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**SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE NOTION OF AN  
'INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PACT': A PERSPECTIVE  
FROM AHMEDABAD**

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## **Some Reflections on the Notion of an ‘Inclusive Political Pact’: A Perspective from Ahmedabad**

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### **Introduction**

It is possible to tell many stories of the multilayered and multifaceted city that is Ahmedabad, located in the state of Gujarat in western India. One story can be constructed out of the rise and decline of the textile industry, of the growth and the decimation of one of the largest industrial working classes in India, and of the informalisation of labour that followed the dissolution of this working class. We could tell a second story; that of a distinct and alternative experiment in trade unionism. The Mazdoor Mahajan Sangh or the Textile Labour Association that was inaugurated by Gandhi embodied the Gandhian principles of trust and partnership between capital and labour, rather than that of irreconcilable class contradictions. We could tell a third story that centres on the way the city has successfully negotiated two major economic transitions: from a trade oriented economy to an industrial economy, and from an industrial to a post-industrial economy. We could tell a fourth story, of how Ahmedabad was constituted as the crucible of nation building in India with the establishment of the Sabarmati Ashram by Gandhi, with the founding of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth (university), the Navjivan Trust, the prestigious Indian Institute of Management, and the equally prestigious National Institute of Design. We could also tell a fifth story of the city, how and why it became the site for Gandhi’s experiments in truth and his earnest efforts to persuade people belonging to different castes and religious persuasions to live together. The city also gained fame because it was here that Gandhi began the famous Salt Satyagraha, which arguably represented the highpoint in the struggle for freedom. We could also narrate a fascinating story of why Gandhi did not go back to Ahmedabad after the salt *satyagraha*, though he had lived there for most of the 1920s. All these stories are not only absorbing in their own right; they provide fertile ground for social science research. However, there is one other gloomy and bleak tale that can be told of Ahmedabad; how and why the city leads the country in the scale and the number of communal riots between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

This paper is a contribution to the work of the ‘cities and fragile states’ component of the Crisis States Research Programme<sup>1</sup> and seeks to explain and account for the prevalence of communal violence in the city. The paper deals with the spatial aspect of the phenomenon: the ghettoisation of the Muslim community. The notion of the ghetto symbolises many messages, all of which are appalling. On the face of it, the term ‘ghetto’ simply implies that members of a particular community have chosen to live together in a confined spatial location. But ghettos do not originate as an act of free will, or as a result of the free choice of people to live among their own, or to live precisely there; in that very place. The origin of the

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to James Putzel, Jo Beall and Wendy Foulds at the Crisis States Research Centre for their support with this project. Praveen Priyadarshi, Silky Tyagi, and Neha Khanna carried out field work in Ahmedabad, and assembled primary and secondary source material for this research project and without their help, this paper could not have been written. The mistakes and the flaws in the paper remain mine.

ghetto lies in the fear and anxiety of people that they are - and will be - targeted, stigmatised and subjected to unbearable violence just because they belong to community X as opposed to community Y. Beleaguered communities flock to the ghetto in search of sanctuary. These constricted and claustrophobic spatial settlements might look like the end goal of the Hobbesian search for basic self preservation but the ghetto is not a refuge and the security it provides is purely illusive. In abnormal times the ghetto provides an easy target for acts of aggression. In normal times, the residents of the ghetto continue to be stigmatised and deprived of both rights and civic amenities that are the due of every citizen. In Ahmedabad, Muslim ghettos - and there is no other kind of ghetto in the city - are typed by other residents as mini-Pakistan's, and the road between these sadly impoverished and denuded localities and other areas is construed as the 'border'. Given the historical record of hostility between India and Pakistan, the implications are clear. The residents of the ghetto are the enemy; there can be no other relation with them but that of hostility.

There are other messages conveyed by the ghetto; the spatial marginalisation of an entire population, denial of basic rights and civic amenities, and the reduction of their status as citizen to one of subject. An entire group is, in the process, rendered politically irrelevant. The built environment of the ghetto, to put the point across starkly, can be seen as a spatial manifestation of the exclusion and the disempowerment of an entire section of citizens in a society that claims democratic credentials. In this essay I want to concentrate on one type of ghetto in Ahmedabad, the resettlement colony, in order to work out the implications of the notion of the political pact outlined by James Putzel and the research team on 'development as state-making' at the Crisis States Research Centre.

