

# Social and economic boycott imposed on Muslim survivors of the Gujarat 2002 pogrom

This report explores the forms and consequences of social boycott imposed on Muslim survivors of the 2002 Gujarat pogrom. Given that there currently exists no formal documentation of the systematic social and economic boycott that the survivors continue to face today (7 years after the carnage in 2002), this report attempts to bring to the forefront the voices and experiences of both survivors and activists, who stand courageously amidst this climate of covert violence that exists today. Using principles of critical ethnography, it draws from interviews with Nyaypathiks of the Nyayagraha campaign, and survivor families, both in villages and in relief colonies, to highlight ways in which the effects of the pogrom continue to affect the social and economic lives of survivors.



Primary researchers: Jaswanthbhai and Mushtaq Ali bhai (Anand district), Jayanthibhai, Usmanbhai and Khaledaben (Sabarkantha district) and Najirbhai and Sharifbhai (Ahmedabad district)

Report authored by Priya Raghav and Andrea Valverde

## Background

Some of the most brutal mass crimes in recent history are those of collective vengeance against an entire community for the real or imagined crimes of a few of its members. The same kind of logic was used to condone the merciless bloodletting that mortally wounded Gujarat three years ago. It was alleged that a group of Muslims set on fire a train compartment at Godhra station, resulting in the tragic deaths of 58 passengers, many of them women and children. Chief Minister Modi described the gruesome incident as a pre-planned ‘one sided collective terrorist attack by one community....’ Three years on, the sense of unease, trauma and fear looms large. More than a hundred Muslims youths remain confined even today behind bars, without either bail or hope, charged under the draconian provisions of POTA with the burning of the S-6 compartment at Godhra. The question is how can an entire community be held accountable for individual acts? In the face of the colossal degree of state impunity, subversion and open hostility and extensive bias in the judiciary, the resistance by human rights groups and many who have never engaged in legal justice work in the past but feel impelled to now join the fight for these, has been utterly remarkable - and in the long history of communal violence in India, unprecedented.

NYAYA-AGARHA is attempting to complement and support these major efforts for justice and eventual reconciliation. Despite the very important wider impact of the legal efforts focused on a few selected cases, in a practical sense, an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the victims are still struggling on their own to fight their legal cases. This would be a formidable human rights challenge even in more normal circumstances, and it is compounded further by the atmosphere and intimidation, in which large numbers of people are being coerced to concede to humiliating compromises of agreeing to withhold or even reverse evidence that can bring the guilty to book. The nyaya pathiks try to help the survivors to rise above the hate and fear that has bitterly divided their communities, and almost broken their spirits. They work without compromise, hate or fear; with steadfast commitment to justice, and with compassionate and unfailing support for the survivors and witnesses.

## Methodology

The method for this qualitative research project emerged out of a very organic process. Out of the 10 weeks we spent in Gujarat, it took us the first four weeks to determine which project we were going to work on. In hindsight however, these introductory weeks gave us an opportunity to become better acquainted with the Nyayagraha campaign and some of the subjects of our study, and observe them in their fieldwork. The study on the social and economic boycott of Muslim survivor families of the 2002 carnage emerged out of discussions with the director of the organization, Harsh Mander. Given that there currently exists no formal documentation of the systematic social and economic boycott that the survivors continue to face today (7 years after the carnage in 2002), we present this report as a first and humble attempt to bring to the forefront the voices and experiences of both survivors and activists, who stand courageously amidst this climate of covert violence that exists today. We acknowledge and hope that this is just the beginning of a more elaborate and continuous study.

We modeled this study using principles of critical ethnography. As Madison notes, this is a way of interviewing that is embedded in the ethical responsibilities of a researcher, that challenges the status quo and brings to light the underlying operations of power and control (2005, p. 5). This is, in essence, as much about the *what* as it is about the *how* of research. Incidentally, this philosophy is synonymous with that of the Nyayagraha campaign, which is also modeled on ethical values.

The interviewees for this study have been selected from two pools: The Nyaypathiks and survivor families. The former, Nyaypathiks or justice workers, drive the Nyayagraha campaign. They are drawn from the affected communities, often themselves survivors, and are working class women and men of diverse religions and castes who are passionate about securing justice for survivors. By inviting them to participate in this study, we recognize the immense time and energy they have spent working with the survivors and the depth and the breadth of their interactions with them, something that would be impossible for us to achieve in ten weeks. Thus, in considering the Nyaypathiks as the primary researchers, we wanted to not only understand their knowledge around social and economic boycott, but also the struggles and successes in this campaign that had brought them this far. Sampling from this pool was purely based on availability. With the tight and often unpredictable schedules of Nyaypathiks, we were only able to conduct in-depth interviews with seven Nyaypathiks spread across the districts of Ahmedabad,

Anand and Sabarkantha. In most cases, these were the Nyaypathiks that accompanied us to meet with and interview survivor families.

Our interviews with the Nyaypathiks were supplemented with seven direct interviews with survivor families across the same three districts mentioned above. Survivor families were selected by the Nyaypathiks, with the criterion that they have already filed a legal case in the local state courts to testify against the perpetrators of the massacres - thus indicating that they would be more willing than others to talk about their painful story. We were accompanied by at least one Nyaypathik on our visits to the residence of the survivor families. With us entering the scene as outsiders, this helped to establish some level of trust in the interviewees and made way for an open and honest interview. Nyaypathiks also served an important role in translation from Gujarati to Hindi, where survivors only spoke Gujarati. An additional level of translation from Hindi to English was done by Priya for Andrea.

In addition to interviews with Muslim survivor families and the Nyaypathiks, two unanticipated interviews were conducted. One such interview was with a Hindu village resident who had rescued a Muslim neighbor during the carnage, and the other was with a public prosecutor of the Patel caste, in the district court of Anand, who was representing a Muslim survivor family that had filed a case against the accused Hindu villagers. Both interviews served to illuminate further certain aspects of the social and economic boycott present in Gujarat.

In preparation for this project, two detailed research instruments were prepared, one for survivor families and another for the Nyaypathiks. The former consisted of personal demographic data and open-ended questions including the conditions of their community, what made them return to their original villages or move away to relief colonies, the type of social and economic boycott they face and its impact on them and their children. A similar questionnaire, designed for a previous attempt at this study (that was unsuccessful) was consulted in preparation of the instrument for this study. For the Nyaypathiks, a similar instrument was prepared, which involved questions around their experiences and knowledge of the ground and their successes and struggles in their lives and in the campaign. This served to highlight the work they do with the survivors and the connection they have to the oppression experienced by the survivors of the 2002 carnage. Both instruments were translated into Hindi by Priya, with the help of Johanna (documentation-in-charge, Ahmedabad) and Mushtaq, Nyaypathik and Nyayagraha's coordinator of the Anand district.

A typical interview started with us explaining the purpose of the study and the ethical considerations to the interviewees. We emphasized that the interview was entirely voluntary and that they could choose not to answer any question if they so wished. Their identities would be kept confidential and a copy of the report will be given to them when completed. Once the interviewees verbally consented, we collected some personal demographic information and asked them detailed questions as phrased in our instrument. Interviews with survivor families were particularly unique and very rich, due to the collective nature of the interviews. Though the main interviewee was one person, friends and family often gathered around and chipped in with their input to certain questions throughout the interview. Interviews with both Nyaypathiks and survivor families lasted anywhere between two to four hours. In this sense, we were able to interview more people than we had anticipated. Due to limited resources, interviews were not recorded. Instead, detailed notes of their responses were taken using a laptop, which was supplemented with our observation of participants and the dynamic of conversations.

