]

Muneera: Are you sure you didn't see anyone break into my house?

Jyoti: If you ask me ten times, you think I will say I did?

Muneera: Hanif said you would know everything.

Jyoti: Listen Muneera, we both know Mehul and Hanif don't get along but that has never been between us. Why start now?

Muneera: You started it. I think Mehul's gang did it.

Jyoti: Who knows? In such times anyone can do anything.

Scene 6

[Anu and Sameer sitting outside the food stall for having a snack]

Sameer: How are you Lucky?

Lucky [a makeshift food staller]: These riots have flattened our business. I cannot ask the shopkeepers to give me a special riot discount.

Sameer: Don't worry. Whatever happens, your omelet will remain a hit.

Lucky: You don't know. To be here I have to feed the entire lot for free. That too all alone.

Sameer: Where is your help, Chhotiya?

Lucky: Since the riots began, I have not seen him. I pray for him every day.

Anu: Listen. We will be fine in Delhi. A fresh start is always a good thing. Sameer: Yes. Whatever doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.

Lucky: Sameer sahib, if those Muslims didn't begin all this, the city wouldn't be burning. Violence is in their blood. We are taught to be tolerant. And they, to be Jihadis.

Anu: Then Chhotiya also must be a Jihadi?

Lucky: What? Chhotiya and Jihadi? He would not hurt an ant. But Chhotiya is not like them. I have known many Muslim. All bloody fanatics [*katar*].

Sameer: I am a Muslim.

Anu: Stop it.

Lucky: That's a good one.

Sameer: No, really. I am a Muslim.

Anu: Will you stop it Sameer?

Lucky: Sahib, these days it's dangerous to even joke like that. You never know when. . . .

[Police jeeps appears]

Lucky: Sir, today what would you like? Omelet, scrambled or boiled egg?

Policeman: Come on, wind up. There is going to be trouble tonight. Also you two.

Anu: Let us go.

Sameer: A minute Sir, just finishing.

Policeman: In such times you cannot indulge like this. Stop licking your fingers and go on.

Anu: Sir we are leaving. In fact, we are leaving the city for good. He loves Lucky's omelet so for the last time.

Policeman: What is your name?

Anu: I am Anuradha Desai. He is my husband Sameer.

Policeman: Tell Mr. Desai not to act too smart. Now get going.

Sameer [to Lucky]: Give this to Chhotiya when you meet him.

Sameer [to policeman]: Let me clarify. I am not Mr. Desai. I am Mr. Shaikh.

Policeman: Shaikh? Then why did you lie?

Sameer; I didn't. My name is Sameer Shaikh and she is my wife Anuradha Desai.

Policeman: Hmm. Now I understand. Why you are so cocky? Get going.

Anu: We are going.

Policeman: GO STRAIGHT TO PAKISTAN ((*screaming*)).

Scene 7

[Khan sahib watching TV news alone in his house]

[A woman survivor sharing: They broke open locks. Destroyed our homes. Most families have only one surviving member. A son, a daughter or a father. We somehow escaped from Kidiad. Babies crying of hunger. The mobs hurled the kids into fire. I still get nightmares. It is all finished]

[A knock at the door]

Helper: A bit of needle and thread is all it took. Khan sahib: Leave it.

Helper: No, I am fine. I will do it.

Khan sahib: It will not be needed. There will be no gathering tomorrow.

Helper: What do you mean?

Khan sahib: You were right. I was wrong. It's pointless, pointless.

Helper: Khan sahib if you lose hope, then what happens to the likes of us?

Khan sahib: How can just seven musical notes have the strength to stand up against such hatred.

Parzania

Parzania is a critically acclaimed Indian feature film which was released in 2005. The film was directed by Rahul Dholakia. The film revolves around the story of a Parsi family who in the wake of Gujrat riots lost their 13-year-old son named Parzan. The story covers the incidents that took place before the riots broke out followed by genocide and post-genocide. The title Parzania refers to the peaceful conception of fairy tale world which was conceptualized by Parzan and shared by him to her sister. The film is a true story of a Parsi teenager named Azhar Mody who was separated from his mother as Parishad goons burnt down the Muslim populated area of Muslim Gulberg Housing Society in Ahmedabad. The massacre took place with the police complicity. The film received two National Awards for best direction and actress, and has been regarded as one of the detailed cinematic depictions of Muslim genocide on Indian cinema. The film is also acknowledged

for its sheer anger against the massacre, audacity, and honesty with which the events have been shot pre-, and post-riots.

In the following text have been deconstructed two scenes from the film and those have been analyzed using the tool of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Scene 1

[Board Convener: We are gathered here today to hear the testimonials of both the victims and law enforcement officials regarding the events that took place on 28th February 2002. It should be noted that this is not a criminal proceeding however the findings of this board will be presented to the government and recommendations on how to proceed with criminal prosecution will be made.]

Board member 1: Could you please describe to us the events you saw on February 28?

Male Muslim testimony: Yes. There was small group of people fighting outside our home.

Board member 1: A small group?

Male Muslim testimony: Yes. Muslims and Hindus were fighting [with] each other.

Board member 1: Was the police present?

Male Muslim testimony: Not at first. No.

Board member 2: And when did they arrive?

Male Muslim testimony: Not long after it started.

Board member 1: Thank you. You may take a seat.

Board member 3: Officer Shashtri, when you heard the violence erupting what orders were you given?

Officer Shashtri [Hindus Policeman]: We were ordered to fire anyone who did not cooperate.

Board member 3: And what did you personally do?

Officer Shashtri [Hindu Policeman]: I followed the orders and broke up the violence. What did you want me to do?

Board member 2: When you asked police for help, what did they do?

Female Muslim testimony 1: The police saved our lives along with Parishad workers. We would not be here if it weren't for them.

