

Wages of Communal Violence in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli

HARSH MANDER, AKRAM AKHTAR CHAUDHARY, ZAFAR EQBAL, RAJANYA BOSE

Three years after the communal carnage in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh, in which close to a hundred people died and an estimated 75,000 were displaced, thousands of survivors have not been able to return to their villages. Even those not directly affected, who fled in the wake of the violence, continue to live in slum-like conditions without basic services. The Aman Biradari team that surveyed these affected villages concludes that the permanent divisions between communities who once lived together peacefully represent the triumph of communal politics.

Hate violence alters the course of people's lives forever. Years, decades, even generations pass after hate violence is unleashed on targeted families and communities, but their suffering does not end. It divides, impoverishes, scatters and embitters them in ways which are imperfectly understood and rarely tracked.

In September 2013, in the two districts of Muzaffarnagar and Shamli, a toxic hate campaign—claiming that Muslim boys were enticing Jat Hindu girls in a “love jihad”—led to violent murderous attacks on Muslim settlements of mainly poor agricultural workers. A people who had never fought each other in history suddenly became bitter enemies, estranged, fearful and angry. “Not even during the Partition riots of 1947 did a drop of blood flow in our villages,” the survivors repeatedly told the Aman Biradari team. When the violence ended in 2013, nearly a hundred people had died, women endured sexual violence, thousands of homes and livelihoods were burnt down and ruined and large numbers of people had resolved never to return to the land of their ancestors.

People of diverse faiths who live together do not spontaneously turn upon each other. There are three essential requisites for mass communal violence to occur. The first is the deliberate manufacture of hatred. The second is the organisation of the physical execution for the riot. The third is a complicit state: no riot can continue beyond a few hours unless the state actively wishes that it does so. The Muzaffarnagar communal upsurge of 2013 presents striking evidence of each of these elements combining to violently divide communities that have lived and worked together peacefully through generations.

Communal organisations from the stables of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have perfected the art of manufacturing hatred against the “other” community by cynically deploying rumour, innuendo and falsehood. The issue chosen to demonise the “other” varies depending on what would resonate and enrage the people concerned most in a particular location and time of history. In Muzaffarnagar, with the patriarchal Jat community, the issue chosen to foment hatred was women’s “honour.”

The dominant popular narrative surrounding the communal violence that inflamed Muzaffarnagar was that the stalking of a Jat Hindu girl by a Muslim boy spurred mass anger and retaliatory violence. This grew into a mega-narrative of “love jihad” that suggested that this incident is part of a larger menacing conspiracy of Muslims to target innocent Hindu girls, both to humiliate the Hindu community and to swell their own numbers.

It did not matter that this story of sexual harassment of a Hindu girl by deceased Shahnawaz, a young Muslim man, is now proved a fabrication (Sahai 2016: 29–31). After the events on 27 August 2013 in Qawal village in Muzaffarnagar that left Shahnawaz and two Jat men, Sachin and Gaurav, dead, police investigations confirm that following a heated scuffle when their motorcycles hit each other, Sachin with his cousin Gaurav and a few others went into the Muslim enclave and stabbed Shahnawaz. Local onlookers managed to catch Sachin and Gaurav, even as the other killers escaped. Shahnawaz was rushed to a clinic, and when news came in that he had succumbed to his stab wounds, the crowd killed the two Jat brothers (Kirpal 2016). In fact, the first information report (FIR) filed by the families of the murdered Jat boys did not mention stalking but only a motorcycle accident involving Shahnawaz and Sachin.

Constructing a Narrative

But this account was not emotive enough to construct a narrative of communal victimisation to foster hate. The story was spread instead that Shahnawaz was

Harsh Mander (manderharsh@gmail.com), Akram Akhtar Chaudhary (akramakhtar87@gmail.com), Zafar Eqbal (helloiamzafar@gmail.com) and Rajanya Bose (89.rajanya@gmail.com) are researchers and peace workers of Aman Biradari.

long harassing Sachin's sister, and to avenge this humiliation, Sachin and Gaurav undertook the honour killing of Shahnawaz. Thereafter, a Muslim mob lynched the brothers to death. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member of the legislative assembly (MLA) Sangeet Som uploaded a video of the mob lynching two young men in Sialkot, Pakistan claiming that the men were Sachin and Gaurav, and the murderous mob Muslims of Qawal (Mishra 2016). Most newspapers and television channels relayed this story uncritically (and continue to do so even today), although Som's video was proved to be bogus, and Sachin's sister testified on NDTV that she did not even know Shahnawaz (Jain 2013).