## **Of Political Pacts**

Putzel distinguishes between the factors that enhance the resilience of a state, and those factors that enable states to develop the capacity to negotiate economic growth and poverty reduction. (Putzel 2007). State resilience, proposes Putzel, depends crucially on (a) the inclusiveness of bargains struck among elites and (b) the extent to which state organisations, particularly those responsible for security and taxation, have established their presence throughout the country's territory. He suggests that along with effective state presence, the existence of a pact among political elites, (which is presumably arrived at through processes of intensive bargaining) necessarily imparts to the state a certain modicum of stability, and provides what can be termed a 'holding together' mechanism. The condition is that the consensus should be *inclusive*. That is, the pact should reflect and codify the interests of most, if not all the elites. Once political elites enter into a political pact, and once the state acquires the capacity to hold society together through monopoly over security and tax administration, we can reasonably expect that the society in question will not be wracked by periodic crisis, which poses a threat to its very existence and reproduction.

Let me expand on Putzel's argument and dwell on the implications of the notion of inclusive political pacts. For one, it is more than obvious that no political pact, however inclusive it may be, can ever be carved in stone. There is, in politics, absolutely no notion of an original Hobbesian social contract, which once arrived at governs the lives, the work habits, the social relations, and the fate of successive generations in perpetuity. For even as new problems and issues are catapulted onto the political horizon, the political pact will have to be renegotiated in order to lay down new rules of the new game. Take as an example the increasing importance of the environment in political discourses, which has radically, if not wholly,

transformed practices of the appropriation and the use of natural resources such as forests, water, and land. If women's struggles for a fair share of the parental property have resulted in the reformulation of property rights that constitute the staple of the market order, affirmative action policies for the doubly disadvantaged have considerably transformed notions of merit and competition, which is another mainstay of a market oriented social and economic order. In India, the rise of caste based parties which shun the notion of inclusive territorial representation, and which argue strenuously for group interests, have completely transformed the rules of a competitive party system. It follows that as political understanding and practices change, these changes will have to be reflected in the constitution of the political pact; otherwise the latter will simply become redundant.

Further, it is more than likely that over time new elites acquire political significance and older elites lose out on this front. Elite formation and reformation is a constantly shifting process; the product of technological changes, new forms of production, and new labour processes, all of which result in new power equations. These transformations necessarily call for new political pacts, new bargains, and new bargaining strategies. In other words, even if political elites have to be relevant in and for that society; political relevance can prove both fluid and mutable. The political and the moral clout of, say, landowners in a feudal society, declines somewhat rapidly in an industrial society in which land becomes a factor of production, rent, and profit, rather than a source of economic, social, and juridical power. In an industrial order, as Marx was to remind us long ago, the two politically significant classes are the owners of capital and the owners of labour power, and these confront each other in the market place as the buyer and as the seller of commodities. Consider how in a post-industrial globalised economy and a society based on new technologies, capitalists and workers who are unable to make the transition to new systems of production and new labour processes rapidly go to seed. Who would have thought in the heyday of industrial capitalism that those who specialise in the production and dissemination of knowledge and information would one day stand squarely at the centre of the production process the way they do today? Furthermore, as has become painfully evident, in post-industrial economies the blue collar working class just does not possess the same degree of political significance and thereby relevance, for a variety of reasons: the informalisation of labour, the decline of the organised working class, the rise of new labour processes that demand new skills and new management techniques, and the pervasiveness of globalised capital. Since the bargaining power of this section of the working class has declined sharply; it is no longer considered a necessary partner in the refashioned political pact.

Political pacts are, in sum, ephemeral entities. If the pact does not reflect and register the rise and decline or the dominance and weaknesses of political elites, then that society is bound to lapse into instability. Marx has commented famously that when the forces of production outstrip the relations of production, societies go into crisis. This insight can be read as a powerful comment on the relevance and the irrelevance of political elites. In sum, the political pact needs to reflect changing balances of power and informal shifting alignments, otherwise it becomes superfluous. The nature of the political pact, in other words, is radically different, at different times, in the same society.