Another male Muslim testimony: I swear Sir. I swear. I witnessed the police firing into the crowd of attackers to stop the violence.

Parishad representative: I was there when our party worker, Parishad workers tried to make special provisions for the protection of Muslims. But unfortunately not everyone can be controlled. Godhra was a special act of terror and the communities were bound to react. But the Parishad worked and helped very much.

Female Muslim testimony 2: Police not only took us to the relief camp but/

Female Muslim testimony 3: /commissioner Panday himself addressed the angry crowds.

Hindu Policeman 2: NO THERE WERE NO CHARGES OF RAPE FILED WITHIN MY DISTRICT.

Scene 2

Board member: Chagan, could you describe to us the events that you witnessed on 28th February?

Chagan: Groups of Hindus were moving in various parts of our neighborhoods and they were carrying a lot of weapons like swords, fire bottles, and *trishuls*.

Board member: Were there any police officers present?

Chagan: Yes.

Board member: And what did they do in response to the violence?

Chagan: They said that we have no orders to help you.

Board member: Excuse me!

Chagan: To the Muslims. Not myself.

Board member: And what did you do?

Chagan: What could I do! It was a huge mob. And they were threatening to kill me. So I told them that I am Hindu and showed them the places where the Muslims lived and they killed them. I did this to save my own life.

Board member: Did you attack anyone?

Chagan: No. but it is the same thing. I told them where the Muslims were. I might as well have butchered them all by myself ((crying))

Board member: Did you try to stop them?

Chagan: How could I? There was no way. If interfered, the police would have fired at you. And the mob was there to kill you so I just stood there and watched the Muslims being raped, butchered in front of my own eyes. Just like the police did. I don't deserve to be here. I don't deserve to be alive. AND MORE THAN THESE FUCKING MESS ((pointing towards policemen))

Board member 2: Shashi, you were there during the events Chagan has spoken of. Would you be able to confirm what he said being true?

Shashi: Absolutely. Every word of it.

Board member 2: When you asked the police for help what they said to you?

Female Muslim testimony 1: We have no orders to help you.

Male Muslim testimony 1: We have no orders to help you.

Female Muslim testimony 2: We have no orders to help you.

Male Muslim testimony 2: We have no orders to help you.

Female Muslim testimony 1: We pleaded with the police officer for help. He showed us the newspaper of Godhra on it and said that's why. If you people hadn't done it, you would not face this.

Male Muslim testimony 3: We were called and told us [that] if you testify/

Male Muslim testimony 4: /they would kill our families. I said you already have.

Male Muslim testimony 5: The mosque was burning. And when I begged the police to call for help...

Male Muslim testimony 6: They laughed. And pushed me into the mob.

Asif: We were told help would come and there was no help. They sent a mob and stood there and laughed as we watched our loved ones getting butchered.

Hindu doctor: I had ten ambulances ready to go to the mansion because I personally received a call. The police blocked the ambulances and wouldn't allow us to help. One of the officers asked me aren't you a Hindu.

Board member 2: And what did you say?

Hindu doctor: I said yes I'm a Hindu but today I'm ashamed to call myself one.

Female Muslim testimony 2: I loved watching my daughter laugh. And then before my own eyes they did these horrible things to her. They pushed knives into her private parts and they laughed. THEY LAUGHED. YA ALLAH!

Male Muslim testimony 7: The Parishad showed up the day before to our house and says we have to dig four graves in a yard. The next day they showed up with four truckloads of dead bodies right to my house. Four truckloads.

Male Muslim testimony 8: They pushed hundreds of people in the well. They burned it with kerosene. And then set them on fire.

Male Muslim testimony 9: And what happened during the criminal pre-trial?

Male Muslim testimony 10: All civic men were acquitted.

Board member 3: And how did the acquittals come about?

Male Muslim testimony 11: The persecutor was a member of the ruling party. And also had been charged of eight accounts of murder himself.

Male Hindu testimony: As a resident of this area I can honestly say that the policemen did a fine job working absolutely around the clock to provide security to the people.

Board member 4: And who asked you to come here and testify today? Male Hindu testimony: The policemen from my area.

((Laughs))

Board member 4: Your name please?

Shenaz: Shenaz. Shehnaz Cyrus Peetawala.

Board member 4: Can you please describe the events that occurred on the day of 28th of February?

Shenaz: The police announced on the loud speakers that we were safe and everything was under control.

Board member 4: And?

Shenaz: As soon as the police left a huge mob broke into us.

Board member 4: How many?

Shehnaz: Five thousand to ten thousand people.

Parishad representative: What? Did you actually sit and count the people?

((Laughs))

Shehnaz: They were moving from all directions and it was impossible to go anywhere. We could not defend ourselves. We had no weapons. We were middle class families depending on the police to protect us and they did not do that.

Parishad representative: So now the police are involved?

Shehnaz: Yes. Sitting right here is Shankar a police officer and my husband's friend. He himself attacked us and tried to kill us just because we were not Hindus. There was madness everywhere. Door which my children could walk to without walking were shut on us. I begged and I screamed. I requested them to take the children and protect them but the doors remained closed.

Board member 4: Then what happened?

Shehnaz: I lost my son.

Board member 4: And how did you escape?

Shehnaz: We ran from there. No place was safe.

Board member 4: And this was occurring outside your society?

Shehnaz: It was all over the place, the whole city. Even the fields we went to hide were not safe. They were pulling out people and killing them. They stripped the women naked and cut them to pieces. Women were being raped of all ages, old, young even the little ones. They were cutting their breasts and throwing around. They didn't spare the unborn children.

Textual Analysis

In the following text words and phrases from above scenes have been textually analysed. The contextual meanings have also been explained in the light of the films' narrative and the evidence as reported in empirical and anecdotal evidence.