Today, the actual facts no longer matter for the Hindu residents of western Uttar Pradesh. They hold Muslim neighbours of generations vicariously guilty of a crime that never occurred, and of a sinister conspiracy of "love jihad" that by any rational evaluation is a fanciful and mischievous charge. The claim is that good-looking Muslim boys are identified, trained in madrasas, equipped with tools for female entrapment, including motorcycles and smartphones, and mobilised to romantically entangle innocent Hindu girls. Their purpose is allegedly only to convert them to Islam, use them to produce Muslim babies, and cause them various forms of suffering. This highly improbable hate narrative spread like a malevolent forest fire across UP, and in the May 2014 general elections helped garner an unprecedented harvest of votes for the BJP.

The second requirement for communal violence to occur is the organisation of the "riot" itself. Once this story had entered popular consciousness, the next steps were easy. It was propagated that this was not a stray incident but a larger trend—of Muslim boys in large numbers sexually harassing Hindu girls, and indeed that this was part of a larger sinister conspiracy of "love jihad." Just 10 days after the killing of the three young men in Qawal village, building on the groundswell of local Hindu fury against their Muslim neighbours because of their alleged deliberate assaults on the "honour" of Hindu girls, a mahapanchayat was

called with the theme *Beti Bachao* (Save our Daughters). And this paved the way for the crucial step of justifying a retaliatory attack on all local Muslims. Fiery speeches were made against Muslims and afterwards, the frenzied crowd dispersed and attacked Muslim settlements. In the majority of villages, Muslims were labourers in Jat-owned sugar cane farms. Their small houses were set aflame and looted, some were killed, while other terrified people fled to the safety of numbers in Muslim majority villages. Attacks on Muslim enclaves led to nearly 100 deaths, uncounted rapes, arson, looting and the fleeing in terror of 75,000 people.

The third prerequisite for a manufactured riot is a complicit state administration, which fails in prevention, control, rescue and relief. The administration took no steps to quell the rumours, arrest those stoking hatred, or prohibit the mahapanchayat. Once violence broke out, the police forces mostly stood watching as the crowds attacked Muslim settlements, without using force or firing to disperse the furious mobs. They did not rescue those trying to escape; instead survivors depended on wealthy Muslim landowners to protect them as they fled. The administration did not establish relief camps; instead these were organised by the victimised community in Muslim majority villages. We found little presence of the state in these camps: it did not provide sanitation, healthcare, childcare or police outposts to record people's complaints.

Judicial Commissions and the Truth

Although catastrophic communal massacres recur from time to time, the Indian state has never appointed truth and reconciliation commissions. Instead, in the political heat that follows major communal and caste massacres, governments often appoint judicial commissions of enquiry, headed by serving or retired judges. Although commission recommendations are not binding, their findings can, if conducted with fairness, carry moral weight. The Justice Srikrishna Commission that investigated the 1992–93 Mumbai riots is a shining example of

this. The report established the criminal role of both the Shiv Sena and police officers in the carnage (Menon 2013). It is another matter that successive governments took no steps to punish those indicted by the commission, but still the report remains a highly credible source of truth-telling.

However, for the greater part, complicit governments deploy several devices to subvert the important democratic instrument of judicial commissions for communal riots. The first is to appoint compliant and ideologically compatible judges to these commissions. The second is to delay the proceedings of the commissions inordinately. The third is to delay placing the report of the commission in the legislature or Parliament (often for years). As a result, the document remains a secret and cannot be accessed by citizens. The Gujarat government deployed all three strategies after the 2002 carnage. It appointed a commission with judges close to the political leadership, the judges took 12 years to present the report, and there is no sign of the report being placed before the legislature. Therefore we have no idea what it contains.