Finally, in the writing of this report, every attempt has been made to understand the perspectives of our interviewees through our own subjective filters as critical researchers and activists. In this report, together with the voices of our interviewees, we attempt to bring in our own by highlighting operations of power and control that challenge the status quo and by taking a clear stand against it. Finally, information is honestly presented and all ethical considerations have been followed in the process of compiling this report. Names of survivors that were interviewed have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity.

## **Description of subjects**

### Survivor families

Our survivor interviewees come from different age groups, castes and cultural backgrounds, but have something in common: their humanity and a prevailing sense of justice. Many are astute analysts of their stories and the stories of loved ones around them. Their humble, warm and hospitable personalities created a very welcoming atmosphere for us. We extend our deep gratitude to the families and neighboring friends and relatives who participated in the interviews. Having witnessed and lived through perhaps the worst atrocities in the world, their strength and courage to re-live the experiences through their narration is much applauded.

Of the seven interviews we conducted with Muslim survivor families, three primary interviewees were female and four were male and they were all between 38 and 70 years of age. Coming from a variety of castes including Vhora, Sheikh, Makhrani, Ganchi and Mansuri (in order of their positions in the hierarchy, most powerful to least) our interviewee families came from diverse cultures. All families spoke Gujarati, while some also spoke Hindi. The main interviewees' educational levels fell within the range of 0-10<sup>th</sup> grade. Most families currently work in or own a cabin (a shop selling groceries and other immediate needs), while others are vehicle drivers (auto-rickshaw or taxi). Most interviewees were forced to change jobs after 2002 due to the economic boycott they faced.

Of all families interviewed, three were back in their original villages; three were in relief colonies built for families affected by the 2002 riots and one in a general residential colony. Those who decided to stay in or return to their villages had lived there almost their whole lives, with one interviewee being the seventh generation of their family in their village. Their strong ties to their hometowns influenced their decision to stay. However, those who decided to leave also had lived in their villages for most of their lives. Reasons for leaving included the destruction of all their property and social relations and explicit threats from the Hindu community in the village. "What is left for us to go back to?" was a common sentiment expressed by those who left. Halemaben, a resident in a relief colony of the Sabarkantha district was distraught by the fact that the strong social relations they had with their Hindu neighbors through their lifetime, and even dating back to a generation before them were severed "in ten minutes." A neighbor of Asgharbai, a resident of a relief colony in the Anand district, who was an eyewitness to some crimes, mentioned that when he had returned to his village after the carnage, he received threats of being burned alive from VHP members if he stayed. Such were the reasons that drove many survivors to leave a good life of comfort in villages and into relief colonies in poor conditions.

In 2008, six years after the carnage, they continue to live oppressed lives, due to their experience of increasing social and economic boycott. Most survivors also concurred that their lives are worse-off today in comparison to their lives before 2002, but better-off in comparison to their situation just after 2002. This is likely due to more stability in their lives.

### Nyaypathiks

Like our survivor interviewees, our Nyaypathiks also represent a diverse population across caste, religion, age group and gender. Regardless of their experience and background, they share a crucial aspect – their passion for justice and peace through grassroots activism and organizing. This passion shone through their interactions with us and the survivors; their enthusiasm in assisting us with this study, in their willingness to interpret from Gujarati to Hindi and their flexibility with our needs. In this report we honor them as the primary researchers for this study, as we learnt much through their panoramic understanding of the situation post-2002.

Of the seven Nyaypathiks that we interviewed, five are Muslims and two are Dalits (of which one identified as Hindu and the other did not). With the exception of one woman, the rest are men. While some were directly affected by the 2002 carnage, others were impacted indirectly. As all Nyaypathiks have experienced the oppression associated with a subordinate identity, be it through caste, religion or gender, they are able to clearly relate to the oppression of Muslim survivors by a fundamentalist Hindu state, and have a sharp understanding of the complexities involved, including a detailed analysis of the power imbalance inherent in the problem.

In this report, we recognize and deeply thank Jaswanthbhai and Mushtaq Ali bhai of the Anand district, Jayanthibhai, Usmanbhai and Khaledaben of the Sabarkantha district and Najirbhai and Sharifbhai of the Ahmedabad district for their invaluable time and contribution to this report.

## Forms of social boycott

One of the biggest repercussions of the 2002 carnage is the social and economic boycott that continues today, meted out to the Muslim survivors. The type of boycott that is inflicted on survivors varies and may depend on the environment. This section summarizes the types of social boycott experienced by survivor families, as gathered from our interviews with Nyaypathiks, some survivor families and a Patel public prosecutor.

### Villages

One of the biggest indications of social boycott in villages is the destruction of social relations among Hindu and Muslim families. Sameer kaka, who chose to return to his village of origin in the district of Anand, stated that all Muslim families in the village face boycott from the accused, their families, extended families and friends. Sameer kaka mentioned that prior to 2002, he was a very respected in the village and was seen as a decision maker. However, “Now all the respect is gone”. They had eighty Hindu family friends in their neighborhood prior to 2002, and now they have none. As Halemaben, another interviewee mentions, Hindus and Muslims were very affectionate towards each other. They were so closely knit that they used to provide emotional support to one another in dire times of illness and death, but not anymore. Hindus would ask Muslims for donations to build their temples. All social interactions have been cut and the few Hindu customers he had through their family business talk strictly of business mattered alone. In Sameer kaka’s case, his family had a good relationship with a neighboring Patel family, wealthy owners of a restaurant, who went out of their way to create a social barrier, through the building of a physical barrier, after the turn of events in 2002 - he built an obstruction in the road to prevent the Muslim residents from accessing his restaurant.

Other aspects that were consistently shared by all interviewees included celebration of festivals and the restriction on the practice of Islamic rituals. Prior to 2002, it was a common sight to see Hindus and Muslims celebrating each other’s festivals together, but this is no longer the case. Asgharbai shared, “Before 2002 there was no need to invite to festivals. People just naturally attended each other’s festivities”. Such festivities included weddings, funerals, birth of a baby and religious holidays. Today, if invitations were extended to each other’s weddings, the assumption is for the invitee to attend only out of formality. The invitee would usually bring a gift, but not stay to eat. Usmanbai, a very passionate and energetic Nyaypathik of the

Sabarkantha district, mentioned a case where a Muslim family printed different wedding invitations to invite Muslim and Hindu neighbors. The invitation for Muslims had the image of a mosque and that for Hindus had the image of the Hindu God Ganesh. This shows that there is fear that their invitation would not be accepted by Hindus if there embellished with Muslim markers. During Hindu festivals, as Sameer kaka mentions, Muslim families in their village have been warned by the police to shut down their businesses and stay at home. As a result, Muslim festivities are now celebrated indoors. They are also prohibited from their traditional practice of sacrificing goats during one of their festivals, the 'Bakr-Id'. 'Bargora' processions are also prohibited. According to Jayanthibhai, another dedicated Nyaypathik of Sabarkantha, before survivors started to fight legal cases, Hindus would openly demand that Muslims not to practice certain festivals or rituals. However, once there were cases filed against them, this demand became less overt.

There also used to be a culture of sharing food among Hindu and Muslim neighbors. Sofiabehn, a colony resident, recalled the little pleasures, when she mentioned that even if she made buttermilk, she would inform her Hindu neighbors so that "they could come and have some". However, the concept of sharing food no longer exists. These sentiments were also shared by other interviewees. Ahmad chacha, a survivor who chose to stay in his mixed village in the Sabarkantha district, also added that while he never visits Patel houses, when he goes to the homes of other Hindus, he is afraid of drinking or eating because he fears being poisoned. He said "The Patels are so powerful that they can pay the lower caste Hindus to poison Muslims".