Words/phrases	Contextual meaning/s
Firaaq	
Bloody liars/pimps	Here, Sanjay calls Indian media liars for depicting the plight of Muslims post-Gujarat riots. The reporter in the backdrop is shown asserting that the region thickly populated by Muslims are primarily backward considering the spatial dynamics of the city and hence have not been reported by the media. The reporter is also shown saying that it is these areas where the security situations were the most critical in need of immediate State intervention. Lexicographically, a pimp is called a person who heads the institution of prostitution, controls prostitutes and arranges clients for them doing so with procuring a part of their income. Often used derogatorily for someone who is disliked, the term carries negative socio-cultural connotations for those who are called ones. Sanjay calls Indian media as pimps because he thinks that it was not as active when Hindus were killed by Muslims (as per his believed assumptions) in Godhra attack as it was now when Hindus have retaliated back.
...the whole world will give it to these Muslims	Sanjay is shown contended and takes pride in the way Muslim massacre was taking place at the hands of Hindu nationalist parties in the wake of Godhra incident. He universalizes the Hindu retaliation to Muslims by saying 'the whole world' and justifies their communal violence against Muslim minority.
Slaughter/butcher/swords	Lexicographically, the term refers to either killing of an animal essentially for food, or to the violent killing of a person, or the indiscriminate killings of a number of people in the form of a genocide, pogrom or massacre. In the context of Scene 1, the woman's voice over (with Arti on the screen front burning her wrist with the hot oil) is heard. Screamingly she pleads for help saying that 'they' will kill her, 'they' will butcher/slaughter her. The plural subject of 'they' reflects the Sangh Parivar, a group of Hindu nationalist organizations (explained in detail in the social analysis). Here, the voiceover is of a Muslim woman who can be heard pleading to Arti for her safety from a violent Hindu mob which is after her to violate her on communal and sexual grounds. Sword is a weapon longer in length to a dagger or a knife, used for cutting or shoving. In Scene 1 the woman is screaming 'swords' which highlights that one of the weapons used for killing was swords other than <i>trishuls</i> and rods (explained in detail in the social analysis).
...beat, stripped, raped, slaughtered and burnt...	'Beat, here refers the violent act of striking repeatedly with the intention of hurting or causing an injury to a person. 'Raped' refers to an act of non-consensual sexual activity which is carried out against a person by the one who uses physical force, or who coerces or who abuses authority. 'Stripped' refers to the act of stripping Muslim women off their clothes after which many of them were raped and then burnt to death by the Hindu nationalists of Sangh Parivar. The woman in this narrative recollects her memory of violence perpetuated against Muslim women. She also reflects on the structural and systematic as well as systemic fashion in which the violence was exercised.

...Kill them! We don't want Muslims in India... ...Go straight to Pakistan...	The first excerpt has been taken from a Muslim woman's recollection of violent incidents during Gujarat riots. The Sangh Parivar was exercising structural violence under the sponsorship of Modi's government to achieve the target of demolishing Muslims from Gujarat in particular and India in general. The second extract from Firaag is also reminiscent of the fact that was internalized in the political and public discourses which signifies that in Gujarat there are many mini-Pakistans dominated by the Muslim populations. Hence these areas should either be demolished or these Muslims be forced to leave India and go to Pakistan.
Big brother	By big brother, Anu refers to all the organizations of the Sangh Parivar and Bharatiya Janata Party which organized a state mediated genocide in Gujarat.
Fruit	In this context fruit can either refer to the body of a Muslim woman who was brutalized through gang-rape or the actual act of forced/coerced sexual intercourse carried out by Sanjay's friend against a Muslim woman. Cannily Sanjay asked his friend if he derived pleasure by having a fruit to which his friend replied that he was not the only one there, he shared it with others. The contextual meanings refer to the massive gang rapes of Muslim women (the details are in the social analysis).
Honor/Dishonor	In one of the scenes transcribed above, a Muslim woman survivor is shown saying that the Hindus dishonored her daughters by raping and killing them. To this, Sanjay's friend mocks over the notion of Indian Muslims' honor whereas he believed they never had one. Listening to this remark, Arti questions his own honor knowing the fact that he was involved in looting Muslim businesses and practicing sexual violence against Muslim woman.
Jihadi/ katar	A <i>jihadi</i> is referred to as a person who believes in the operationalization of an Islamic State which should have the power to govern Muslim community in its entirety. In the context of this film, in order to achieve this end, a <i>jihadi</i> may use violent conflicts as a means. In Scene 6, Jihadi and <i>katar</i> (fanatics) have been used together. Other terms such as extremists, zealots and militants are also common in this regard. Muslims, in the context of Gujarat, were portrayed as fanatics and <i>jihadis</i> who could do anything at any cost for the widespread of Islam and hence viewed as serious threats to the Hindutva ideology.
Parzania	
Parishad	Parishad here refers to the group of Hindu nationalist groups based on Hindutva Ideology. Vishwa Hindu Parishad is one of the right-wing political organisations whose workers were active in pre-meditating and conducting the violent attacks in predominantly Muslim areas of Gujarat. In the first scene from Parzania the Parishad representative has been filmed delivering dialogues that his party workers performed their duties of saving Muslims and controlling the violent attacks. He also brings in the Godhra attack thereby justifying the action-reaction discourse.
Every word of it	In each of the two selected scenes the excerpts show the testimonies of Hindus and Muslims. One Hindu woman named Shashi testifies by saying that details provided by Chagan were true. She corroborates his details of state apathy to the violence, police complicity, target killing of Muslims, and commoner Hindus' facilitation to the Parishad workers.