Therefore, when Putzel refers to political elites, he obviously means those elites who happen to be politically significant *at a particular moment of time*. As elites decline or are reconstituted in new modes, or as new elites appear on the horizon, the political pact itself has to be reformulated in order to safeguard the interests of a new category of elites. The assumption of course is that any pact both reflects and codifies the interests of the politically

relevant section of the population. It follows that the capacity of a political pact to lend stability to a society, and enhance the durability of a state, depends to what extent this pact can expand or contract, be refashioned or reworked, to accommodate the interests of currently significant political elites. Putzel's point that the stability of a society depends upon the degree to which the political pact can both accommodate and represent the interests of elites, is perfectly valid. But what was generically termed the 'circulation of elites' in the late nineteenth century has to be taken into account. Therefore, the pact itself needs to be adjusted and fine tuned to keep in touch with new developments. The process of arriving at an elite consensus through a political process of negotiation and bargaining may be far more fleeting and shifting than assumed at first glance. Consider for instance the disastrous consequences that follow when a section of elites, who are no longer relevant to collective life, attempt to dominate society. This is after all the stuff of which the French Revolution was made in the eighteenth century.

The notion of political significance can be interpreted in at least two ways. Political elites can be conceptualised in terms of their formation, dissolution, and reformation. The emergence and the consolidation of a set of elites, is, in this sense highly dependent upon the economic profile of the society at hand. In a classic class based model of elites in the developing world, we would, for instance, include the political and the bureaucratic class which has acquired a disproportionate historical role in developing societies, the landowners who remain important because one economic system has not made way for another, the owners of domestic capital, and the owners of trans-national capital. Also included in the political pact would be international agencies such as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, trans-national banks and donor agencies, and global NGOs. Developing societies appear to straddle both time and space, since they contain elites that belong to different sorts of social configurations, different sorts of organisational establishments, and even different economic systems. It goes without saying that the pact will include elites grounded in different forms of power.

The notion of politically significant elites acquires, however, a completely different dimension in ethnically plural and divided societies. Here elites who represent distinctive ethnic groups and their interests will have to be included in the pact, if this pact has to endure. The ethnicity based model of elite representation in decision making bodies, has been classically termed consociationalism. In its current avatar, this model is referred to as the 'mirror theory of representation'. According to this theory, politically salient ethnic groups should be represented in decision making bodies in direct proportion to their share of the population, irrespective of whether the group in question is oppressed or dominated by the majority group. It is more important that the leadership of the group be represented at the site at which decisions are made.

There is, in sum, considerable virtue in James Putzel's proposition that the stability of a society is dependent upon, among other things, the existence of a consensus among political elites, for the following reasons. One, participation in processes of decision making, and in particular the power to veto any proposed legislation which has some bearing upon the group represented by the elite, transforms leaders of an ethnic group into stake holders in the system. Two, even if the outcome of the decision making process is not approved by a particular group, the leaders can hardly complain, *provided* they have been given a fair chance to participate in the deliberations that *precede* the taking of decisions, and provided that they have been offered an equally fair opportunity to *influence* the decision. That is what matters is the equal opportunity to participate in the processes whereby decisions are taken. Three, very many vexatious issues have been resolved by incorporating the elite of particularly

troublesome groups into the ruling coalition. One can, after all, hardly complain of oppression, if one is a stakeholder in the system that oppresses. Four, if the coalition of elites arrives at a political consensus on the rules of the game and on their own stakes in the system, there is far less likelihood that the balance and the stability of a given society will be threatened at any given point in time.

However, I would suggest that there are various preconditions that must be addressed before a viable political pact can be reached through processes of bargaining, and be signed and sealed, if not for perpetuity, then at least for the immediate future. One, the participants have to exhibit the virtue of prescience and recognise that the pact has to be constantly renegotiated and adjusted to address both pressing issues that may be relatively new to the political agenda, and new elites. Two, the coalition of political elites must be sharp enough to be aware both of the decline, if any, of some of its members, the rising political significance of new groups, and the need to incorporate these groups into the pact. Atul Kohli has argued, for instance, that the success of India's democracy is largely due to the fact that the claims of new political elites have been neutralised by incorporating some of them into the system (Kohli 2001). Three, all elites that represent significant groups must be given a fair opportunity to participate in the system. Let me elaborate the third point because it may be of some importance for the notion of elite bargains, or political pacts among elites. A political pact can only be inclusive, *if* a particular ethnic group has not been marginalised, rendered politically irrelevant, or simply not recognised as a worthy partner.