The judicial commission headed by Justice Vishnu Sahai, appointed after the 2013 Muzaffarnagar communal violence, submitted its report in two years, and the state government tabled it in the legislature expeditiously. However, a careful reading of the 776-page report reflects how such commissions can actually subvert both truth and justice. It legitimises the majoritarian Hindutva communal version about the events and causes, and completely frees the political leadership from any culpability for the violence and displacement.

The Sahai Commission report confirms that the police complaint filed by the Jat boys' family made no allegation of any teasing or harassment of the Jat boys' sister by the Muslim youth. The dispute arose instead from a motorcycle accident of the Muslim and Jat youths. In revenge, the Jat boys went to Shahnawaz's home and stabbed him to death. Angry Muslim neighbours caught and killed the two Jat youths. The report also accepts that the video of the two youths

being killed by a mob was of a lynching in Pakistan, and that it was mischievously circulated widely with posts, including the one from MLA Som, claiming that the youths being lynched mercilessly were the Jat brothers. This inflamed communal tempers among the Jats against the Muslims. It also accepts that false rumours were deliberately circulated before the mahapanchayat of 7 September 2013 that hundreds of Jats had been slaughtered by Muslims and thrown into a canal, that communally provocative speeches were made in the mahapanchayat, and that the widespread arson and slaughter of Muslims started after this.

This should have established clearly the culpability of the BJP and Hindutva organisations for raising communal tempers with criminally circulated falsehoods against the local Muslims, and for the communally charged speeches. Instead the commission chose to give equal, actually greater, weightage to the version of the Hindu Jat majority.

The judge accepts without evidence the charge that while Shahnawaz did not know or tease the sister of the Jat brothers, tensions were high because Muslim youth in general did tease Jat girls. He also accepts (again admittedly without evidence) that Muslim leaders made communally provocative speeches, and also provoked Jats by attacking them as they gathered in large numbers for the 7 September mahapanchayat, and after they dispersed. He ignores the official and fact-finding reports that the Jat mobs were raising threatening slogans asking Muslims to go to Pakistan or the cemetery and attacking them in large numbers, and that the few acts of violence by Muslims had to be seen in that perspective. In this way, the commission mostly accepts and reproduces the Jat and Hindutva narrative of what caused the Muzaffarnagar massacre.

It goes further by never once in the entire report even reflecting on the role of the political leadership of the state government for its criminal mishandling of the communal carnage, let alone indicting it. Even the local administration is let off by the commission with a rap on its knuckles for minor lapses. The commission suggests that for the

most part, the administration did all that was possible to control the violence.

This is a shameful falsehood, entirely unbecoming of the office of a judicial commission that is expected to fearlessly and impartially hold up the light to the truth. With fair and decisive handling, by forcefully quelling rumours that the Muslim youth was killed for harassing Jat girls or that Muslims had slaughtered hundreds of Jats, by acting firmly and fairly in arresting the killers on both sides, and by preventing the series of panchayat gatherings that roused to fever pitch communal tempers against the Muslims, the violence could have been prevented. The administration did none of these. Instead, at every stage, it tried to appease and accommodate the BJP and Hindutva activists, and after the violence also to appease Muslim political and religious leaders.

If judicial commissions will not tell the truth about who and what was responsible for communal massacres, who will?

No Relief for Survivors

Just three months after the carnage, the state government officially terminated all relief camps, even though several thousand displaced persons still lived in fear and dread, and were unwilling to return home because they continued to feel unsafe. Whereas displaced persons in camps should be officially assisted and supported to return to their original homes by promoting reconciliation and security, by forcing them to do so in Muzaffarnagar by closing the camps prematurely, thousands of people were left without even the meagre food and health support that the government had extended in the camps.

Contrary to claims of the state government that all camps emptied months after the carnage, we found over 10,000 women, men and children still living in unofficial camps in around 25 villages one year after the carnage. Even in the immediate months after the conflagration, in many camps state support was restricted to food supplies or a few blankets. Only after national outrage following the death of many children in the winter cold, were there occasional visits by

medical teams. Thereafter even this became a distant memory. Charitable organisations, mainly faith-based Muslim associations, also closed their offices: compassion also tires. The unhappy people—fugitives from the hate which pervades the villages of their birth—were left to fend for themselves. They had just survived the monsoon showers, and endured three long winters in camps under plastic sheets.