We have no orders to help you	Unlike in scene 1 (Parzania) where Muslim testimonies are shown fearful of detailing the actual events due to the threats posed against them by law enforcing agency/ies, in scene 2 the testimonies are shown fearless, provocative, aware, and assured. Four of the testimonies have been shown repeating the same phrase to the question asked by the scrutiny board on the police response to the Muslim pleads. It also alludes to the fact that a social control of police was strictly handled by state ministry and as per orders directed from there it was not functioning responsibly. Shehnaz's testimony also starts with the police role outlined by the Hindutva groups. In many of the incidents the police was either a silent spectator, or a smooth operator, or simply a facilitator.
THEY LAUGHED. YA ALLAH!	One of the testimonies while referring to the acts of violence against women recollects her memories about her daughter who died as a result of massacre. She says that before killing her daughter and burning her body, the Parishad workers induced knives into her private parts and derived pleasure out of this act by laughing loud over it. Nearly towards the end of her narrative, she says in a shaky voice "YA ALLAH!" to articulate her loss and anger. The details of the forms of violence have been analysed in the social analysis in the subsequent section.
Four truckloads	As part of arranging and launching attack, the Parishad workers showed up to the Muslim grave diggers to dig graves in Muslim graveyards on the evening of 27 th February 2002. Next day four truckloads reached with Muslim dead bodies being piled up over each other. This fact has been detailed by one of the male Muslim testimonies in scene 2 of Parzania. Firaq also starts by two men digging graves in a deserted place for the collective burial of Muslim dead bodies. While they were doing so, another truckload reached. These cinematic references can be corroborated by Rakesh Sharma's documentary titled "The Final Solution" in which two grave diggers were interviewed who shared that Muslim dead bodies outnumbered the burial space. Four female Muslim dead bodies reached with torn bellies and unborn babies still dangling by umbilical cord, and dead bodies were purposively burned to remove any mark of identity.
Trishuls	Trishul (trident) is a three edged weapon which has paramount religious signification in Hinduism. In Hindu religious traditions <i>trishul</i> is being held by Lord Shiva and Hindu goddesses. Tri in <i>trishuls</i> means three and <i>shul</i> means spear. Three spears are collated into one. The middle edged spear is longer than the other two prongs. Lord Shiva and Goddess are shown holding a <i>trishul</i> who kill demons with it. The Parishad gang has been filmed holding <i>trishuls</i> and attacking Muslim population signifying religious importance of genocide.

Social Analysis

The important themes which can be identified from the scenes as transcribed, translated, and textually explained in the preceding section are as follows.

Violence against Women and Children: One of the identified recurrent themes is the violence against women. The pattern followed in the killings highlight three important factors. Women bodies were the cite for infinite violence and hence subjected to innovative forms of torture (Srinivasan, et al. 2002). Second, their sexual and reproductive organs were systematically targeted (Khanna, 2008; Punjabi, 2012). Third, children (both born and unborn) were killed before their eyes. Rape was used as a strategy for collective dishonoring of Muslim community (Kumar, 2017). Based on the narratives of the legends in Hindu mythologies, a Muslim male body

is considered a constant threat for luring Hindu girls. This fear is the result of the socio-historical narratives built on the notions of rapes of Hindu women, Hindu queens, and their abductions by Muslims. The unrest, fear and anxiety of emasculation is being capitalized by the Sangh Parivar and translated into doing violent deeds. Therefore, violence for the Sangh Parivar, is the proof of masculinity which is manifested more by killing and raping women. In Gujarat riots men who raped came dressed in *khaki* shorts, saffron underwear, and *tilak* on forehead, signifying that rape for them was a religious duty (Sarkar, 2002). Muslim male body is also feared because of its capacity to produce more children and female bodies being more fertile than Hindu women. Out of the fear of outnumbering Hindu majority, strengthened community, and bright prospects of future growth, Muslim children were killed. Other aims for massive killings were dishonoring Muslim men and women, destroying Muslim female womb (unborn foetus were torn out) and vagina so as to symbolically destroy the reproduction and pleasure for Muslim men, punishing the fertile Muslim female and virile male bodies, destroying children to signify an end to Muslim population, and finally burning Muslim men, women, and children as a way to destroy the evidence and deny them an Islamic burial.³ The dark sexual obsession with Muslim bodies has been used as a trigger by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad whose leaflets widely circulated was signed by the state general secretary, Chinubhai Patel. The leaflets stated:

“We will cut them and their blood will flow like rivers. We will kill Muslims the way we destroyed Babri Mosque”.

This statement was followed by a poem (Sarkar, 2002):

The people of Baroda and Ahmedabad have gone berserk Narendra Modi you have fucked the mother of miyas⁴

*The volcano which was inactive for years has erupted
It has burnt the arse of miyas and made them dance nude*

We have untied the penises which were tied till now Without castor oil in the arse we have made them cry

Those who call religious war, violence, are all fuckers We have widened the tight vaginas of the bibis⁵

Now even the adivasis have realised what Hinduism is They have shot their arrow in the arse of mullahs

Wake up Hindus there are still miyas left alive around you Learn from Panwad village where their mother was fucked

She was fucked standing while kept shouting She enjoyed the uncircumcised penis

With a Hindu government the Hindu have to power to annihilate miyas

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/asa200022005en.pdf>

⁴ Used derogatorily for Muslim men in Gujarat.

⁵ Married Muslim women.

Kick them in the arse to drive them out of not only villages and cities but also the country

The literature produced post-Gujarat riots have shown that women have been killed in large numbers. In a Muslim populated area called Naroda Patiya, a mass grave was dug to bury 96 bodies on March 6, out of which 46 were women.⁶ Fact findings reports⁷ have highlighted words such as rape, gang rape, mass rape, stripping, insertion of objects into bodies, molestation, slitting of vaginas and wombs of pregnant women, parading of women without clothes, and burning them alive. The women have testified these forms of violence in a number of reports and scholarly materials.