Where other restrictions on the daily lives on Muslims are concerned, all the interviewees mentioned that the Islamic call to prayer, the 'azaan', is no longer broadcasted through loudspeakers in villages. In response to why this was so, the family of Asgharbai, a resident of relief colony situated in the Anand district, commented, "Nobody restricted us to do so; we did it ourselves". However, it must be noted, as mentioned by the Nyaypathiks, that while there may not have been any specific verbal threats against them regarding stopping certain cultural and religious practices, there exists a climate of fear and distrust that has driven them to these forced 'choices'. However, Usmanbai offered that between 2002 and 2004 many communities explicitly did not allow broadcasting the 'azaan', but since many Muslim families have been displaced since 2004, this is no longer a big issue because there are not many Muslim families left in villages. Although in places with a mosque, the 'azaan' is still played off the mic; it is

unable to reach many Muslim residents, who are then forced to keep track of time for their prayers. In places where there are mosques but no more Muslims, the grounds of the mosques have been filled with trash.

When asked about suppression of other ethnic markers, all interviewees indicated that there was none. Muslim residents felt comfortable in wearing their traditional clothes. One of the Nyaypathiks of the Anand district, Jaswanthbhai, theorizes that this may be because the accused Hindus are aware of the pending cases against them. Perhaps if those accused in these cases get acquitted, suppression of these ethnic markers may also arise.

Ahmad chacha has faced, and continues to face numerous threats in his village. According to him, while Hindu children are growing up, they are recruited by their parents into this web of hatred against the Muslims. He cites the case of a 16 year old boy, who was 10 at the time of the riots, whose father (an accused in Ahmad chacha's case) has advised him to take any chance to kill Muslims. Ahmad chacha has received direct threats from this family, where the father has proudly claimed that his son is now old enough to harm him. This family threatened him to withdraw the case, and said that if he did not, he would be killed. "You are old now and nobody will care" were the exact words of the accused. Moreover, chacha is aware that the Patels also wish to convert his house into a community hall for the use of the other Hindu villagers. All together, Ahmad chacha noted that the threats and the boycott from villagers have increased over time. However Ahmad chacha also noted that Hindu-Muslim tension in his village has existed since even before the 2002 riots, due to a five-year lawsuit over land problems in the 1970s in which the Muslim families won over the Patels. According to him, not only were the Patels displeased, but so were the other Hindus that worked under them. This was only exacerbated by the carnage and its aftermath. He does, however, have relations with Hindus outside the village, with whom he had business relations prior to 2002. He mentioned that he still maintains a relationship with them, and that they did not boycott him.

Ahmad chacha also makes a clear distinction between two kinds of Hindus - the Patels, who are the wealthy business owners that initiated the riots of 2002, and the 'adivasis' or 'dalits', the lower caste Hindus who are often dependent on the Patels to grant them manual labor work. While chacha's family's relationship with the 'adivasis' is as good as before, due to the fact that they did not participate in the riots, he understands that these Hindus did not come forward to help him during the riots because they did not want to be excluded by the Patels and lose their

jobs. He also noted that they receive perks like food for their water buffalos from the Patels, and they did not want to lose that privilege. While the ‘adivasis’ did acknowledge what happened, they did not apologize for not intervening.

In some villages, social boycott also manifests in the village council level. In another village located in the Anand district, there are 26 seats in the village council, out of which only one is set aside for a Muslim representative. As Sameer kaka, a resident of the village described it, the last Muslim representative refused to run again, claiming “it is futile”. In cases where the council still does comprise of both Hindu and Muslims leaders, Jaswanthbhai points out that while they used to work together to make collective decisions about the village in the past, Muslim leaders are no longer consulted by other council leaders. Moreover, as Jayanthibhai added, many leaders are corrupt and have obligations to the Patels, as the former are bribed by the latter. As a result they put pressure on Muslims survivors to drop their legal cases. The council also boycotts the needs of the residents. One interviewee pointed out that their village council refused to repair the gutter lines that they had had problems with for the last six months, with the excuse that such repairs can only be made by private companies, and do not call for public funds.

Perhaps one of the more hopeful situations is that of a village near Ahmedabad that was very badly affected by the 2002 riots. Here, Sayyadbhai mentions that while some neighboring Hindus continue to do business with him out of lack of alternatives, they have acknowledged that what happened was wrong. He also said that he is able to continue celebrating Islamic festivals as normal. Today, Hindu neighbors still wish him on festive occasions and talk, but not as much as before 2002. In Sayyadbhai’s words, “Only 10% of Hindus here are accused. Not all are bad people.”

With the widespread social and economic boycott that Muslims families started to face after 2002, children’s relationships with each other have also been dramatically affected. As narrated to us by Sameer kaka’s son, his children used to attend a Christian Missionary school together with neighboring Hindu children before 2002. One parent of some Hindu children owned an auto and offered to drive all Hindu and Muslim children to and from school. Sameer kaka had good social and economic relations with this man, as the latter, a restaurant business owner, used to purchase agricultural products from him. However soon after the occurrence of the Godhra train incident, the business owner became erratic in picking up Sameer kaka’s grandchildren, and this culminated in the breaking of their relationship. Even though he had offered to disregard the

outstanding tabs that this man had on his shop account in exchange for the school ride, the man refused. Not only this, but on one regular school day, Sameer kaka's grandchildren had seen this man torture one of the other Muslim children. He called them names and threatened to burn them alive. This traumatized the children so badly and they did not wish to attend school any longer. They did, however, start to attend a different school (a nearby government school) after a while. Such is a glimpse of the many stories of the impact of the boycott on children.

Today, segregation among Hindu and Muslim children is more apparent than ever. Before 2002, children used to play together, and now they do not. In villages, a team of children of mixed religions used to play cricket with a similar team from a different village. Today, village teams are segregated into Hindu and Muslim teams. However, one grandson of Sameer kaka, aged 15, reported that he has some Hindu friends who come to his house to play, but that he does not go there. Sameer kaka explained that this is because of the discrimination he faces at his friends' house. One of his friend's father had asked him 'why he has this type of a friend' (Referring to him as a Muslim child). Ahmad chacha, however reported that in his village, Muslim children mingle and play with the lower caste Hindu children, but not with the Patels.

There is segregation in schools too. The interviews across families suggest that there is no overt discrimination from the staff and teachers towards its Muslim students, but that the segregation is apparent among the students themselves. Sameer kaka stated that the teachers at the government school his grandchildren attend, who are all Hindu, do not discriminate against Muslims. "One out of five teachers might give differential treatment to Muslims but it is not very overt" he said. In fact, one of the teachers is the wife of a man who took part in the riots in their village. However there is no discrimination from the teachers towards Muslims children. But Jayanthibhai believes that discrimination by teachers is less overt than that by Hindu children and perhaps gets by unnoticed. He claimed that it is harder to identify when a teacher is interfering in a negative way in the education of Muslim children. He described an incident of when a Hindu teacher once told his daughter that the election was coming up, and that she should tell her parents to vote for the BJP (the right wing Hindu political party that orchestrated the 2002 carnage and that supports the ongoing boycott). Rest assured that Jayanthibhai took immediate and appropriate action to confront the teacher, and related that he felt that the teacher perhaps understood his point.

While students sit together and study together inside the classroom but not outside, there is almost no friendship between Muslim and Hindu children inside and outside the classroom. According to the interview with Sameer kaka and his family, Hindu children make fun of Muslim children in his grandson's school, and tease them saying that they have been reduced to beggars for they cannot even afford a meal at home. They mock them for losing everything during the riots. This, they said, is not how it was before 2002.