That exclusionary political pacts can generate serious consequences can be foretold and it is precisely this recognition that underlies Putzel's insistence on inclusive political pacts. For instance, much of the armed struggle in the Kashmir Valley erupted in the late 1980s because one national political party - the Congress - and one state party - the National Conference - simply did not allow the entry of other groups into the electoral arena. The 1984 and 1987 elections to the state assembly were so heavily rigged against relative newcomers to the electoral process, that these contestants were forced to take up arms against an extremely discriminatory and corrupt system. Structures of opportunity were, in other words, heavily tilted against new groups seeking to enter the electoral system in the Kashmir Valley, as much as they were tilted against the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, when the Tamil language was downgraded in the nineteen fifties. The cause of the civil war that wracked Sri Lanka for twenty six years was exclusionary linguistic politics. The discontent that erupted around the politics of language could have been predicted. If out of a plurality of languages one language is privileged as the official language; the non-speakers of the official language are disadvantaged in a number of different but overlapping ways.<sup>2</sup> This fact should be more than obvious. People who speak the language used in educational institutions as a medium of instruction, in government jobs and transactions, in deliberative forums, in decision making processes, in the legislature, in the judiciary, and in the government owned media, will possess a rankly unfair advantage over non-speakers of the language. The latter will have to invest in the learning of a language if they want to take advantage of the structure of opportunities available in that society. If narrowly conceived linguistic policies make access to material opportunities difficult for the non-speakers of that language, the devaluation of a language also leads to the depreciation of identities, downgrading of epistemic systems and dismissal of the symbolic resources of the linguistic community. Moreover, citizens whose language has been devalued are unfairly disadvantaged in the public sphere, because debates in this space are conducted within the conceptual and the symbolic framework constituted by

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<sup>2</sup> Tamil was reinstated as the official language in 1978.

the dominant/official language. The right of the non-speakers of the language to take part in the debates in the public sphere as equals is simply curtailed. If the non-speakers of the official language are settled in a discrete piece of territory, discontent can easily translate into secessionist movements. This was the precise case in Sri Lanka, where Tamil speakers were denied fair opportunities to participate in the formation of skills and training, which are essential for a competitive market economy. Although the status of Tamil was restored as an official language in 1978, the measure came too late and amounted to little.

Therefore, Putzel's argument that the political pact among a coalition of elites has to be inclusive, or that the pact must incorporate the interests of politically significant agents is perfectly valid. The problem arises when structures and processes *prevent* the formation of new political elites, or systemically *disempower* certain groups. The net consequences of such exclusion are that the leaders of the group are simply not in a position to participate in the bargains that result in a political pact. Political pacts can be exclusionary not only because some groups are left out deliberately, but when they are not recognised as significant. Political pacts can exclude because some groups have been systematically discriminated against and marginalised. In most cases an exclusionary rather than an inclusive political pact among elites has led to instability, armed struggle and societal breakdown as in the case of the Kashmir Valley and Sri Lanka. But ironically enough there are also cases in which exclusionary political pacts that systematically disempower and disprivilege a particular group result in political *stability*. This is precisely the case in Ahmedabad.

Despite the fact that Ahmedabad holds the record of being one of India's most violent cities, since 2002 when the most horrific violence was wreaked upon the Muslim community by the cadres of the Hindu Right, there has been no indication of further communal tension. The Muslim question seems to have been 'resolved' by the Hindu right, mainly by forcing the minority community to accept that if it has to live in a state dominated by the religious right, then it has to comply with dominant rules.<sup>3</sup> A community from which once Ahmedabad's ruling classes, court officials, and skilled crafts persons and weavers were drawn, and a community that formed an important component of the working class in industrialised Ahmedabad, has been rendered quiescent and perhaps even politically irrelevant, through processes that essentially involve the employment of violence. Muslims in Ahmedabad form fifteen percent of the population, and by all standards of democracy should be represented in the political pact that lays down the rules of the game. As suggested above, inclusion of minority ethnic groups into the pact neutralises discontent and can serve to 'buy out' the leaders of the group. In Ahmedabad this is not even considered necessary, because the community itself has been so thoroughly disempowered. The stability that has ensued may be purely illusory and purely transient since political pacts are by nature time bound and exclusionary political pacts even more so. This remains to be seen.