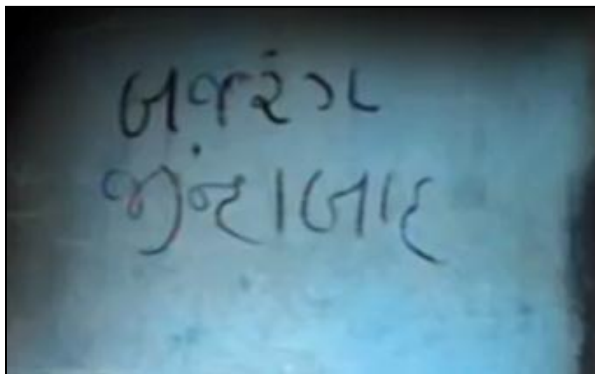
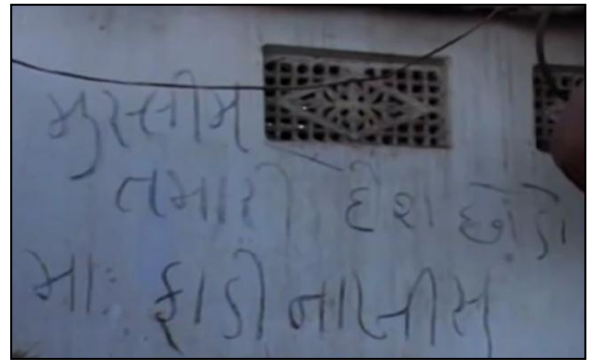
“...beat, stripped, raped, slaughtered and burnt...”, “THEY LAUGHED. YA ALLAH!”, “Fruit”, “stripped the women naked”, “cut them to pieces”, “Women were being raped of all ages, old, young even the little ones”, “...cutting their breasts throwing around”, and “didn’t spare the unborn children” are the dialogical instances from the above scenes which show the social reality of violence against women and children in Gujarat riots.

State’s Active Role in Gujarat Riots: Communal violence in India is attributable to the Hindu nationalism which is responsible for attacks not just against Muslim but also Christian minorities. The Hindu organizations responsible for Gujarat riots are Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bajrang Dal, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and BJP. All these organizations collectively form Sangh Parivar. RSS founded in 1925 mandates its agenda on the belief that in post-independence India has not been able to create a nation based solely on Hindu culture. Therefore, RSS propagates Hindu nationalism in militant forms viewing Islam and Christianity as alien to India. VHP which was founded in 1964 played the most active role in campaigning and publicizing for the construction of temple to the Hindu God Ram at the site of Babri Mosque which was located in the city of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. They claimed that the site was the birthplace of Lord Ram and the temple in his name was destroyed to build Babri Mosque. In response, the mosque was demolished by the cadres hired in the organizations working under the Sangh Parivar. Bajrang Dal, the militant youth wing of VHP, is a youth based organization which was designed to strengthen Ayodhya campaign. Bajrang Dal in alliance with other Hindutva organizations has been instrumental in violence against Christians in 1998 and also communal violence against Muslims in Gujarat riots. As a retaliatory response to Godhra incident, attacks had already begun by the afternoon of February 27 against Muslims on the command of VHP which had called for a statewide shut down (*bandh*). Sources from BJP had also validated that police were under the direct control of Narendra Modi who was the chief minister of Gujarat. State’s sponsorship in communal violence (which formally started in an organized way when the group of saffronized Hindu mobs attacked Muslim dominated areas of Gujarat) has been proven by the evidences collected from media, and human rights groups. Eyewitnesses have also corroborated the state-police complicity in directing violence not just in urban but also in rural areas. Police stations despite located in the proximity of the inflicted population stayed silent and as reported in most of the evidential reports spectators. Hindu mobs carried with them computer printouts of addresses of Muslim families, properties, and businesses. This information was obtained from the Ahmadabad municipal corporation.

⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/india0703/Gujarat.htm>

⁷ <https://www.sacw.net/Gujarat2002/GujCarnage.html>

In their murderous rampage the Hindu mobs killed Muslims, looted their properties, raped their women, and destroyed their shrines and mosques. The survivors have also reported the mobs carrying voter lists and businesses in advance for an easy identification of Muslims. The leaders of the mobs were well-connected and coordinated over the cell phones presenting preplanned and organized mob attacks. The police facilitated mobs in gun firing, looting, burning, and killing Muslims. The following stills extracted from Rakesh Sharma's documentary to explain state's sponsorship in Gujarat violence as well as Hindutva ideology.



Still on the top left: Muslims- learn arson from us

Still on top right: Muslims- quit the country or we'll fuck your mothers

Still on the bottom left: Long live Bajrang Dal

"Parishad", "Four truckloads", "Trishuls" and two courtroom scenes in the preceding stage of the analysis clearly state the precision with which Muslim dominated areas were attacked by the Hindu mobs.

State's response to Gujarat Riots: As a response to receiving severe backlash regarding apathetic stance to Gujarat riots, the Gujarat government, and in particular chief minister Narendra Modi responded that the riots were either justified or brought under the control. He has stated on various forums that upon realizing the gravity of the situation in the wake of Godhra incident and the subsequent *bandh* the state took precautionary measures. According to the Gujarat government's official report presented to the National Human Rights Commission, the response in Ahmedabad and Baroda were huge and crowds gathered were from middle and higher socio-economic classes due to which curfew could not be enforced. The report further claims that due to 'timely measures' major incidents were controlled within 72 hours. The report took a very cosmetic stance and oversimplified the violence and state responsibility. The report remains silent on the role of VHP and Bajrang Dal during riots. Gujarat state commission of inquiry was also set up to look into police and state complicity and administrative failure to control violence during Godhra and post-Godhra incidents. The inquiry was chaired by the retired high court judge and associated with the BJP government which raised serious concerns about validity, reliability, accountability and transparency of the

incidents among intelligentsia, activists, and inflicted population.

The two courtroom scenes especially the emotional outburst of Shehnaz when she was asked to have taken the responsibility of her child herself and her fiery response that it was the state's responsibility to have taken care of the inflicted rather than premeditating the violence and coopting with police detail the Gujarat state's direct involvement in the riots and in aggrandizing communal violence.