In these camps, people subsisted mainly by working as casual labour in the surrounding fields, and in the numerous brick kilns that dot the landscape. But they reported much lower wages than prevailing rates, as employers knew of their misfortunes and desperation. Besides, they also had to compete with local labour. They still had to beg landlords for loans, to cope with illness and hunger, and if they were lucky they got a few thousand rupees at twice the already usurious interest rates, 10% compound per month. “Who knows when you might run away with our money?” reasoned the landlords. Many children dropped out of school, sometimes because teachers refused to admit them or sometimes even taunted them but more often because they had to labour to light the kitchen fires of their families.

Three distinct trajectories were visible for populations who escaped their homelands. First were residents of villages in which locals suddenly turned upon their Muslim neighbours with daggers, country rifles and flaming torches. People still recount with pain and disbelief the cruelty with which old people and children were slaughtered, women gang-raped and homes destroyed. Their houses were plundered and torched, often by young men, who had been like sons and brothers, and by revered village elders. Hopes of ever returning to the villages of their birth crumbled when no one from their villages sought them out to offer solace and comfort or to urge them to return home.

The state government announced a grant of ₹5 lakh for each household only in villages that were attacked, on the condition that they would not return to their original villages. We believe that this represents an utterly bankrupt state

policy with communal underpinnings, one that has no precedents in past communal riots. The duty of the state was to restore mutual faith and trust between communities to enable their return instead of tacitly incentivising religious segregation. As a result, the norm of centuries—of mixed villages in which Hindu and Muslim residents lived in amity side by side—was abandoned in favour of segregation of populations on religious lines, the ultimate success of the communal agenda. That this was done with state support is particularly distressing.

Displaced villagers left behind a great deal in the villages of their birth; houses where they were born and raised, settled livelihoods, life savings, friends of a lifetime, and most of all trust in people of divergent faiths. Their adopted villages were far from welcoming. In their desperation, Muslim landowners saw the chance for windfall profits. They carved out and sold small house-plots at sometimes four times the price before the carnage. Refugees spent all their compensation money to buy small sites for their houses at these extortionist prices, and took loans at usurious interest rates of up to 10% per month compound to build modest brick houses. Many carried loans from before they escaped their villages, which they took care to also return. The administration did little to pressurise those who set up these colonies to fulfil their basic obligations to supply most fundamental amenities of internal roads, drainage, water supply and electrification.

The new settlers searched desperately for work, in exploitative brick-kilns, or as casual labour on farms or building sites, or in petty house-to-house trade. The brick kilns entailed near-bondage, whereas petty-trading required further high-interest private loans. All this amidst the festering pain of betrayal by their former neighbours and aggravated by unwelcoming discrimination by original inhabitants in their new villages. The predicament of these refugees from communal hate demonstrated once again that sharing the same religious identity is no guarantee of social solidarity.

A second category of affected households was of villagers who were not

attacked by their neighbours, but who still fled because they could no longer trust their neighbours in Muslim-minority villages. Muslim residents of a large number of villages, not just from Muzaffarnagar and Shamli, but even surrounding districts of Meerut, Saharanpur, Baghpat and Hapur also fled their homes in fear of attacks, lived in camps not recognised or supported by the state government for one to two years, and have finally gone to mostly self-settled colonies in Muslim-majority villages. Their quandary was that the state government does not regard them to be “affected” by the communal carnage, therefore they did not qualify for even a rupee of compensation.

The last category was of households that ran away when neighbouring villages were set aflame and yet agreed to return after persuasion by the state government. We visited many of these villages. Muslim residents everywhere said that it was only a matter of time when they would raise enough money to also leave forever. Social relations between communities had collapsed to such a degree that women in burqas and men in beards were routinely taunted, and none were invited for weddings and funerals, a dramatic reversal of co-living before 2013.

The sense of fear and alienation of the survivors was enhanced by distressing reports of organised social and economic boycott of Muslims after the mass violence. Many men testified that if they went back to their villages, they were told to cut off their beards if they wished to live in their village. People also reported similar hate exchanges in buses and public spaces. Three young men were killed when they went to work in their fields (*Tehelka* 2013). Sporadic incidents of sexual assault were also reported (Human Rights Watch 2013). Survivors recounted intimidation and boycott in employment as farm labour, or economic activities like *pheris*, or selling cloth and other goods from house to house (Ali 2015).