On the whole, the social boycott of Muslim survivors in villages today is apparent through broken social relations between Hindus and Muslims. Many Muslim survivors have left the village for relief colonies. Those Muslims families that chose to remain for a variety of reasons are forced to face the consequences of the boycott that has been growing stronger since the 2002 carnage. Even Muslim children are not spared, as they too experience boycott and discrimination. In most areas there is no longer any overt violence against Muslim families, but the covert violence of continuing social boycott is perhaps in some ways even more harmful and poisonous than the carnage of 2002. There are, however, areas such as Ahmad chacha's, where overt threats continue to exist. While some of these threats seem to be in response to a legal case that is being fought by him, there also exist examples of when the legal cases actually help to render more power to the survivors, and keep them safe from threatening/violent encounters with Hindus. Threats or no threats, perhaps both responses speak to the power of fighting legal cases with the support of the Nyayagraha campaign.

#### Relief colonies/ghettos

Unlike in villages, where Muslim residents will need to live among and face Hindus, most relief colonies are not built in close proximity to Hindu residents and are essentially Muslim ghettos. However, some colony residents still continue minimal relations with Hindu neighbors in their villages. As one interviewee recalled, since 2002, some Hindu neighbors have invited his family to their weddings "out of formality". While he has been treated in a civil manner at those events, he no longer feels the emotional involvement that used to exist. He also mentioned that he would invite them to his family events too, but only because there could be negative repercussions for his Muslim 'brothers' in the village, since they live and have business relations with them.

Some families, though, were still in touch with certain Hindu villagers while living in the colony. Halemaben stated that her family has been able to maintain friendships with those Hindus that

did not participate in the riots. These Hindus, however, did not offer them help during the riots either, very likely due to threats from the more powerful Hindus. Through his business, Halemaben's son often bumps into their Hindu village friends on the street. According to Halemaben, they would inquire about how they were doing, but also ask him to advise his mother to compromise with the accused Hindus on the case that they have running. Sofiabben, a colony resident in Sabarkantha, believes that if she does go back to her village, she would be invited by her Hindu friends there, but she does not, for fear that her friends would be troubled by the accused people in her case. It is interesting, though, that Sofiabben spoke of some brave Hindu neighbors who came to her defense and faced the mobs when they came in 2002. However, they too insisted that she compromise. In her words, they said, "See, we tried to save you during the riots! Why don't you listen to us and forget about what happened? They (the accused) are just kids and made a mistake". Unlike Halemaben and Sofiabben, who felt compelled to distance themselves from the Hindu community, Shefaliben of a different relief colony near Ahmedabad, however, feels differently. Though she admitted that the 2002 riots have brought about a climate of distrust, she feels that she must continue her relationship with Hindus. She is against discrimination and makes it a point to visit them and mingle with them at work. "By mingling, they might change their impression of us," she said. She acknowledged that her Hindu colleagues do not threaten or discriminate against her. However, Hindu villagers still hold animosity against Muslims. She can tell that they are erratic in their responses and can tell the difference between the quality of relations before and after 2002.

When asked if colony residents experienced any cultural restrictions from neighboring Hindu residents, all interviewees indicated that there was none. Asgharbhai commented that he still wears his cap outside his relief camp and feels there are no restrictions. All interviewees in relief colonies also consistently reported that people in their colonies were not harassed and did not receive any threats. However, Asgharbhai shared that the accused had approached him once to reach a compromise on the case that he filed. "They know where I live, but they do not come here anymore".

While no harassment from Hindu villagers was reported, harassment from a different authority was. A common thread across all interviews conducted of colony residents was the power differential between external colony organizers or builders and their residents. Halemaben came to know after she moved in to her present home, that the house was not in her name. She says

that the colony, built by Jamiat e Ulma e Hindi, an Islamic NGO, was constructed illegally on a piece of agricultural land that was not meant for non-agricultural purposes. Moreover, she stated that the builders charged many of her neighbors 25,000 rupees for the house without prior notice, but they did not approach her. She hypothesizes that this is perhaps because she is one of the leading organizers in the colony. However according to her, there is still a sense of fear that they could be driven out of their homes at any time, since it is not in their names. She has also seen that when neighbors go back to their towns for work, the organizers break the locks of their homes and evict them. This causes her family great apprehension.

According to Khaledaben, a fabulous female Nyaypathik of the Sabarkantha district, power issues exist even within the Muslim community in either overt or covert ways. Due to the arrival of Muslims of different factions at relief colonies, there are varying rituals and practices. As illustrated by Usmanbhai, Muslims who come from villages tend to have similar cultures to Hindus, though their religious rituals may differ. When such Muslims come to the city area, for example, they feel shy about celebrating their festivals with 'aarti' or lamps (a common Hindu practice) for the fear they would be criticized by other Muslims for bringing Hindu rituals with them. Another example of power imbalance within colonies is the authority that a maulana (the leader of the Mosque) or an internal colony organizer claims over the other residents. Usmanbhai and Khaledaben know of many cases of Muslim widows with children who are approached for illicit favors. If the widow refuses, the colony organizers publicly blame the widow for engaging in prostitution whenever she leaves the colony to get food or earn some money for her children. Under this pretense, the widow is expelled from the colony, as the people of the colony don't allow prostitutes to live amongst them.

The impact of social boycott in relief colonies on children manifests in slightly different ways in comparison to children in villages. With highly limited employment options available in relief colonies, families are forced to weigh out education of children with the family's financial need. Asgharbhai's sons, now aged 12 and 17, used to attend school till three months ago. After moving to a relief colony, it has become hard for the family to financially support their children's education with Asgharbhai's sole income, due to very few economic options in and around the colony. The children used to attend a Christian Missionary School in Anand. Though education was free, the miscellaneous school fee, computer technical fee and transportation costs added up to more than they could afford. Furthermore, Asgharbhai feels that education does not

help much financially as he has seen educated people in his community who are unable to find jobs. He even introduced a relative to us from a neighboring unit who is a graduate in accounting, but has been unable to find a relevant job in the area. As a result, both his sons now work in a saree shop, owned by a Muslim outside the relief colony. They have a very busy schedule, as they work from 9 am to 8 pm from Mondays to Saturdays with a half an hour break in between, and earn 1000 rupees each per month. When we interviewed the eldest son, he told us that he used to like his life very much before the riots, because he did not have many responsibilities. He had time to play with his Hindu and Muslim friends. “Now, I only have Muslim friends and not much time to play.” When they did attend school, their teachers were both Hindus and Christians and the students did not experience discrimination across religions. In school, they had Hindu friends. When asked if they would play with their former Hindu friends in their villages if they went back to visit, the younger child said that he would not play with them because they have not been in contact anymore, though he does not have bad feelings for them, as he still considers them as brothers. However, the elder son is still in touch with Hindu friends in the village and he has played with them when he visited in the past, likely before starting to work.

Halemaben also narrated a similar account, as she recalled how the lives of her children (two sons now aged 22 and 26) changed after 2002. She said that it took them a long time to adjust to the new conditions. Before 2002 they had a comfortable life, but after 2002 they had to work. Though her younger son wanted to study further, he was not able to continue his education because of financial need. She regrets that her younger son had to resort to hair cutting, a trade that people of her caste do not usually perform, instead of getting a better education.

Shetaliben has three of her four children in school. Contrary to experiences in other schools, a Christian Missionary school that one of her children attends sees discrimination from its Hindu teachers towards its Muslim students, who are only three among three Muslim teachers and a majority of Christian teachers. Before 2002, she asserts that one could not differentiate between Hindus and Muslims, but now one makes the effort to find out from their last names, and they are segregated. Hindu and Muslim children are made to sit separately by their Hindu teacher, with Muslim kids pushed to the back. Shetaliben also mentioned that the children get beaten. Hindu teachers ask the Muslim children why they come to school if they are going to end up in a mechanic shop. They also shoo away Muslim kids during lunchtime, saying that their food,

which often contains eggs or meat, stinks. Even Hindu children, who do play with Muslim children at school usually, would not do so when they come to know that a Muslim child has eaten eggs. According to Shefaliben, food-related taboos have always existed, but this has increased after 2002. Her children do not mingle with Hindu children outside school. However, sometimes they play cricket matches together, but even during games, Hindu children would not drink the same water as the Muslim children.

