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## INTERCOMMUNAL CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper will investigate the aftermath for victims following the cessation of violence. In the absence of a legal framework for peace and reconciliation, what occurs to the social relations among the communities? The prevalent inclination to seek safety in numbers results in a ghettoized existence; what implications can this new spatial arrangement provide for the pluralistic structure of Indian society? Is legal justice an adequate vehicle for addressing the issues arising from violence? We will examine the several peace approaches available to address the issue of collective violence.*



**KEYWORDS:** *Positive peace, negative peace, peace building, social healing, trauma, communal violence, spatial segregation.*

### INTRODUCTION :

The pursuit of peace has been a continuous endeavour throughout history. A review of historical records reveals a clear chronology of wars and conflicts, alongside concurrent efforts to seek a harmonious world. In 1959, peace studies emerged as a distinct discipline with the founding of the Peace Research Institute Oslo by Johan Galtung, a seminal figure in peace research. Peace studies examine all dimensions of conflictual situations, including physical, social, political, economic, and psychological aspects. (Keating & Knight, 2004). While national disputes may be readily addressed through a singular peace accord, the more significant problem lies in identifying strategies to manage identity-based conflicts. These conflicts encompassed emotional and psychological concerns among citizens residing in close vicinity to their adversaries, occupying the same geographical territory while entrenched in antagonistic interactions. To address intra-societal conflicts, peace studies created the concept of peacebuilding, which transcends peace-making and peacekeeping. Any form of ethnic, religious or communal violence inflicts wounds of all kinds that are physical, social and psychological in nature. In the absence of peace mechanism after the conflict we observe a divide between the religious communities, loss of trust, increased tendency of ghettoization, absence of shared spaces, social alienation of the communities, building up of prejudices, structural discrimination against one section and worsening plight of the survivors, with no heal and repair. In post conflict society it is essential to bridge the gap between the communities that might have erupted as a result of violence. Ironically in India the policies available to deal with post conflict survivors does not address the issue of reconciliation and social healing.

In our analysis of communal riots, we focus on understanding their origins, examining the roles of economy, politics, and religion in inciting violence and fostering animosity. We hardly discuss or contemplate the societal repercussions following the cessation of violence. We seldom return to see the existence of the survivors of such a horrific and inhumane massacre? Does the recollection of violence diminish, or does an unjust silence envelop the pain? Some contend that time heals, allowing individuals to forget and progress; yet, if this is the case, why do Sikhs still react vehemently to any irresponsible remarks on the 1984 pogrom after three decades? Following each riot or mass massacre, life appears to resume; nonetheless, the memories, anguish, and scars persist. Erasing memories that continually torment survivors is challenging. Without a genuine endeavour to resolve the sorrow, peace cannot be attained.

This paper will investigate the aftermath for victims following the cessation of violence. Without a formal framework for peace and reconciliation, what occurs to the social relations among the communities? The prevalent inclination to seek safety in numbers results in a ghettoized existence; what implications does this new environment pose for the pluralistic character of Indian society? Is legal justice an adequate vehicle for addressing the issues arising from violence? We will examine the several peace approaches available to address the issue of collective violence.

The study is segmented into three sections; the initial section examines the essence of communal violence and its potential psychological effects on the two communities, so underscoring the necessity for reconciliation and psychosocial healing in a post-conflict context. The second section seeks to analyse the role of ethnic politics and violence in the creation and appropriation of public places. It examines how the distinctions between "ours" and "theirs" are perpetually created and modified, and how socio-spatial processes are maintained or transformed, fostering a sense of bias and alienation across populations. The final section examines the peace models created by three significant theorists: Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach, and Adam Curle, and how these models can facilitate the building of enduring peace in post-conflict societies.