In sum, our study of Ahmedabad illustrates two aspects of elite pacts or bargains. On the one hand, the city has been able to make two rather important economic transitions - from a trading to an industrial centre, and from an industrial centre to a globalised service economy - successfully. The changing political composition of the elite is reflected in the renegotiated political pact. If at one time the pact was one between the owners of the textile industry and the working class, it now reflects the interests of a globalised capitalist class, the service sector in the economy, and owners of financial capital. What is not present today is the formerly organised working class, much of which is now unorganised and which works in the

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<sup>3</sup> Interviews with various Muslim citizens in the city. Their names have been withheld at their request.

informal economy. The ability of the political elites in the city to enter into new forms of agreement, and on new terms, is the success story of Ahmedabad, and one that offers some lessons to other societies seeking to make economic transitions successfully.

The second aspect of the elite pact is how the Muslim minority in the city has been thoroughly marginalised. The leaders of the community are just not considered important enough to be included in the political pact. At one point an important component of the trading economy and of the industrial working class, today the Muslims of Ahmedabad live in poverty and want, in desolate ghettos and resettlement colonies that at one and the same time evoke hateful representations and supreme neglect. In these ghettos they are denied the basic rights of citizenship relegated as they are to the spatial, economic and political margins of the city.

These two stories, of successful economic transitions and of the ‘successful’ marginalisation of an entire body of the citizens, tells us about two kinds of political pacts. One pact codes an agreement on how economic transitions can be managed successfully. The second pact codes agreements on *which section of social elites can be included in the transition, and which are left out through the institutionalisation of processes prior to the pact*. In a significant sense both pacts are based not on inclusion but on the exclusion of the Muslim minority. In the next section I will seek to map out these exclusions by studying one dimension of this marginalisation: the ghettoisation of Muslims, with ghettos standing in for exclusion, the herding together of populations, and the denial of access to both structures of opportunity and to partnership in political pacts.

### **The Making of Ahmedabad as a Segmented City**

The Muslim community in Ahmedabad began moving to ghettos in 1969 after a major communal riot had shaken the city. In this riot ninety percent of the people who were killed belonged to the Muslim community (Shah 1970). By the 1980s the ghettoisation process had intensified and by the 1990s only a few mixed neighbourhoods remained (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 230) It was these Muslim inhabited areas and some mixed neighbourhoods that were systematically and brutally targeted in the violence of March 2002, the worst affected areas being on either side of the railway track in old Ahmedabad. Settlements were burnt down, individuals were brutally tortured and murdered, and women were subjected to gang rape by mobs numbering sometimes ten to twenty thousand. An estimated two thousand people were killed in the state of Gujarat and out of this number one thousand were murdered in Ahmedabad alone. A majority of those killed were Muslims (Chenoy et al 2002).

The victims of violence were herded into poorly funded and grossly inadequate relief camps mainly set up by Muslim religious organisations. Twenty relief camps were set up in the city, and some of the bigger camps, such as the Shah Alam camp housed between eight and nine thousand refugees. The Concerned Citizen’s Tribunal reported that in March 2002, ninety-eight thousand Muslim refugees sought sanctuary in the camps (Concerned Citizens Tribunal 2002). By May-July 2002, the camps were being rapidly wound up by the government and the inhabitants, after being given pathetically inadequate funds as ‘compensation’ sometimes as low as Rs 1200, were now on their own and thrown onto the mercy of a society that had proved complicit in the carnage, either actively or through studied silence. The state government, recognising neither the plight, nor the needs of the victims of communal violence, simply refused to take any action which would help these people to rebuild their

shattered lives. Some of the refugees went back to their homes, others migrated out of the state, and according to the Citizens Tribunal report, an estimated 13,482 refugees continued to live in the relief camps that were now being run informally. About a quarter of the displaced, fearing renewed threats by organisations on the religious right were reluctant to go back to their original homes. Yet, the state government refused to rehabilitate these refugees in new and safe locations.