Few Arrests or Convictions

The confidence of survivors to return to homes was further shaken because of the very low numbers of arrests and

convictions of the men accused of murder, rape, arson and looting. Without justice, as we have learned from survivors in many sites of communal violence, neither do wounds heal nor can fresh violence be deterred.

Police and even the judiciary often displayed communal biases. Of 6,400 persons accused of crimes in 534 FIRs, charges were ultimately pursued against only 1,540 persons. Most of the cases of murder were closed without a charge-sheet or trial showing the accused as “unknown persons.”

Even after a year of the carnage, only 800 people were arrested, and most of them were quickly released on bail. One reason given for low numbers of arrests by the police administration was that large numbers of women blocked the entrance to the village whenever police vehicles drove there for arrests, or farmers parked tractors to thwart police passage. Survivors, on the other hand, believed that police themselves informally tipped off the villagers before arriving to make arrests. Otherwise how would so many assemble at short notice to block village roads? This allegation was difficult to verify independently, but no self-respecting police administration could accept these public block to persist when they came in the way of fulfilling their official duties.

It did not help that this “inefficiency” was selective. In the two episodes of killings in Qawal village that set off the hate violence, the Muslim men accused of killing the Jat cousins were duly arrested and charge-sheeted. However, police closed the case related to the murder of the Muslim boy Shahnawaz, claiming that no one is alive who killed him. However, many eye-witnesses confirmed that the Jat cousins were accompanied by many other men who participated in the murder but escaped. Shahnawaz’s father has appealed against this final report. His appeal is pending at the time of writing.

Only three of the 25 men accused in six cases of gang rape were held. “I will carry this shame for all my life, but not one (of the men who raped her) is in jail,” a 25-year old woman of village Fugana said to Betwa Sharma, reporter for *Al Jazeera* (Sharma 2014). Another

added sadly, “We are poor, another year will pass without arrests, and then we will be forgotten.” Given the disgraceful record of the police so far in apprehending those charged with grave hate crimes, her pessimism is understandable. In one rape case, all the accused men have been acquitted; in another even after three years no one has been arrested; and in the other rape cases, all the accused men are out on bail.

There was enormous pressure on the witnesses to rescind on their statements, and a large number of witnesses have turned “hostile” in court. Although Indian criminal law does not permit “compromise” in heinous offences, this remains a routine practice after mass communal violence. Since the accused freely roam in the same villages, either evading arrest or on bail, they can intimidate the complainants and victims. It does not help that the majority of the complainants are impoverished farm workers or brick kiln labour, critically dependent economically on the large Jat landowners for work and loans.

The police was particularly soft in acting against politicians who were allegedly directly involved in the rioting. They have at best been booked in very minor sections like Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Most of them did not even see the inside of a jail.

Several persons killed during the carnage were not considered as dead because of murders related to the riots, as a result of which their families were not given any compensation and employment as state reparation. Still, around 18 people are declared “missing.” Their FIRs were registered under murder or attempt to murder sections of the IPC, but no decisive action was taken by the state government to find them or their killers.

There were also other distressing signs of judicial bias, because most arrested persons have been granted bail almost the next day or soon after their arrests. This ignored the gravity of hate crimes, and the susceptibility of the survivors to intimidation because of their vulnerable situation after mass targeted violence has spurred large-scale fear, destruction of livelihoods

and habitats and migration. In five cases of heinous violent crimes the accused have been acquitted.

Triumph of Politics of Hatred

More than two years after the carnage, BJP member of Parliament Hukam Singh stirred a nationwide controversy by claiming that more than 300 Hindus had been forced to leave the Muslim majority urbanised village Kairana in Shamli district because of extortion, threats and violence by criminals of the Muslim community. He was forced to backtrack when investigations confirmed that many in his list were dead, or had left the village 10 years earlier in search of better schooling or jobs (*Indian Express* 2016). It is remarkable therefore that the forced exodus of several thousand Muslims after the communal carnage of September 2013 from Hindu majority villages because of violence and fear in Shamli and Muzaffarnagar has attracted little public attention, and even less outrage, even though this represents a triumph of the politics of hatred and division and a grave betrayal of the constitutional guarantee of fraternity.