### **COMMUNAL VIOLENCE: TEARING APART OF THE SOCIAL FABRIC**

Indian towns have had severe riots, including those in Jabalpur in 1969, Aligarh in 1981, Meerut in 1982, Bhagalpur in 1989, Gujarat in 2002, Muzaffarnagar in 2013, and the most recent riots in Delhi in 2019. Communal riots between Hindus and Muslims are a persistent occurrence that has been analysed from multiple perspectives by scholars and intellectuals. The instrumentalist perspective regards communal violence as a political tactic that benefits the interests of political leaders. Communal feelings serve as a tool for economic and political leaders to safeguard their electoral or financial interests. Proponents of this method assert that political elites participate in the incitement and orchestration of violence. Through many methods such as delivering incendiary speeches, orchestrating religious processions, or distributing money and alcohol, these elites can effectively mobilize substantial crowds for extensive riots. (Jaffrelot, 1998). Engineer asserts that communal conflict emerges from the adept exploitation of the religious sentiments and cultural ethos of individuals by the elite, who want to fulfil their political, economic, and cultural ambitions by framing these objectives as representative of the entire society. (Engineer, 1989) Both (Brass, 2003) and (Wilkinson, 2004) advocate for a strong correlation between electoral processes and the incidence of violence. It is asserted that politicians exploit riots to fragment their electorate along communal divisions.

A secondary method, termed the ideological approach, interprets the prevalence of a communal ideology throughout society as a rationale for the emergence of communal violence. Chandra (1984) perceives riots as a vehement and toxic expression and outcome of communal ideology, while Jaffrelot (1996) contends that riots predominantly stem from a skewed perception of the other. The ideology referenced by both authors in India is commonly termed communalism, which denotes the belief that individuals sharing specific cultural characteristics (such as caste or religion) possess collective (political) interests that must be delineated in opposition to those lacking these attributes.

Riots transpire, resulting in fatalities and property destruction. As long as media attention persists, the anguish of the killings remains in public consciousness. The media's attention eventually

shifts away from the site of the incident, causing it to fade from public memory. What occurs to the victim's psyche? Does the incident dissipate from their recollection in a comparable manner? In what manner do the survivors of violence cope with the trauma of loss and recollection?

The study of collective violence in India encompasses three components. (i) access to criminal justice for victims of violence; (ii) accountability of public officials implicated in violence; and (iii) access to compensation and rehabilitation for survivors of violence. Previous experience indicates that most complaints filed following communal violence do not progress significantly inside the criminal justice system. The majority of cases are dismissed due to insufficient evidence to charge the accused. In the wake of a massacre, the state's customary approach has been to establish a judicial commission of inquiry led by a retired judge. The formal measures implemented post-violence are essential yet insufficient to mend the injuries or ensure enduring peace. Prior to reaching this conclusion, it is essential to examine the aftermath of the violence, the process by which communities return to their quotidian existence, and the characteristics of this normalcy.

Reychler and Paffenholz (2001) propose that all forms of violence have enduring effects on individuals; while physical or direct violence inflicts bodily harm and injury, psychological violence disseminates hatred, fear, and results in mental trauma. The psychological impact of violence can inflict profound damage, and without any healing intervention, the anguish and recollection of such abuse persist indefinitely. The traumatic recollection creates enduring rifts in the psyche of the victims, who struggle to lead a regular existence. Their confidence has eroded, their trust has dissipated; the sole recourse for individuals lies within the court system. However, as is evident, perpetrators of mass violence are seldom prosecuted, exacerbating the trauma and suffering endured by the victims. In such circumstances, it is imperative that, following the conflict, substantial initiatives are implemented to confront the traumatic history of the victims

In contexts of prolonged war, individuals inside local communities frequently articulate a shared sentiment regarding the national peace process by a succinct remark: 'Nobody listens to us.' We lack a voice. Numerous victims of violence endure a profound sense of powerlessness, an overwhelming and deeply entrenched sentiment that they lack agency in the response mechanisms and decisions impacting their lives or the surrounding events, despite official representations suggesting these processes are executed on their behalf. Their main reference point stems from the sensation of exclusion, engendering an experience that reinforces a deep sense of alienation and detachment. They are discussed but not engaged with, and when engagement occurs, they frequently convey that the conversation lacked significance due to its failure to result in anticipated change, especially in political procedures claimed to bring peace to a troubled nation and its local communities. (Lederach J & Lederach A, 2010)

The metaphor of voice is associated with concepts such as inclusion, power, and significance. When an individual states, 'We do not have a voice' or 'We want a voice', the underlying metaphor indicates a desire for inclusive and empowering environments characterized by recognition, respectful dialogue, substantive conversation, and influence over decisions that impact their lives. (Lederach J & Lederach A, 2010) The victims of violence experience a severe sense of helplessness and perceive a lack of control over the decisions made on their behalf. They are abandoned and ensnared in a circumstance entirely beyond their control. For comprehensive peace to be achieved, it is essential to acknowledge, deconstruct, and replace the repressive social, economic, and political systems that foster socioeconomic disparity and injustice, beyond merely addressing direct violence. (Lederach J & Lederach A, 2010).