At this point a few civil society organisations, predominantly Islamic ones such as the Tabligh Jamaat, the Jamaat-e-Islami, and the Jamiaat-el-Ulema-e-Hind took over. In particular, the Islamic Relief Committee (the relief wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami) stepped in to help people relocate and resettle. Some land was acquired on the outskirts of the city and the victims were resettled in four pockets - Juhapura, Ramol, Vatva and Dani Limda. All of these 'colonies' are on the periphery of Ahmedabad and are poorly connected to the city itself where most of the jobs are generated. The seven hundred and twenty nine households that have been relocated in fifteen such colonies in Ahmedabad have been displaced mainly from eastern Ahmedabad, from areas such as Naroda Patia, Gomtipur, Daria Pur, Gomti Pur, Saraspur, Bapu Nagar Jamal Pur, Rakhial, and other inner city areas that have repeatedly suffered from periodic outbursts of communal violence since 1969 (Chandhoke et al 2007) . The status of the land upon which these shanty towns have been constructed is, however, legally uncertain, because the state government has earmarked it as agricultural land. Some Muslim organisations bought this land to settle the refugees, but the use of agricultural land to resettle displaced Muslims can be contested by the government. The shaky status of the land has instilled dread among the residents that they still live in temporary settlements, which can be easily mowed down by the bulldozers of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. Long term fears are compounded by the exigencies of everyday life. Not only are most resettlement colonies remotely located from the city where jobs are to be found; they are far away from schools and health clinics that are an indispensable prerequisite of living a life of minimal dignity. In these bare, stark, inhospitable areas, civil society organisations constructed rickety one room tenements, without water supply, without electricity, without access to internal roads because there were none, and without sanitation and sewerage for families. It is here, in these barren spaces, that some of the victims of the carnage in Ahmedabad have been settled, and expected to begin their life anew, amidst even more deprivation than they faced in their original habitats. A new phase in ghettoisation has thus been earmarked.

Many of these families still own houses and land in their original habitats, even if these houses have been burnt down. But even as bitter memories of the brutal violence that was inflicted upon them and their families and community haunts collective psyches, people fear to go back to their homes. They prefer to live in these desolate ugly, and rundown one room tenements that house as many as five members of a family. But this is not the major problem that confronts refugees. Other and much more serious problems stalk everyday life of the inhabitants of these settlements. For instance, in the resettlement colony ironically called the 'Citizens Nagar' in Dani Limda, families who once lived in the most communally hit area of Ahmadabad; Naroda Patia, have been resettled. This particular 'citizen's' colony has been built literally in the shadow of a massive mountain. The only problem is that this mountain has been constructed out of garbage collected from every part of Ahmedabad and more garbage is dumped at the foothills of the mountain every morning. The stack of garbage dominates the collective life of the inhabitants. The stench that emanates from it overwhelms both the senses and sensibilities of people who live not only in the colony, but also in the surrounding areas. More critically, during the monsoons, the garbage overflows the dump, runs through what passes for roads within the colony, and enters homes. The garbage, which

is highly toxic, has penetrated the ground water. Since the inhabitants of the colony do not have access to clean drinking water, they are forced to consume this contaminated ground water. This yellow, grimy, and filthy water is so polluted that it cannot but be the harbinger of terrible and life threatening disease and unsurprisingly gastro-intestinal diseases are rampant in this locality. Despite repeated representations by some civil society groups the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has made no attempt to look for an alternate site for the dumping of city garbage. To make matters worse, residents complain that the AMC often deposits carcasses of dead animals around the colonies. The revolting odour makes the place simply unbearable.

The plight of the residents who have been subjected to involuntary displacement does not end there. When the AMC begins to burn the garbage in the dump once in a while, the pollutant ridden smoke, which pervades every pore of the body, leads to all kinds of health problems; particularly respiratory diseases. Yet the AMC, which is responsible for providing services to citizens, has refused to take notice of the deplorable condition of this colony or of the appalling lives led by the victims of violence who live there.

Built as they were in a hurry, these so called houses are in dreadful condition, water seeps into the rooms during the monsoons, and rubbish flows along what passes for internal roads. These houses have low roofs that heats up in the summer and have no windows or any kind of ventilation. These makeshift tenements have been provided with temporary and unsafe electrical wiring. The land these houses are built in is generally low lying, and therefore water logging is common. The situation is worsened by the fact that there is absolutely no drainage system, no paved pavements, or street lighting in the so called colony. Vulnerable and insecure as the families already are; the highly depressing and sorry surroundings in which they are forced to live, has resulted in both helplessness and alienation. These sentiments are exacerbated by the fact that the government practically refuses to recognise these settlements, and therefore no aid to make these colonies habitable, to build schools, and health clinics, or provide for transportation to the city where people can work, is forthcoming.