As seen above, social boycott in relief colonies takes very different forms in comparison to the boycott experienced by Muslim survivors in villages. Most interviewees spoke of the broken social relations with village neighbors and threats or ‘polite requests’ for compromise on legal cases by villagers who they happen to meet occasionally. Colonies being spaces for Muslim survivors alone, many problems exist within their community. Residents are sometimes under the control of the colony organizer or their religious leader. Children also experience discrimination in certain schools that admit both Hindu and Muslim children. Relief colony residents also experience boycott from the government and the legal and law enforcement systems, which is further illustrated in the following sections.

### Government

Just as there are indications of boycott of social relationships, there are indications of a government boycott as well. As known to us, and documented by many eminent authors and human rights reports, the government of Gujarat was complicit in the violence of 2002, and there has been documentary evidence to prove that the government indeed played an active and systematic role in the perpetration of the carnage. It is thus not surprising that there continues to be a boycott by the government against Muslim survivors today. One of the very first indications since the days of the riots in 2002, includes the determination of compensation amounts for affected families. These amounts, as many interviewees mentioned, were determined arbitrarily by Hindu surveyors, who were hardly fair in their assessment. One interviewee’s family lost Rs. 10,00,000 in the riots and only received Rs. 1500 in compensation. He was not even present when surveyors arrived to estimate his damage. However, compensation is only one such indication of state inaction. As time progressed, the boycott perpetrated by the state manifested through their continued inaction on various matters.

One such indication of state boycott is the horrendous living conditions in relief colonies. The IRC relief colony in Anand district reeks with unpaved muddy roads, polluted water, no street lights, and no sewage facilities and gutter lines. The government only started collecting garbage in June 2008. There are no public or private hospitals, no schools, markets or banks nearby. Residents need to walk 0.5 km in order to even get transportation to any place. Such is the sad state of all relief colonies visited for the purpose of this study and beyond. Despite the fact that many colony residents have organized and demanded action from the government for better living conditions, the response has been immensely slow.

Another indication is apparent as narrated by Sameer kaka's, whose family is unable to enroll their children in school welfare schemes despite being eligible in terms of caste and income level. In addition, BPL (Below Poverty Line) status grants school-going children scholarships for books and materials. When the family's BPL documentation was burnt with their house during the riots, they were given an APL (Above Poverty Line) card as a replacement. Though the interviewee provided proof of their current income level, the government insists that they no longer are below the poverty line, due to the compensation that has been provided to them as reparations for the damage caused by the riots. Another excuse conveniently provided by the government is that they have run out of BPL cards. The interviewee filed his appeal in 2002, and has yet to hear from them.

Another way of ensuring the continuation of the boycott of Muslim survivors by the government is to target service providers and activists who are dedicated to working with Muslim survivors of the carnage to help them fight legal battles and to better their conditions. Usmanbhai notes that one of the barriers to his work is the government. Quoting him, "The government can corner you as a Muslim with any excuse (accuse you of rape or looting). They can arrest you with more reason for doing this work; they can accuse you of terrorism."

#### Justice and law-enforcement systems

Social boycott is also apparent through the justice and law enforcement systems in systematic, yet subtle ways. One interview with a higher-caste Hindu public prosecutor, in one of the districts of Gujarat illustrated the way in which social boycott is exercised by the justice system. As Usmanbhai observed, prosecutors like him are not proactive in their cases and do not probe to help the witness make his case. If the defense attorney asks inappropriate questions to the

witness, the prosecutor does not advocate for the witness and point out the inappropriateness of the questions. This is an accurate description of the attitude that we discerned from our prosecutor interviewee. His privilege in being a high-caste prosecutor oozed through his body language, as he overpowered the lower-caste Hindu district lawyer of Nyayagraha and the survivor witnesses. He seemed to be in very good terms with the public defender too, who was also a Patel. Unfortunately for the clients that day, the judge, another Hindu, decided to not make an appearance at court and the hearing was conveniently postponed to another date. In seeing the demeanor of this prosecutor, we decided to interview him. Having been assigned to this particular case for 1.5 years, this was the first time he met with the survivor witnesses who filed the case to hear their story. The more questions we asked him about the case, the more he dodged them. He conveniently placed the blame on the witnesses and the Nyayagraha campaign lawyer for the lack of preparation on the case. Moreover, as expected, he denied that the legal system was biased and firmly emphasised that caste played no role in the legal system and that all survivors got a fair hearing. Such ways of working in the legal system only ensure the perpetuation of the boycott thrust on marginalized Muslim survivors.

Many Nyaypathiks have also mentioned that the police places many obstacles in their work. When approached by any Nyaypathik to assist the survivor in giving their statement, the police would ask “Why do you want to open a can of worms?” The Nyaypathiks of the Sabarkantha district described threatening letters they once received from the VHP and Bajrang Dal, another right wing Hindu organization that accused them of terrorism. It stated that these three people along with other members of Nyayagraha are involved in terrorist activities and claimed that they ran a school that trained students into terrorist activities. The police called them into individual inquiry, but did not take further action. There have been many such cases of discrimination from police.

While this section outlined the various factors that feed into the social boycott that is experienced by Muslim survivors of the 2002 carnage, the next section outlines the forms of economic boycott that are experienced by them.

### **Forms of economic boycott**

We met Halemaben, her daughter-in-law, and her grand-daughter in a small home they share with her two sons in a relief colony in Sabar Kantha. Halemaben and her family came to the relief colony five years ago, leaving behind a lifetime of coexistence with Hindu neighbors in the village where her two sons were born and raised. Originally from Rajasthan, Halemaben became a widow at a very young age, having to work in the fields and do housework to support her two small sons. With effort and perseverance, she was able to build a successful business selling groceries in her village, an enterprise that allowed her to provide her children with a secondary education, furnish her home, and achieve a comfortable standard of living. Her business of seventeen years was utterly destroyed in the 2002 pogroms. Her Hindu neighbors looted her shop and home, burning both to the ground. In hiding, she saw in terror and disbelief how longtime neighbors, some of whom she considered “family,” obliterated a lifetime of hard work and her dreams of bequeathing to her sons the fruits of her labor. Nowadays, she lives in a geographically isolated relief colony in a house from which she could be evicted for not having a title. Her eldest son was able to return to his line of work as a bus driver, after being fired from his original job for being a Muslim. Halemaben’s youngest son’s dream to pursue higher education was shattered with the financial downturn that the 2002 riots and the ensuing economic boycott inflicted upon the family. To his mother’s dismay, he now works as a hairdresser, a job she deems beneath their caste. Halemaben does not work anymore. She dedicates part of her time to organizing efforts to improve the dire conditions under which her community lives. She often reminisces about her life in the village and her neighbors: “I remember them most when I have to buy stuff that was easy to get in the village, like collecting firewood or picking vegetables from the trees. It is more expensive here. [...] Now we are poor and they are rich. [...] Today I think a million times before I spend a single rupee.” When evaluating the current conditions of her life, she states unequivocally that they are worse than they were before the 2002 pogroms.