The untreated trauma of the victims fosters prolonged resentment and anguish. Consequently, for a harmonious community, it is essential to reconcile the grievances of past memories. (Rosenberg, 2005). He suggests that empathy is where the healing comes from. In such painful atmosphere the minimum that one can do is to listen to the story of pain. He has used the term empathy for healing the wounds, where one is able to share another person's feeling as if they were their own. If you empathize with someone you understand their situation, problems and feelings (Rosenberg, 2005).

Subsequently, with the systematic neglect and deprivation of livelihood, coupled with the absence of economic and social security, the existence of the survivors deteriorates significantly. The progression of communal violence commences with pre-violence biases and preconceptions, followed by acts of violence, subsequent neglect, isolation, ghettoization, and ultimately results in the emotional and physical dividing of the national community. Collective violence invariably divides communities. The subsequent part will forecast how, from the 1990s onward, communal violence has escalated, exacerbating 'hate the other' feelings and resulting in spatial isolation and community division.

### **ALIENATION AND EXCLUSION: CREATION OF NEW SPACES**

Ethnic politics and violence in India, driven by religion, caste, class, and region, are reshaping and generating new spatial configurations; this phenomenon is more pronounced in urban centres than in rural areas, where traditional spatial divisions persist based on caste and religion. Segregation and order are established by the utilization of religious beliefs, cultural classifications, regional identities, and historical contexts, hence constructing narratives using new political strategies. The subconscious apprehension of one another moulds the environment. (Shaban 2012). The examination of spatial dynamics is crucial for comprehending social relations and the essence of peace within society. Public spaces, such as parks, roadways, coffee cafes, and mass media, fulfill significant social roles, and their varied utilization reflects the social cohesion or polarization within a society. Inclusiveness in public areas shapes social organization and is significant as it serves as the framework in which individuals are socialized and formulate their worldview or restrict their social interactions. As per Habermas (2004), the form of social integration is represented in the construction of public space.

The most detrimental consequence of communal violence has been the spatial division of communities, hence exacerbating the psychological gap among individuals. The most significant threat posed by this type of place to the pluralistic nature of society. The circumstances within the ghettos reinforce the notion of reconciliation for harmonious living in the communal environment; nonetheless, without the relinquishment of fear, resentment, and animosity, genuine peace cannot be achieved. (Zakaria, 1995) In his work *Glimpses of World History*, Jawaharlal Nehru stated that the physical chains that bind our bodies are detrimental, but the invisible chains that constrain our thoughts are far more severe. They are self-created, and although we frequently remain unaware of them, they exert a formidable influence over us.

Comprehending how individuals create spaces aids in grasping how spaces influence individuals, foster specific social ties, and restrict the manifestation of alternative social practices. Historically entrenched and serving as tangible substitutes, metaphorical locations shape social environments. The socio-spatial constructs are significant since they foster a sense of territoriality and community. They influence our daily interactions and decision-making processes. They inform us of our identity and our affiliations. In other words, it dictates whom we maintain distance from in our daily interactions, despite their actual proximity in the neighbourhood. (Shaban, 2012).

The riots evidently exacerbated the schism between the two populations and initiated a trend of increased ghettoization. A ghetto is primarily defined as a disadvantaged area of a city predominantly occupied by individuals of the same ethnicity, religion, or social background, typically as a result of prejudice. Ghettos signify restrictions, discrimination, and a deprivation of freedom of movement. It also illustrates the vulnerability of its populace, who congregate for safety and security.<sup>1</sup>

While conflict and marginalization are significant issues, marginalization during peacetime is far more severe. It occurs quite ordinarily and is not seen as an anomaly. Not all marginalization manifests as physical violence; rather, societal polarization is far more detrimental, becoming increasingly apparent as the violence subsides. Within a ghetto, individuals of the same religion inhabit the same geographic area, sharing same faith, culture, and beliefs. This uniformity ensures survival among conflict. The ghetto illustrates the absence of trust that a community or group harbours towards the state and particularly among co-religionists. The daily existence within the ghettos is unimaginable. This impoverished existence encompasses individuals who reside here out of necessity and those who do so for the security it provides. Within these places, two concepts are developing concurrently.

During riots, overt violence prevails; nevertheless, the more insidious violence and injustice encountered during peacetime is even more egregious.