“There is nothing, nothing which can persuade us to return to our villages. They burned and looted our homes: we could barely save our lives, as we desperately ran with our children in our arms and just the clothes we were wearing on our backs. What is there for us to return to?” Words we hear over and over through the districts of Muzaffarnagar and Shamli, after the storm of hate overnight tore this peaceful countryside apart.

As we travelled from village to village in these two districts, everywhere we bore witness to a social landscape ravaged by this communal hate, just three years old, but already settled like the crusted burden of generations. An old man said sadly, “No one has come to call us back, not the village elders, nor people we grew up and worked with.” “No village cricket team was complete without a Muslim lad or two,” said another. “And now they don’t care if we live or die.” “Look at this place in which we live now,” said a third, pointing to leaking, soiled plastic sheets stretched over

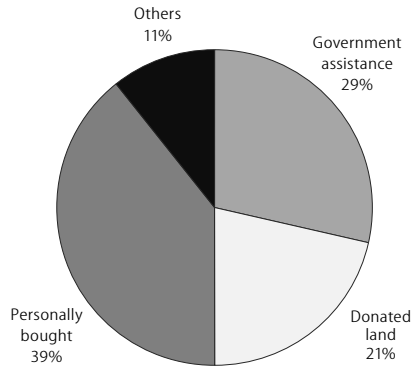
bamboo sticks affording each family a few square feet of minimal shelter, surrounded by black cesspools and mosquitoes. “We know we can die here as well. But at least here we are assured that our loved ones will bury us. Not like our village where our people were killed and burned.”

By the third year, this expulsion from their homelands has become permanent. The state government did little to create conditions in which survivors felt safe to return to the villages of their birth. Without any public remorse by their attackers, any official or community initiatives for reconciliation, or attempts at justice, these hapless people were unable to return to their villages. Sometimes, with small grants from government or NGOs but mainly with usurious loans from private moneylenders, they bought house-plots in hastily laid-out colonies in Muslim majority villages on what were cultivated fields. Seizing the opportunity to make windfall profits, local large farmers and real estate developers sold these plots at exorbitant rates to these luckless displaced persons.

The indifference of the state government is reflected also in the fact that there is no official record of these mostly self-settled colonies, let alone official plans to ensure that they are able to access basic public goods and citizenship entitlements. Therefore Aman Biradari and Afkar India Foundation undertook a comprehensive survey of these new settlements of internally displaced persons.

With mounting astonishment and anguish, we ultimately discovered as many as 65 refugee colonies, 28 in Muzaffarnagar and 37 in Shamli, housing 29,328 residents, described in our report *Living Apart* (Mander et al 2016). Even this does not represent the total number of people, displaced by the hate violence, who could never return to the villages of their birth. Uncounted populations bought houses or rented homes in existing Muslim settlements, or permanently migrated out of these districts or even the state. We estimate that the mass communal violence led ultimately to at least 50,000 people being permanently expelled from their villages as

Figure 1: Muzaffarnagar Acquiring Land for Houses



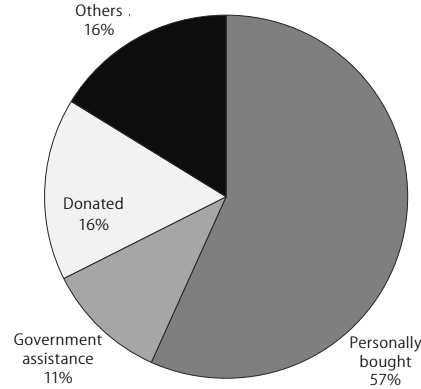
hate refugees, of which 30,000 were in these 65 new refugee colonies.

Among the 28 colonies in Muzaffarnagar, 19 are inhabited by people directly affected by the riots while the other nine colonies have a mixed population of those directly affected and those who fled due to fear of violence. Twenty-one of these colonies are in rural areas, while seven are in urban areas. Among the 37 colonies in Shamli, 18 have people directly affected by the riots while 19 have a mixed population. Of these, 26 are in rural areas while 11 are in urban areas.