Like Halemaben, hundreds of Muslims had their livelihoods destroyed during the 2002 pogroms. Most of those interviewed have not been able to restore the standard of living they once enjoyed, unanimously agreeing that the conditions of their lives are definitively worse now than they were before 2002. With the deliberate destruction of their means of subsistence, the 2002 pogroms laid the foundation for the further economic decline of the Muslim population, a decline that has been

perpetuated by a continuous economic boycott and other forms of economic marginalization. What follows is an examination of the different forms economic boycott takes, as well as other existing means of economic exclusion.

After looting and destroying their neighbors' homes and businesses, slaughtering their farm animals and breaking down their farm equipment, Hindus proceeded to sabotage any attempts by Muslims to rebuild their livelihoods. It soon became evident for those who were able to reopen their shops after the pogroms that the number of Hindu customers was reducing at a fast rate. Secret meetings were held by VHP community members to plan not to buy from Muslims, according to Asgharbhai and his neighbors in a relief colony in Anand. Flyers were then distributed urging Hindus not to engage in business transactions with Muslim shopkeepers. VHP members living in the communities also resorted to threats to keep Muslims from restoring their businesses. Many of those who attempted to resume their livelihoods in their villages after the riots were forced to close their shops indefinitely, moving to relief colonies for safety. In other communities, physical obstructions were built to prevent access to Muslim businesses, etching in the physical landscape the new socioeconomic order of segregation. The Patels built a roadblock to Sameer kaka's shop in a mixed village in Anand. The seventy-year old man's business was severely affected. He recalls with sadness how before the 2002 pogroms he used to have many Hindu customers with whom he had friendship ties, "80% of my customers were Hindu. Now, Hindus are only 2% of my customers, and they are business-like. They don't stay and chat anymore; they only purchase stuff and go on their way." The collective decision to sever commercial ties with Muslims is further exacerbated when Muslims file court cases against those Hindu neighbors who participated in the 2002 pogroms. Having joined the *Nyayagraha* Campaign since its inception, Khaledaben has witnessed this form of coercion in the many communities she works in the Sabar Kantha district. In one village, she assisted witnesses in reopening a case, which led to the accused being arrested. In retribution, Hindu residents decided only to buy from Hindu shops. Being the vast majority in most communities, the impact of their refusal to have commercial dealings with their Muslim neighbors was and continues to be devastating.

Former Hindu customers have not only stopped buying from Muslims shopkeepers, but have also refused to pay extant debts. Jaswanthbhai, a dedicated Hindu *nyaya pathik* who has worked in the Anand district for the past three years, observes that before the 2002 pogroms Muslims and

Hindus customer relations were very flexible. Built on trust and longtime personal connections, they would loan money and give merchandise on credit, trusting each other's word and integrity. With the tragic chasm that the 2002 pogroms opened between Muslims and Hindus, these personal and business relationships were drastically broken. Hindus refused to pay money owed, and they did so with impunity, further crippling their Muslim neighbors' economic situation. Of the many painful incidents of this sort, one stands out in Sameer kaka's memory. A member of the Patel clan used to buy his produce from Sameer kaka on credit. A hotel owner, he also has an auto rickshaw in which he brought the informant's grandchildren to a Christian private school, in exchange for the money he owed Sameer kaka in merchandise – as described earlier in this report. After the 2002 pogroms, the Patel stopped bringing the informant's grandchildren to school and also refused to pay his debts. Usmanbhai, the Sabar Kantha district coordinator for the *Nyayagraha* campaign, poignantly remarks that the system of loaning merchandise has virtually ceased to exist. In the communities he serves, Hindus have both not paid their tabs, and not given loans or credit to Muslims anymore. His colleague, Khaledaben, further illustrates the vicious cycle to which Muslim shop owners are subjected: "Hindu big shop owners used to keep credit accounts for small shop owners, who used to accrue up to 7500 rupees in credit. They don't do this anymore, as they fear that Muslims won't be able to sell their merchandise and pay them back. This affects Muslim businesses today." For Asgharbhai and his neighbors in the Anand relief colony, these kinds of incidents, not paying back and not given loans or credit, are a sign of disrespect and broken social relations. Not only have their "hearts been broken," but also the very social fabric that sustained their economic relations with Hindus.

These intertwined strategies – not buying, paying back or giving credit – have been very effective forms of economic ostracism aimed at the demise of this minority population. But compounding these strategies is the involvement of political institutions within villages in implementing the economic boycott. At the village council level, Hindu appointees impose their political will under the guise of democratic process. Being the majority in the village council, they reach consensus in taking measures that are detrimental for Muslim residents. The case of Ahmad chacha is a prime example of the power of Hindu village council members in displacing Muslims from the communities' economic life. In August 2002, Ahmad chacha received a notice from the village council ordering him to close his shop in a mixed rural village in Sabar Kantha. He had managed to reopen his shop in July, after Hindu neighbors had looted it and burned it to

the ground earlier that year. Having a license to his shop and observing that Hindu shop owners were allowed to conduct business, he defied the council's arbitrary order. Weeks later, however, he was forced to close his shop when Hindus refused to buy from him. Sameer kaka has witnessed similar discriminatory measures become commonplace in his mixed village in Anand. The predominantly Hindu village council has refused to repair the gutters in the Muslim section of the village. The only Muslim representative in a council of twenty-six seats has refused to run for office again, given the futility of being in that position. Jaswanthbhai observes that in several communities in Anand, Hindu leaders have sidelined their Muslim counterparts, no longer including them in collective decisions pertaining to the village's political and socio-economic processes. Likewise, village councils across the district have significantly decreased the portion of the budget allocated to improve areas where Muslims reside. With this concentration of power in the village councils, Hindus have been successful in excluding Muslims from political processes and decision-making, as well as depriving them of their right to freely pursue economic development.

Aside from having a monopoly in village councils, Hindu leaders use other institutional means to exert their power to impose the economic boycott. Being members of the government's party, the BJP, gives them enormous political power to impose their will not only among Muslims, but amongst Hindus who do not necessarily embrace the ideological precepts of the Hindutva. BJP members, for instance, have imposed a system of differential enforcement when the government calls for *bandhs*. Even though the general public is mandated to cease economic activities, Hindus are allowed to conduct business through their back doors in Sameer kaka's village in Anand. Muslims, on the other hand, are persistently harassed by members of the government party if they attempt to do the same. Unions have also been hijacked by an ideology of hatred that justifies the economic annihilation of Muslims. Sameer kaka reports that union members force Muslims to close their shops when anyone, be it Muslim or Hindu, dies in the community. When a Muslim dies, however, Hindus are not required to close their shops. Apart from the ideological underpinnings that are driving the economic boycott, these arbitrary measures illuminate one of the leading motivations for the institution of the economic boycott against Muslims: to eliminate competition for Hindu businesses. Sameer kaka asserted unequivocally, that the riots and subsequent boycotts were driven by Hindus who became "jealous because Muslims had better prices and more customers." It was a business competition among shop

owners that lead to their business union to break down. Other informants shared his perception. Khaledaben and Usmanbhai have witnessed how this phenomenon is widespread in the communities they assist as *nyaya pathiks* in Sabar Kantha. In some villages, most grocery stores were owned by Muslims before the 2002 pogroms. Now, Hindus hold a monopoly, relegating the few Muslim shops that have survived the onslaught to the margins of the communities' market economy. Hindus have also monopolized occupational niches that Muslims traditionally held for generations. Khaledaben provides a case in point. Members of the Hindu Panchal caste now dominate the blacksmith trade in the villages they inhabit. They invited their relatives to move into their villages to become blacksmiths. Relatives came from other villages and cities before Muslims could return from the relief camps into which they were forced to escape for safety during the riots; thus, displacing in this manner the Muslims blacksmiths. Usmanbhai has seen a similar process among butchers, where Hindus have driven Muslims out of a business niche that has been passed from father to son for generations.