Within the ghetto, individuals of similar religious affiliations are compelled to coexist due to coercion or fear; yet, for those who have previously resided in a diverse community, such living arrangements pose a danger to the foundations of a harmonious society. The spatial divide is a critical factor in assessing the degree of trust and harmony within any society. It is essential to introduce the concept of peaceful coexistence and the sharing of places for enduring societal peace. In his work on reconciliation and peace, Rigby delineates three categories of co-existence: *surface co-existence*, *shallow co-existence*, and *profound co-existence*. The characteristics of spatial sharing following violence are typically superficial or shallow. The essence of deep co-existence necessitates that individuals from diverse religions and groups coexist together, devoid of any sense of threat, thereby enriching daily interactions with complexity and diversity. The evident spatial difference illustrates a significant erosion of trust, accompanied by considerable dread and distrust towards the other group; under such conditions, the nature of coexistence tends to be superficial and fragile. (Rigby, 2003) .

Social rehabilitation following social hardship necessitates efforts to establish communities or neighbourhoods. The intercommunal bonds fractured after violence require restorative efforts, wherein the contributions of governmental entities, judicial systems, civil society, neighbourhood families, and local communities are essential. Constructive social change seeks to transform human relationships, achievable solely through the collective efforts of the conflicting community. (Chatterji & Mehta, 2007). Individuals must employ social spaces as a medium to close the relational divide. Real peace in society is unattainable without a collective endeavor to mend relationships via constructive, transformative, and sustained interactions. Positive inter-community connections are essential for harmonious coexistence. The concept of peace, as articulated by Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach, and Adam Curle, will be examined in the subsequent section.

### IN SEARCH OF PEACE: THE WAY AHEAD

Scholars such as Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach, and Adam Curle propose that their concepts of peace can be beneficial in addressing intra-state conflict. These intellectuals proposed concepts for the harmonious coexistence of a pluralistic society. Johan Galtung conducted pioneering research in the field of peace studies. Galtung proposed that conflict can be conceptualized as a triangle including contradiction (C), attitude (A), and behavior (B). The contradiction pertains to the fundamental conflict scenario, encompassing the actual or perceived 'incompatibility of objectives' between the parties involved in the dispute. Attitude encompasses the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of one another and of themselves. These can be either good or negative; nevertheless, in violent disputes, sides typically cultivate derogatory preconceptions of one another, with attitudes frequently shaped by emotions such as fear, rage, resentment, and hatred. Behaviour constitutes the third component. (Charles & Galtung, 2007). It may entail collaboration or compulsion, actions indicating reconciliation or antagonism. Violent conflict behaviour is defined by intimidation, coercion, and destructive assaults (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2011). To achieve conflict resolution and enduring peace, all three components of conflict must be altered, necessitating a shift in attitude, a reduction in conflict behaviour, and a transformation of the connections or opposing interests central to the conflict structure. (Charles & Galtung, 2007).

Galtung, in his analysis of peacebuilding, proposed two separate concepts: positive peace and negative peace. Positive peace is a state characterized by the absence of direct violence, underpinned by the concepts of justice, equity, and liberty, particularly in post-conflict communities at the intrastate level. (Galtung, 2007) In his analysis of peacebuilding, he proposed two separate concepts: positive peace and negative peace. Positive peace is a state characterized by the absence of direct violence, underpinned by the concepts of justice, equity, and liberty, particularly in post-conflict communities at the intrastate level. proposes three Rs to be addressed following an episode of violence: reconstruction of physical, social, and cultural infrastructure; rehabilitation of individuals; reconciliation of relationships; and ultimately, resolution of conflict. Only a limited number of societies have attained

positive peace. The essence of peace in post-conflict civilizations is negative, characterized by a conspicuous lack of war and widespread violence within a culture, society, or nation-state, yet simultaneously marked by pervasive injustice, inequity, and personal discontent and dissatisfaction. According to Galtung's definition of peace, each peacebuilding initiative must address direct, structural, and cultural issues to achieve concord. Eschewing any form of conflict or violence will result in a limited perspective on peace.