In hellish slum-like settlements, these internal refugees are bravely building their lives anew. Perhaps our most striking survey finding was the almost complete absence of the state from these efforts of the refugees to begin a new life. Apart from a ₹5 lakh grant given only to households directly hit by the violence (and none to the much larger number who escaped their villages because of fear of attacks), the state took no responsibility for helping them resettle in any way. The displaced were forced to either abandon or sell their properties at distress prices in their villages of origin, and the state compensation for the loss of their moveable assets was negligible.

The colonies were settled substantially with the self-help efforts of the impoverished and battered refugees themselves. Figure 1 shows the ways of funding for acquisition of lands for houses in Muzaffarnagar while Figure 2 shows the same for Shamli district. Part support in many colonies came from mostly Muslim organisations. One of the heartwarming exceptions was Sadbhawana Trust, which assisted 230 households to

Figure 2: Shamli Acquiring Land for Houses



design their houses and choose their neighbours in Apna Ghar colony. And in the only initiative by a political party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—CPI(M) gave ₹1 lakh to displaced households in Ekta Nagar. The support of Muslim organisations often came with strings attached, such as forcing residents to adhere to more orthodox beliefs, or refusing to give land titles to the residents. Muslim charities collected donations from Indian Muslims overseas for a few

residents have titles to land and houses. In 41 of the 65 colonies across both districts, three years after the riots, households are still unable to build houses and instead live in makeshift houses with plastic roofs and temporary walls. In others, with grants, personal labour but also loans from private moneylenders, they have been able to build all-weather brick houses, though these are modest and small.

The survey highlights the neglect and apathy of the state with little evidence of any meaningful public provisioning. The developers or the government rarely invested in drinking water, sewerage, drainage or electricity, and the district administration at most installed a handpump. Therefore typically, these colonies completely lack basic infrastructure and public services. In Muzaffarnagar, 82% colonies do not have clean drinking water, 93% no street lighting, 61% no drainage and not a single colony has a public toilet (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3: Muzaffarnagar Infrastructure-1

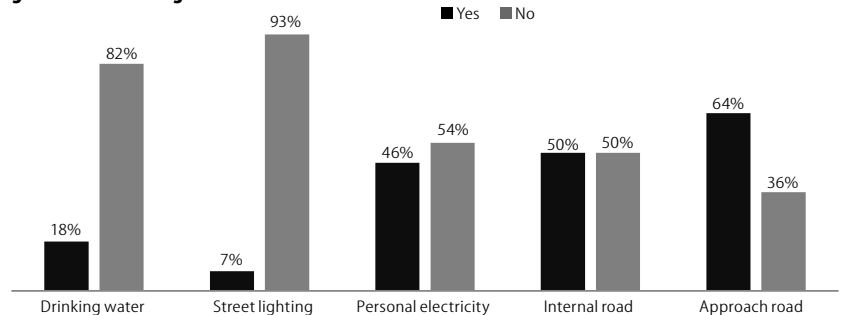
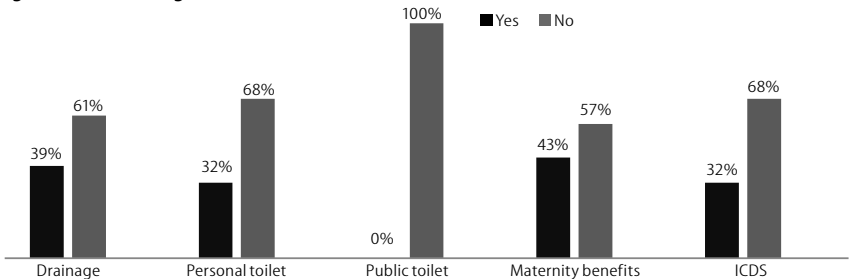