The legitimacy of a democratically elected government rests upon its ability to take care of the worse off in society. In Ahmedabad, as in the rest of the state, the government does not even acknowledge these responsibilities. Similar problems attend other resettlement colonies. Since most of these colonies are on the outskirts of the city, they are surrounded by industries that spew pollutants, all of which makes the areas hazardous for human habitation. In Sundaram Nagar in Bapu Nagar, for example, cotton dust emanating twice a day from the burning of industrial waste, makes breathing difficult for the residents. Both children and adults that we met have developed lung related diseases.

The residents of most of these resettlement colonies eke out a bare existence without any basic amenities, be it drinking water, sanitation, drainage, primary health centres, schools for children, or approach roads and modes of transportation. Children have been forced to drop out of school and take to daily wage labour, because it is too expensive to hire transport to take children to school. Residents of Ekta Nagar complained that they have to pay twelve rupees daily to send their children to the nearest school, and since they cannot afford this, the children have dropped out of school. Most families are terrified of sending their daughters to school outside the neighbourhood, following the sexual violence that Muslim girls have been subjected to after 2002. A few colonies were given child care centres more than five years after they were established, but no schools for children have been set up. Resultantly, an entire generation of children who are less educated than their parents is growing up in these

ramshackle tenements. Is this not a denial of every child's basic right to education? Health care for the victims of the communal violence is equally deplorable. There are barely any primary health centres available for these colonies. There have been instances when due to an absence of health facilities, patients have died on the way to remote hospitals and babies have often been delivered on the road.

One major consequence of the establishment of resettlement colonies in spatially isolated areas is that people have been forced to abandon their previous vocations and look for alternative employment. Most of them now work in informal and petty jobs, and are casual labourers. Whereas most of the men work as auto and cycle rickshaw pullers, petty vendors, and casual workers in nearby neighborhoods, women work mostly as domestic help. Consequently there has been a universal decline in income that has dropped to less than half to what people used to earn before the violence and relocation. The drop in income has not only led to extreme pauperisation, but the ramifications of poverty can be seen in a new wave of child labour and the growth of a generation of illiterate and unskilled youth.

The response of the state government to the needs, the grievances, and the woes of the victims of communal violence has been negligent at best and vicious at worst. Six years after the pogrom, many of the relocated families were still awaiting their voters' identity cards and Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration cards. Earlier in 2007, after a massive meeting of the internally displaced, the election commission took measures to ensure that the displaced were able to cast their votes in the forthcoming state assembly elections, but the attitude of local state functionaries can best be described as sheer indifference. Most families have not been provided with documentation that will allow them to access subsidised food for 'Below Poverty Line' families, and relief cards for the poor. Since these documents are crucial if citizens want to benefit from social protection schemes, most of the residents lose out. Ironically, residents of New Fazal Nagar, one of the relocated colonies, have been served a notice to pay eight thousand rupees as house tax; even though their houses lie beyond the pale of the government or of the Corporation.

Since the state government continues to be in denial, non governmental and other civil society organisations have stepped in to support the victims of communal violence. A small group of such organisations has done a commendable job in resettling victims of communal violence, and it is because of their concerted effort that these people have been able to survive, but a majority of civil society organisations have proved indifferent to the cause. The cloud of right wing extremism continues to hang heavily on civil society organisations, which often fear withdrawal of state funding. Resettlement of the refugees was made possible because the Islamic Relief Committee and a few organisations such as Action Aid devoted both resources and energy to the task. The role played by some of the civil society organisations has been highly commendable, and the victims of the 2002 carnage gratefully acknowledge these efforts. Organisations such as the Aman Biradri and Jan Vikas have waged a long battle against the indifferent attitude of the state agencies towards relocation of the victims of violence. Further, these organisations have meticulously documented the callous attitude of the state towards the displaced. Armed with these resources, the displaced families have been able to press for their rights, and to put their demands before the government at the local level. It is due entirely to these organisations that the plight of the victims has not been subsumed completely in the state sponsored din about a 'globalised Gujarat'.