Rural Gujarat and Violence: Violence in Gujarat has been majorly an urban phenomenon. But in case of Gujarat riots 2002 violence spread to the rural areas where very few Muslim people resided. In villages, Muslim minorities constituted mainly of shopkeepers and moneylenders making them a relatively successfully economic elite. This social group was essentially from Khoja, Memon and Bohra castes that owned businesses and were also moneylenders. The peasants became indebted to the Muslim moneylenders. These Muslims were the mob's main targets. Jaffrelot (2003) states that more than 1200 villages in the districts of Mehsana, Sabarkantaha, Bharuch, Bhavnagar, and Vadodara were adversely affected. In Vadodara, in particular, army had to intervene on March 5. In the evacuation process followed by the army intervention 2500 Muslims and 22 villages were moved to refugee camps. "It was all over the place, the whole city. Even the fields we went to hide were not safe." is a testament to the fact that these riots penetrated areas which were never been affected before.

Gujarat as a Laboratory for Hindutva Ideology: Gujarat has turned into a political space for professing Hindu nationalism since the 1990s. The stronghold of Gujarat has been strengthened as a result BJP stayed in power for the longest time which has also reshaped the region's administration. In addition to police, the state machinery has been insinuated by Hindu nationalists. During Gujarat riots the rioters had access to documents that could only be ensured from the state administration. The Hindu mobs identified and torched a shop in Ahmedabad that was not given a Muslim name but had ownership of 10% of the capital which was owned by Muslim. The aggressors could not have identified such detailed information unless provided by the state administration. Summarily, power of Hindu nationalism controlled the state apparatus. Hence nationalist control is the most significant factor in explaining Gujarat riots. In addition to institutional control, the Hindutva ideology has also entrenched in the Gujarati society which has triggered a common Hindu man to practice violence against Muslims in the riots. Jaffrelot (2003) while referring to a survey exploring the reasons for the Gujarat riots explains that it is not because of state government, Hindu nationalists, or civil societies of Hindutva ideology but solely because of Muslim fundamentals which is explained in the following text.

"Big brother" in one of the scenes from *Firaaq* shows the imperial and militarized supremacy of Sangh Parivar and interests of the vested groups which can turn riot into a pogrom for their political gains. In the context of Gujarat the interest was to ignite communalization between Hindus and Muslims through riots and enforce Hindutva ideology. These actions were planned beforehand and implemented for March 2003 elections in which BJP won over Congress.

Politics of Networked Hate: Since 1990s the Sangh Parivar has been propagating negative image of the Muslims in the print and electronic media, and also in the revised school curriculum. Among the myths proliferated about Muslims were:

- After partition Muslims have found a separate country, Pakistan. Some Muslims have not migrated to Pakistan and are living in India but their loyalties are still with Pakistan which can be evident in India-Pakistan cricket match when they cheer out loud for Pakistan's victory.
- In our own country they have more religious freedom than Hindus. They are not ready to give us land for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The government of India has been unable to sensitize with us and rather prefer to send Muslims for Haj.
- Due to polygamy Muslims have four wives and have many children so their population will outnumber Hindu population.
- Their education centre is *madrassah* where they preach terrorism.
- Backwardness in India is due to Muslims. Their women wear *burqahs* which is a sign of backwardness as opposed to the modernity of the Hindu women.
- Muslims have been aggressors, rapists, and violators throughout the history.
- Muslims are always privileged and Hindus oppressed.

Discursive Analysis

Rahul Dholakia, the director of *Parzania*, decided to shoot a film on Gujarat riots out of the immense anger and dejection of what Muslim minorities had to suffer at the hands of Hindu nationalist groups. Dholakia is from Gujarat, and he bases his film on the story of his Parsi friend who lost his son during one of the many attacks on the Muslims residing in one of the Muslim dominated housing localities of Ahmedabad, the largest city of Gujarat. The film got released in the nine cities in 2007 but was banned in the director's home state, Gujarat. The theatre owners refused to screen the film as they feared that the controversial subject matter of the film may reignite communal tension between Hindus and Muslims. The film was approved for screening by the Indian censor board, and before the film's release, when the director sent three prints of the movie to Ahmedabad, the multiplex owners responded that they would screen only if the radical Hindu group, Bajrang Dal, allowed them to do so. The chairman of the Gujarat multiplex owners' association clearly stated that the film may hurt sentiments of the two communities and at a time when people were trying to forget and move on with their lives the film can cause communal disharmony. Dholakia's decision to shoot film on Gujarat riots is also driven by stoical stance of his own members of the closed and extended families who believed that the violence was justified and Muslims deserved to be taught the lesson. Another reason that clinched him to make this film was to campaign for the disappeared son of his friend. After being banned in Gujarat, Dholakia held private screenings of the movie in Gujarat.

Nandita Das, the director of *Firaaq*, shared in one of her interviews that making a film on Gujarat pogrom was a challenging process. Das shared that when the pogrom happened in Gujarat, she was shaken by the images of violence in the news channels and for the very first time in her life she watched the brutality against minorities in India in the name of carnage, genocide, and pogrom. She doesn't believe in calling the severe communal violence as riots as the state and police were part of staging the tension and reaping the benefits of it. The pogrom provoked Das to visit different educational organizations across India and deliver lectures on issues such as identity, the notion of the 'Other', feminism, and communalism. During the process of conversing on these issues with academics, activists, students and common people, she was amazed by the polarizing views. Instead of narrating the stories of lives affected by the pogrom individually to people she

chose to reach out to the larger audience by making a film. She believes that her film is a work of fiction based on the thousand true stories that she had collected from her personal interactions with the victims, and books, reports and newspaper articles that she had collected, read and dissected. She believes to have made a film on violence without having single scene of violence in it. The relentlessness throughout the film, she explains, is the result of the fact that the social context the film is based on is palpable. She also reasons the anthological format of the film with five stories interwoven into a linear narrative structure. She aimed to construct a perceptual and contextual reality of the pogrom as experienced by each one of the principal characters of the film. Each story ends on a different note. Some end on a rather optimistic note and some are left open-ended to signify the life with all its complexities and unpredictability. She also wanted to trigger the conversation on communalism which she believes exists along the axis of divides typified by class, gender and sexuality. After having briefly explained the directors' take on their respective films, the conversations generated through these films are discussed in the following texts. Both films are available online on YouTube and the following conversations have been lifted from the comments sections. The comments have been translated into English and subsequently analysed.