Figure 4: Muzaffarnagar Infrastructure-2

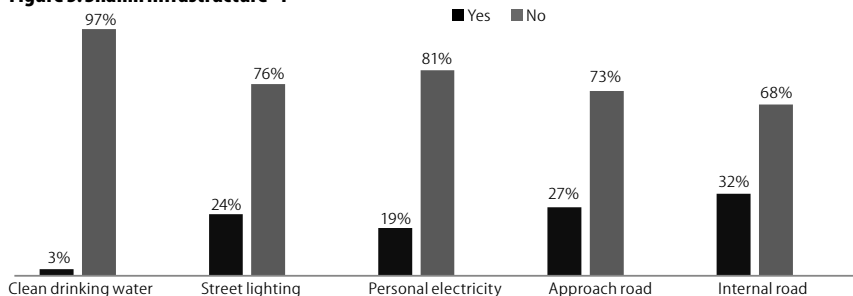
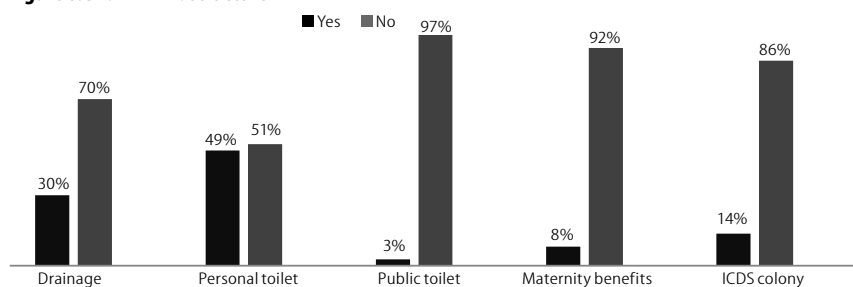


colonies, but mostly refuse to give them land titles. The misfortune of the displaced people mounted because on some occasions unscrupulous touts, sadly from the Muslim community itself, charged the residents for the land and houses.

Only in 15 colonies in Muzaffarnagar and 26 colonies in Shamli did all

In Shamli, 97% colonies lack drinking water, 76% street lights, 70% drainage and 97% colonies have no public toilets (Figures 5 and 6, p 45).

Education and childcare services are badly hit in these colonies. Conflict pushed children out of school into the workforce or early marriages. But in

Figure 5: Shamli Infrastructure-1**Figure 6: Shamli Infrastructure-2**

more than half the colonies in Muzaffarnagar, and two-thirds in Shamli, there is no primary school within a kilometre of the colony. Less than a quarter of the colonies have Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres. In not a single colony do people have Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) job cards. In Muzaffarnagar, in 27 out of 29 colonies, no one has a ration card. In both districts, virtually no one receives old age, widow or disability pension. Samajwadi pension, started after 2013, is available to only few households in seven colonies across both districts.

A Sombre Homecoming

In this way, only around a third of the people who ran away in fear after the attacks on Muslim villages three years ago returned home, the remainder migrated out of the state, or rented or bought houses in Muslim majority settlements, or established and moved in large numbers into these new colonies in Muslim habitations. But it was a sombre homecoming for the minority who did return. They arrived to homelands in which they are no longer friends and neighbours but hated “others,” suddenly unwelcome at festivals and weddings. Taunts and barbs have become commonplace in the region, and young men are particularly discourteous, pulling beards and heckling women in burkhas. Social

hatred has replaced traditions of shared living that endured all of living memory. Consequently, many who return are saving to buy land and ultimately move to Muslim villages.

Rural riots are very different from urban ones, because people know their attackers in the former, unlike in the relative anonymity of cities. The sense of betrayal and loss, and the associated anger, pain and bitterness generally runs much deeper in rural riots. As one survivor, who continued to live in a makeshift unofficial camp for nearly two years, remarked to us, “Houses can be built again. But when faith is broken, it is very hard for this to be rebuilt.”

Before the violence, residents in this agriculturally prosperous region saw themselves first as farmers and farm workers, then as members of certain castes, and only after this as persons of different religions. The region was distinct for its farmer-led politics, and Gujjar and Jat farmers, both Hindu and Muslim, shared strong political and social solidarities. Today all of this has crumbled, and cleavages of religious difference have erased all other solidarities of class and caste that marked this region during the many decades since independence.

These divided populations represent the triumph of communal politics, successfully undoing histories of shared living between Hindus and Muslims in

the region over centuries. This emulates the “Gujarat model”, now unleashed on Uttar Pradesh, which deploys communal violence and hate to drive out and “cleanse” entire villages of their erstwhile Muslim residents. These strategies of engineered social hate continue to yield a rich harvest of votes of polarised populations. But new generations of Hindus and Muslims will be raised deprived of friends and neighbours of the “other” community. This will render them much more amenable to communal politics, eroding ultimately the idea of India itself.

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