John Paul Lederach's framework for conflict resolution and transformation has garnered significant attention, particularly due to its focus on grassroots processes and the proposition that the intermediate level can effectively connect the other two tiers. He posits: 'my fundamental assertion is that no single level can independently achieve and maintain peace.' It is essential to acknowledge the interconnectedness of individuals and actions throughout every tier of the hierarchy. (Lederach, 1999). In summary, a significant portion of the endeavours centers around high-ranking leaders and the overarching political activities in which they participate. Lederach (2003) posits that the official processes at the highest level are insufficient in isolation, advocating instead for an organic approach that conceptualizes peacebuilding as a network of interrelated activities and individuals spanning all three levels, rather than adhering to a hierarchical model. 'The paramount element in fostering an organic viewpoint lies in cultivating an authentic sense of engagement, accountability, and stewardship throughout a diverse array of individuals within the community.'(Lederach, 1999)

Adam Curle elucidates the process by which one transitions from a state of unrest to one of tranquillity. He elaborates on the concept of peace, emphasizing the significance of addressing unequal relationships. He asserts that true peace cannot be achieved unless the dynamics between the involved parties transform into harmonious ones. He suggested that we comprehend the journey towards peace by examining the roles that arise in a conventional evolution of conflict, delineated into four principal stages. The initial step involves recognizing the exploitation, followed by a confrontation that ensures the issue emerges into the open. This is succeeded by negotiation, culminating in a heightened sense of justice. (Curle, 1971 ). The function of the educator in this context is focused on dispelling ignorance and enhancing understanding regarding the nature of unequal relationships, as well as the imperative to confront and rectify inequity, particularly from the perspective of those who endure the injustices. Confrontation elucidates the underlying conflict. It has come to light. Negotiation fundamentally entails an acknowledgment among the involved parties that neither can unilaterally enforce their desires nor dismiss the opposing side. Instead, it necessitates a collaborative effort to realize their respective objectives. Effective negotiations and mediation result in a reconfiguration of the relationship that addresses the essential substantive and procedural issues pertinent to the parties involved. This is what is referred to as "enhanced justice" or "more harmonious relations."(Curle,1972)."

The process of peace building in a post-conflict context is inherently long-term, as it necessitates an examination of intra-level conflicts that significantly undermine inter-community relations among violent factions. Thus, the exploration of peace building emerges as a pivotal focus of our research endeavors. Often after every violence there is straining of relation between the parties that were in conflict at the first place. Consequently, merely ceasing violence at the intra level may not guarantee enduring peace. It is imperative to address the conflict initially and foster unity among the communities, enabling them to relinquish their grievances and cultivate an environment conducive to harmonious co-existence.

## CONCLUSION

Intra-state conflicts often stem from historical grievances or identity disputes. Consequently, various peace theories propose that following the cessation of direct violence, it is imperative to undertake measures aimed at resolving these conflicts and reconciling the differences between the opposing groups. The evolution and reconstruction of relationships necessitate the cultivation of novel strategies and methodologies for establishing environments where diverse groups can interact meaningfully. In certain instances, the processes of socialization must initially occur within distinct groups prior to the endeavor of uniting previously opposing factions. It is essential to implement

initiatives that explicitly promote contact and dialogue among members of conflicting groups. Such efforts are vital for dismantling social barriers, addressing mistrust, and fostering a constructive environment for peace building.

Following any communal, ethnic, or religious riots, it becomes imperative to address the physical reconstruction and rehabilitation of the victims, thereby meeting their immediate needs. Once this foundational step is accomplished, the subsequent focus should shift towards fostering harmonious relations between the conflicting groups. In the framework proposed by Johan Galtung and Lederach, the notion of reconciliation emerges as a pivotal element in the endeavour of peacebuilding within post-conflict societies. Typically, following each conflict, we observe a state of negative peace, characterized by a cessation of direct violence, yet the underlying resolution of the conflict remains unaddressed. To attain enduring tranquillity, it is essential to transcend the condition of mere absence of conflict and strive towards the realization of a more profound and constructive harmony. Unless the three Rs articulated by Galtung are embraced, the realization of peace will continue to elude us. Violence has the potential to reemerge at any moment, leaving society in a state of division. The endeavour of peace building is fundamental to the overarching objective of establishing enduring peace, as it focuses on conflict resolution, the reconciliation of relationships, and the rehabilitation of those affected by violence. Furthermore, if accomplished, it guarantees that the opposing factions do not regress into a state of warfare once more. To achieve enduring peace, it is essential that the dynamics between the conflicting groups transition from a state of discord to one of harmony.

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International Report, March 2007, .3.