The combination of the dishonest tactics examined previously, has made the economic boycott very effective in impoverishing the Muslim population. Their economic structure has been severely impacted, forcing them to resort to change their trades and/or conduct their economic pursuits outside their village for their very survival. Jaswanthbhai has witnessed a general trend occurring in Anand, where Muslims have changed their traditional trades to ones that are not dependent on their Hindu neighbors. After being forced to close their shops, Ahmad chacha's brothers and neighbors became jeep drivers and auto-repairers, activities they must conduct outside their village in Anand given that their Hindu neighbors refuse to employ their services. Ahmad chacha's son was also forced to change jobs. He used to be a jeep driver for a Patel, but after the 2002 pogroms he was fired. As with many others in his predicament, he had to find an independent trade, given that Hindus refused to hire him. However, many Muslims are not able to have an independent trade if they lack the economic capital to start anew. Asgharbhai's means of subsistence were so utterly destroyed during the pogroms, that he was forced to move to a relief colony with his wife and his two sons. Having being a successful business owner in his village, Asgharbhai is currently a government employee, earning only 6000 rupees a month. By the time of our interview, his two sons had recently dropped out of high school and were hired by a Muslim to work in his clothing store. In this way, they hoped to help their father in supporting the household. In one of Ahmedabad's many ghettos, Shefaliben and her husband are

also struggling to make ends meet with their new trades. Shefaliben used to be a seamstress before losing both her sewing machine to the 2002 pogroms, and her Hindu customers to the boycott. For a pittance, she and her husband worked all day in the fields after the riots, not making enough to keep their children from hunger. Shefaliben was eventually able to find a job in an NGO for a modest wage. Her husband's income, on the other hand, is not reliable. He went from being an autorickshaw owner before his vehicle was destroyed during the riots, to renting an auto from a Muslim for 300 rupees a day. After paying for the auto rental and the gas, Shefaliben's husband brings home 50 to 100 rupees a day, a meagre wage for a family of six. He has attempted to find additional work, but no one would hire him because he was Muslim.

Labor discrimination is a widespread phenomenon and a powerful force in ensuring the downward social mobility of Muslims. Mushtaqbhai, the district coordinator for the *Nyayagraha* Campaign in Anand, has observed that Muslims have a difficult time finding work, for Hindu employers prefer hiring Hindu workers, only choosing Muslims as a last resort. Najirbhai has seen the same unfair hiring practices in the communities he serves as a *nyaya pathik* in Ahmedabad: "I see the economic boycott happening in jobs. Any new Muslim worker who tries to find a job doesn't get hired. His name identifies him as a Muslim. If he is lucky to get a job, he's forced to work too much and will be paid less than Hindus." The economic boycott is forcing Muslims into labor conditions of exploitation and differential treatment. Hindu employers take advantage of their desperate situation to employ them for pittance. For those Muslims who used to have a business or an independent trade before the riots and the economic boycott, a process of proletarianization appears to be emerging, for they must now resort to sell their labor as a means of subsistence. The resulting downward spiral in terms of income has deprived the Muslims in providing their children opportunities for advancement. Halemaben had the means to provide her younger son with a college education before 2002. The pogroms and the economic boycott ensured that her son would not be able to move up in the educational ladder. Instead of taking over their father's business or been able to open their own, Asgharbhai's two teenage sons are now working in a dead-end job in order to meet their family basic needs for survival. Girls' education is yet another casualty of the economic boycott. Jaswanthbhai asserts that families who previously were invested in educating their children are now forced to halt their daughters' educational advancement given the dire financial situation to which they are subjected. As a result, the economic boycott has been successful in relegating Muslims to the

lower rungs of the economic structure, providing no opportunities for advancement for them or their children.

As we have examined, the Hindus are invested in instituting and perpetuating the economic boycott against Muslims. As customers, employers, creditors, or influential leaders in their communities, Hindus have ensured in a somewhat systematic manner a process of pauperization and economic exclusion of the Muslim population. Apart from the different strategies they use to boycott Muslims, there are other mechanisms in place that have contributed to the detrimental restructuring of Muslim economic life and that have been equally effective in demoting their economic status and in arresting their social mobility. The refusal to provide adequate compensation for the destruction of property during the 2002 pogroms is a case in point. In the communities studied, the government has consistently refused to pay adequate compensation, if at all, to the Muslim victims of the 2002 pogroms. Although it would require additional research to corroborate if there is a covert and widely applied governmental policy, what appears to be the case is that Hindus in government positions are making sure that Muslims do not receive what they deserve for the damage done to their homes and to their means of subsistence. Interviewees indicated that Hindu surveyors came to their communities to assess the damage done in order to determine the amount of money to distribute for each case. In many instances, the victims were not even present when the surveyors came, and for those who were, the surveyors did not even consult them about the damage. Asgharbai and his neighbors in one of Anand's relief colonies had their damages assessed in this manner. Surveyors arbitrarily decided to give one of them 1500 rupees, a humiliatingly low compensation for the 10 *lakhs* lost during the pogroms. Others did not even receive compensation and wondered what criteria surveyors would use to make that determination. In her new home in a relief colony, Halemaben also wondered why some people received more money than others, commenting on the meagre compensation she received: "back in the village, I had a fridge that costed me 10,000 rupees and they gave me 9,000 rupees for the entire loss of my home. I received no compensation for the property I lost and for the 3 *lakhs* of merchandise I had. There are people who received compensation for 50,000 rupees; I don't know why I did not receive much." Those who received compensation are now confronting other bureaucratic obstructions. Sameer kaka, the elder from a mixed village in the Anand district, has been applying for BPL cards for his and his son's families. The government has turned down his application with the explanation that Muslims have received enough money in

reparations as to disqualify them for BPL cards. As discussed earlier, BPL cards would have allowed his grandchildren to receive scholarships for books and materials. Asgharbai has also applied for BPL cards, but the government disqualified him because he lives in a brick house, turning a blind eye to the fact that he does not even have a title for his humble home in a relief colony. Harsh Mander appealed to the Supreme Court on behalf of many who as Asgharbai live in brick homes that are not theirs. After his appeal, BLP cards were given to them, but they cannot use them because the cards do not have numbers. Other institutions are also contributing to the economic decline of the Muslim population. The Sabar Kantha coordinator for *Nyayagraha*, Usmanbai, pointed out that national banks discriminate against Muslims by turning down their loan applications and changing the interest rates once a loan has been granted. Without adequate or no compensation or bank loans, Muslims are unable to amass enough capital to restore their business or to start new ones. Thus the government's system of compensation and the banks' differential policies, have contributed in accelerating the economic demise of the Muslim population.

It is important to note that not all Hindus participate in the economic boycott voluntarily. On the face of it, there appears to be a consensus among Hindus to ostracize Muslims within their own communities. However, both *nyaya pathiks* and the victims indicated that some Hindus are coerced into compliance. Village leaders and people of higher castes, many of whom are members of the VHP, BJP, and/or RSS, are orchestrating the economic boycott against Muslims, using their class and caste privilege to force other community members to participate in the boycott. The Patels, for instance, are a powerful caste in most of the communities visited. As the owners of the means of production, they have considerable power over people who depend on them for survival. Being landowners, they can threaten not to hire as field hands those who do not support the boycott. Also, due to relations of patronage, *Adivasis* and *Dalits* would not dare to risk losing "privileges," such as water and food for their water buffalos, by not participating in the boycott. The collectivistic culture within the communities also serves as a deterrent against non-participation. To challenge a measure condoned by the majority amounts to social death, for those who dare not to boycott are ostracized by the Hindu community. In spite of the overwhelming pressure to comply, there are Hindus who have had the courage to challenge the inhumane economic and social strangulation of their Muslim neighbors. We honor them in the following section.