Conversation 1

Comment 1: Everybody is talking about Modi and riots and no one is talking about Godhra and the death of 58 people including kids who were burnt alive. Shame on your hypocrisy!

Response to comment 1: Check yourself. Just imagine what you will go through when someone kills your family members in front of your eyes. Hindus always take the lead in practicing violence to which Muslims react. And when they do they are tagged terrorists. So yes, you people are hypocrites.

Response to preceding comment: You Muslims are hypocrites, born terrorists and the whole world has accepted this fact... You Muslims play brothers with Hindus when you are in minority and butcher Hindus when in majority just like in Kashmir, Kerala and West Bengal. I appreciate Modi to fuck these anti-Hindu gangs and Muslims like Rohingyas from Hindustan

This conversation shows the contestation of ideas between Hindu and Muslim viewers of these two films which were uploaded on YouTube. The conversation was based on the absolutist notion of nationalism as existing in the political histories of India and Pakistan. The stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists in popular culture is also reflected in this regard. Based on the argument of terrorism, the violence against Muslims has been justified in this context. The references of Kashmir, Kerala, West Bengal, and Rohingyas have also been drawn in one of the responses which shows to explain that religious intolerance and hence violence against Muslims is also justified.

Conversation 2

Comment 2: Modi should be behind bars. It is request to all Hindus and Muslims not to fight please or take revenge because life for both is the same and the pain of being killed brutally is also the same.

Response to comment 2: Bastard police!!! ... India is not a civilized country.....with a barbaric

Hindu government.....barbaric politicians. It is said that India is the land of a Mother.....What lies!!!! Raping, torturing women, girls and mutilating them.....for the crime of some other Muslims and innocent Muslims have to pay the price.....barbaric Hindu government.....

Response to preceding comment: ... Oh really you *madrassahchap* Mujahideen asshole terrorists...Islam is a religion of terrorists and all Muslims are terrorists. It is time to fuck these anti-Hindu gang and Muslims like Rohingyas in Myanmar. We Hindus don't want secular India. Fuck these Muslim terrorists from India.

Response to preceding comment: ... Terrorism is strictly prohibited in Islam. Muslims who are terrorists are not Muslims.....you idiot!!!!

This conversation is more explanatory in terms of the open exposition of the forms of violence against Muslim women, the tagging of Hindu government as 'barbaric' and calling police who had coopted with the state in producing communal violence. One of the Hindu respondents propounded that India should no longer be the secular state on constitutional level. Again a reference to violence against Muslim Rohingyas of Myanmar has been drawn here. The point of justification, for this commenter, is that religious fundamentalism is the corner store of Islamic assurgency and that madrassa culture has strengthened *mujahideen* movement.

Conversation 3

Comment 3: No one cares of 59 Hindus who were brutally burned

Comment to preceding comment: 2000 Muslims were sacrificed by the Hindu extremists as a response to killing of 59 Hindus

Comment 4: Is this right for you to destroy temples in Bangladesh for one Babri mosque?

Comment 5: It is not justified to destroy temples in Bangladesh, nor is it justified to destruct Babri mosque. All religions have to be respected for their faith and belief.

Response to comment 5: Let us learn from the experience of Babri Mosque. You have killed many people in Pakistan and Bangladesh and destroyed many temples.

Response to the preceding comment: What do you mean by you people? We are not like you people. We believe that there is humanity first then religion. We are not like you all who kill thousands of innocent people without proof. You have mentioned Bangladesh and Pakistan. I cannot say anything about them here. In my own country people are like you who think killing innocent people instead of criminals is right what can I say to other.....change your thinking.

Comment 6: Tell me bro whose responsibility is it to punish the culprits? Isn't government responsible to punish those who were responsible for Godhra? Instead of punishing culprits, the government propagates riots and justifies the killings of other innocents. Asifa is raped by Hindus, so is it justified to kill other Hindus just because they share same religion. It cannot and never be justified to kill innocent people just because according to popular perception majority thinks it is done by some community. In the last just think who got benefitted from all these

mass murder of Hindus and Muslims.

This conversation is descriptive of the state-police complicity, the killing of *ramshevaks* in Godhra incident, the lack of empathy for the Godhra victims, the lack of logic for organising and structuring communal violence, and the destruction of temples in Pakistan and Bangladesh as a retaliation to the abolition of Babri Mosque.

Conversation 4

Comment 1: Heartbreaking movie!!! But it's just one-sided movie, in fact all the movies that are made on Gujarat 2002 are one sided. Till date there is no single movie on people who were burnt alive in Sabarmati express near Godhra junction, what about family of those who died in train? What about women/ kids who were burnt alive? Why always 2002 Gujarat riots one side of story? What about other side of the coin? Without a doubt ruling party and leaders were involved but why no one points fingers at those who burnt Sabarmati Express? Aren't the leaders culprit? More importantly, here people are abusing and fighting over religion? Aren't they making and following roadmap for their respective leaders? So there is no solution. This will continue whoever has power will have upper hand.

Response to preceding comment 1: As a response to the killing of a 18-20 Hindus 1000 Muslims have been killed at a stretch. And who knows that train killers were Muslims. It's just politics.