### **Stories of courage, resistance and hope**

Amidst the harsh reality of unspoken hatred towards Muslims and a prolonged climate of fear among the survivor community, there thankfully do exist stories of courage, hope and resistance. While we document few stories of explicit breaches to the existing boycott, we came across many courageous and helpful acts by Hindus and Muslims that gives us indication that change is indeed possible. It should also be noted that due to the limited sample size of this study, we believe that more breaches of the boycott can likely be found across all survivors' experiences.

Among all interviewees, four direct survivors narrated experiences that are in direct breach of the continuing boycott. Ahmad chacha found a savior in a Hindu neighbor for three years following the carnage, at the onset of the boycott. Having had his electricity supply cut off after the riots, Ahmad chacha's neighbor graciously offered him a share of his electric supply. In return for the electricity, Ahmad chacha split the cost of the electric bill with his neighbor. Despite the resistance and pressure his neighbor received from other Hindus, he has been quoted saying to them "I did not ask for your permission to get my electricity. I don't need permission to share it with my neighbor". Ahmad chacha is still on good terms with this neighbor, who comes by occasionally to help him fix things around his house. Quoting chacha, "It is not business; it comes from the heart." Breaches have also emerged against economic boycott. Halemaben's son, a driver, works for a Hindu bus company. She pointed out that this job was offered to him by the Hindu owner of the company. In fact, he personally called Halemaben to assure her that he would take good care of him if he accepted the offer. This gesture by the employer is a commendable breach. Another breach of economic boycott was experienced by Sayyadbhai, a businessman who manufactures chairs in a mixed village, where many Hindus reside. While he acknowledges that there are Hindus that approach him with discrimination, he identifies that a good 50-70% of Hindus provide support for his business. Some Hindu customers refer him to their friends and family, while others provide him with emotional support and encourage him to continue the business. This is indeed surprising, given that this was a village where during the riots, 11 Muslim villagers were burnt to death, many Muslim houses were demolished and Muslim businesses were taken over by the wealthy Hindus. Sayyadbhai believes that "not all Hindus are bad" as "only 10% of the Hindus in the community are accused" in the case that he is fighting. Yet another remarkable breach of economic boycott is evident in Shefaliben's brother's story. Having been fired from a factory job that he had held for ten years after the 2002 carnage,

he worked for a Hindu man for two years, during which he received much moral support from his boss. His boss also encouraged him to start his own business, given that he had enough skills for the job. What is more profound is the powerful admission of this man, as related by Shefaliben's brother: "After knowing you, my stereotypes against Muslims have vanished."

While some interviewees explicitly identified breaches to the boycott as illustrated above, there have been other instances in their narration that lead us to believe that they have experienced breaches in other more subtle ways. As far as economic relations are concerned, many interviewees have mentioned the existence of Hindu customers, bosses and co-workers. These relations, whether voluntary or simply out of convenience, need to be recognized as breaches to the boycott, as they provide a space for interaction between Hindus and Muslims, regardless of how minimal this interaction may be. However, in the case of Shefaliben, not only did her Hindu co-workers get along with her, but they got along well, as illustrated by the co-celebration of festivals. Another indication of breach of boycott is the observation that most teachers in schools around villages and relief colonies do not discriminate against Muslim children. Such instances serve to exemplify more breaches in the face of continuing social and economic boycott against Muslim survivors of the 2002 carnage.

While there were stories of breaches of boycott, most stories of hope, as narrated by survivors, were located at the time of the carnage. One such remarkable story was the experience of a neighbor of Asgharbai. Upon the breakout of riots in his former village, all Muslims in his village were assisted by Rajput landowners in the village, a wealthy class of Hindus. Though they were sheltered in their land for three days, they were obliged to leave when the other Hindus threatened the Rajputs. It was then that they arranged for a 'tempo', a large vehicle, to transport all 35 Muslims to a nearby city. There were other cases where Hindus came forward to assist their Muslim neighbors. In fact, Ahmad chacha spoke of a Patel neighbor who fed him for a whole week during the riots. When his neighbor was confronted by other Patels, who asked him why he would want to assist someone who was part of the Godhra carnage, his reply was that Ahmad chacha had nothing to do with the carnage and he would continue to help chacha. Khaledaben, a very conscientious Nyaypathik also narrated an instance in her experience where she was offered a place to stay by a dalit neighbor, who was her 'rakhi' brother (a culturally adopted brother), for three days during the riots. This neighbor also helped to safeguard her home, by convincing other dalits who participated in the mob activities to spare her house. In

another case, Sofiabén's family was also rescued by an adivasi Hindu family in a neighboring village during the riots. The neighbor not only provided them with a separate place to stay near their house, but also bought them the grains/food items needed for them to cook. Moreover, the neighbor's extended family, who also lived in close proximity to him, assured Sofiabén's family protection from further harm. They too brought them grains of food. But Sofiabén experienced a breach of the common Hindu sentiment even at the time that she fled her village from the violent mobs. She recalled that when riots hit, about 8-10 Hindu friends resisted and fought back with sticks in an attempt to drive the mob away. Among them were two Patels, five Vankars (a dalit caste), one dalit doctor and one darbar. Another source of support, in Ahmad chacha's story, was an adivasi village council leader. Upon knowing that chacha's house was burnt, the leader publicly acknowledged the unfairness, and provided him with moral support, asking him to contact him in case of further problems. Support during the riots also emerged from non-Hindus. Christians were very helpful during Asgharbhai's time in the relief camps that were organized shortly after the riots. A group of fathers from churches helped them to organize for better camp facilities. In the case of Sameer kaka, his grandchildren used to attend a Christian convent school before the riots of 2001. Upon losing their means of transportation to social boycott, their grandchildren were unable to attend school. A Christian teacher, having identified his granddaughter as a very bright child, wished for her to continue her education and the school even offered to send a bus to pick her up. However, due to the recent violence and threats the family had experienced at the time, they refused the offer in the interest of the child's safety.

There are stories of courage and resistance too, that invoke hope. Many of our interviewees exude resistance, through their drive to fight the social and economic boycott that serves to victimize them further. They fight this boycott through legal battle against the accused, in search for justice. They also fight through their emerging leadership in resistance to the poor living conditions thrust upon them. Many men and women have formed committees in relief colonies and have demanded concrete improvements through collective action. But resistance, as a rule, has also been demonstrated by the work of Nyaypathiks. Simply standing up as leaders to work against the face of adversity demands recognition, but to do this work through honest and ethical means calls for a standing ovation. However, some Nyaypathiks have gone beyond that, by actively resisting opposition. One incredible example is that of a Hindu Nyaypathik, a Brahmin, of the Sabarkantha district, who was directly confronted by a VHP leader. When this VHP leader

placed before him Rs. 50,000 in cash and a gun, demanding the Nyaypathik to “choose” in an attempt to bribe the nyaypathik into dropping charges in a particular case, the latter chose the gun, pointed to his back and boldly asked him to “shoot”. It was perhaps sheer luck that he was not shot at, or perhaps sheer fear on the part of the VHP leader. This Nyaypathik not only braved the incident, but also continues to brave a complete boycott from his Hindu community. A similar case of bribery occurred with Sharifbhai, a young and dedicated Nyaypathik of the Ahmedabad district. When Sharifbhai was offered a Rs. 50,000 bribe and the survivor witnesses were offered Rs. 100,000 by the accused members of a case that he helped witnesses to file, Sharifbhai and the witnesses turned it down, declaring that they seek justice, not money. Such acts embody immense courage and resistance in this fight for justice.

## References

Madison, Soyini (2005). *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics and Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.