Response to preceding comment: It's not just 18-20 people, there were 2 compartments of Sabarmati Express. That is where the problem lies. Even a single human death can trigger riots. And even the whole world knows still some people do not accept that Sabarmati Express was burnt by Muslim group. The fact of the matter is that no one is clean on both sides. Whoever found an opportunity killed and looted people from other communities. And because Hindus outnumbered other side, it's called anti-Muslim riots.

Comment 2: Burning a train is wrong but inducing a knife in a girl's vagina, cutting breasts, and raping women of all ages! What kind of a revenge is this my friend? Just imagine that the minds behind the pogrom are running the country? WHY?

Comment 3: This movie has shown a partial story. It's a lopsided movie showing only one religion attacking other, whereas the reality is way different. Both the religions attacked one another and innocent lives on both sides were lost. Media played a significant role in keeping the mob provided with all sorts of information to go on instilling violence. It is such a disgrace that even today, in the era of artificial intelligence, gene-edited babies, we see people waging fights in the name of religion. All TV channels debate on religious related issues to boost their TRPs...

Comment 4: It is my heartiest request. Please remove the movie from the YouTube. The film may raise communal riots and people will feel hatred for Hindus even Muslims or one another... So please kindly remove this.

The conversation in addition to stating violence against women and exploitative role of media run by Hindutva ideologies also brings in the view that the story is one-sided made with a Muslim gaze and the fact that the films be removed from the YouTube as these can reignite

communal violence between the two communities.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of current research was to articulate the lived-in experiences of communal violence documented in empirical research and theory with the scenes and characters of two films on Gujarat Riots. For this purpose, CDA as the tool of analysis for conducting three types of analyses; Textual Social and Discursive was completed. The selection of scenes was based on the relevancy and relatability of characters, situations, and scenarios with the experiential realities of brute force, gender-based violence, politics of hatred, police complicity, and networked hatred. The analyses confirm with the existing scholarship in which transmittance of communal hatred against Muslims of Gujarat is not only projected but also justified and reasoned on the ethnic, religious, sexualized, and political grounds. Subjugation of Muslim men, women, and children through projecting sexual and physical violence is popularized in political manifestos, pamphlets, and nationalistic jingoism. The complicity of State in this violence is reflective of its duplicity in ensuring safeguarding of rights on one hand, and running its own apparatus through police to violate and kill.

Films in contemporary India are considered an instrumental vessel for generating public discourse in ways society functions, ideologies form, voice echoes, and collective consciousness generates. In contemporary India, concomitant with hyper-masculinization of body polity and systemic endurance of networked hatred against religious, sexual, linguistic, and gendered minorities, subversion of majoritarian hatred discourse is simultaneously occurring through decentralized mediums of expression, among which social media and films are significant contributions. This research by critically analyzing two films based on Gujarat riots articulates themes which resonate with empirical and theoretical literature on communal violence in contemporary India, religio-sexual violence against the woman of the powerless, premeditated and staged violence, and complicity of state in both premeditation and execution of communal violence. The textual analysis asserts the intra-textuality of discourse through filmic characters who communicate among themselves (people of same class directly or indirectly affected by communal violence) experiences of communal violence. Some characters speak of existentiality as Muslims positioned as threats and hence reprehensible to sexual and physical violence. The others speak as the spectators who silently observe and their complicity is grounded in this silence. The inter-textuality is more engaging when characters differently impacted by violence based on communal, religious, ethnic, and gender identities speak to each other; the conversations here yield more layered sub-discourses of violence as experienced by a Muslim woman who is speaking as a testimony to the state institutions of control (police and court), and violence as experienced by a male Muslim who confesses his identity as a Muslim man to a police officer at night. These frictional dialogues depict contemporaneous co-existence of both discourses; the violated and the violator. Both films speak of communal violence; *Parzania* is direct in its tonality, performance, and execution and *Firaaq* is implicit, indirect, and sub-liminal. But both share commonalities in themes of militarized patriarchal violence, political economy of communal conflict, and hyper-sexualization of male and female Muslim bodies. Therefore, the themes as discussed in social analyses bridge the textual articulation and empirical documentation to explain that themes as shown in these films are not fictional points in narratives rather documented evidences, and hence lived-in realities of those who staged this communal violence and who faced it. The discursive analysis is of units which are not fictional, rather comments made by those who watched these films, consumed the content, shaped their

thoughts, and eventually expressed on the comments section of YouTube. The conversational pieces analyzed under discursive analyses show the ideological contestations, networked hatred, and sexualized and gendered expletives to express both hate and dissent. Four theoretical standpoints were found to be relevant for this research. The analyses conform with Engineer (1984)'s macro factors, with narrative tracks, particularly in Firaag, showing that why proliferation of Muslim-owned businesses was considered a threat and why their businesses were systematically targeted. The micro features of politics of hate, predilection to communalized forms of violence, and brewing anger and hate amongst communities are also confirmed by the analyses of two films. The analyses by either directly mentioning or indirectly hinting at the operability of State institutions and majoritarian civil society organizations in complicity roles of communal violence confirmed with Varshney (2002)'s and Brass (2003)'s theories of communal violence and communalized riots. Lastly, the discursive analyses highlight the themes of transboundary and networked nature of hatred against the Muslim populace in contemporary India, in-line with Dutta and Pal (2024)'s research. The application of CDA aided in describing these themes starting from textuality of dialogical and fictional data to connecting the same with the evidentiary and socially-constructed realities of Muslims in Gujarat.

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Ethical Approval: The study is based on the application of discourse analytical technique on two feature films, which are uploaded on YouTube for public consumption and view. Obtaining formal ethical approvals was not necessary as the audiovisual data is publicly available online.

Data Availability: The data used in the study is from two films which are available online on YouTube.

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