For instance, on 1 February 2007, the Antarik Visthapit Haq Rakshak Samiti (Society for the protection of the rights of the displaced), the Centre for Social Justice and ANHAD, along

with several others organised the 'Convention of the Internally Displaced' in Gujarat. At the convention, thousands of internally displaced persons demanded 'recognition, reparation and rehabilitation'. Discussions on several issues and problems, such as the livelihoods of the internally displaced, discrimination, exclusion, and economic boycotts, police intimidation, the specific problems of children, youth and women, served to highlight several crucial issues. At least the convention could expose the lie of the state government that it has rehabilitated the 'riot' victims. The Convention also provided the victims with a forum to share their troubles and come together to fight these predicaments. Apart from the demand for the provision of basic amenities and livelihood, the convention suggested forcefully that there should be a national policy for rehabilitation for people displaced due to communal violence. One positive outcome of this convention was that the election commission recognised that the inhabitants of these colonies should get election cards, even though they could not establish residence because they had not been given the required documents by the agencies that relocated them. The second positive outcome was hope that these families will be given BPL ration cards, even though they cannot provide proof of residence, such as sale deeds, rental receipts, or electricity bills.

However, private initiatives in resettling such massive numbers of the displaced cannot substitute for state action. For one, given the limited resources at the disposal of these agencies, relocation has been partial and insufficient, and falls short of the requirements of the residents. Neither the poorly constructed houses, nor the pathetic state of facilities and services, can give the victims a sense of security, or a feeling that they are being compensated for a major lapse of justice. Secondly, the building of residential colonies on land that has been marked for agricultural activities not only makes the future an uncertain one, it also gives the civic agency a pretext to deny basic amenities to what are typed as unauthorised colonies.

Two more consequences should be noted here because these are of some import. One, the resettlement of the displaced in areas which were already settled has led to new kinds of conflicts and tensions within colonies. Bagh-e-Aman in Vatva area is witness to one such tension. Here twelve families were relocated from various parts of the city. Rehabilitation was accomplished through the collective efforts of the Islamic Relief Committee, private initiatives, and the people themselves. However, residents had rebuilt their lives mostly on their own, and without any external support. Now they face the odd problem of not being recognised as 'relocated' in the same way as the twelve families which have been rehabilitated with outside help. Even as state agencies have been forced to take some cognisance of the twelve relocated families because of litigation in various courts, they refuse to recognise other affected households as displaced. As a result of this unevenness in resettlement, about one hundred households are deprived of government schemes or compensation. Consequently these households do not even have any hope of being supplied with a Voters Identity card.

Secondly, our research team discerned a rather troubling development in these resettlement colonies. Since the state has refused to step in to rehabilitate the displaced, Islamic organisations have provided the major resources for this purpose. For example, the land on which victims have been relocated was mostly purchased by the Islamic Relief Committee (IRC). The land deeds, therefore, are with the Islamic Relief Committee, and the organisation refuses to give these deeds to the residents. As no land entitlement has been given to the victims, people believe with good reason that they live in semi-permanent relief camps, and that they have not really been rehabilitated. There have also been instances where the Islamic

Relief Committee has imposed its own set of conditionalities on people if they want to live in these colonies. Most of these problems emanate from the conflict of priorities of the victims and civil society organisations on the one hand, and the IRC on the other. Residents told us that the IRC prefers the construction of mosques to health clinics, *madrassas* to schools, and that the organisation insists on dress codes for women, in other words *purdah*. The residents on the other hand, are more concerned about incomes, health, and education for their children. In general, there is some evidence that the IRC has been trying to influence people to abandon their traditional life practices, and to follow rigid and doctrinaire versions of Islam.<sup>4</sup> This is the natural outcome of state fundamentalism and neglect of religious minorities; for when religious organisations step into the vacuum, they are likely to demand their own price for helping people. Fundamentalism always breeds counter-fundamentalism, and it is the lives and the futures of ordinary people that are at risk here. In sum these displaced Muslim families are fated to remain outside the reach of all the amenities that a ‘Vibrant Gujarat’<sup>5</sup> might perchance offer to those who form an integral part of society and the polity. For the present government these families just do not form an integral part of Gujarati society and politics; they have been expelled both spatially and socially to the margins of the city, and condemned to live in new forms of ghettos.

### **Implications of Ghettoisation**

Though the Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad seem to have preferred to live separately since the early eighteenth century, residential segregation did not necessarily mean unequal opportunities for members of the communities. They could participate in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of the city on their own terms. Today the spatial marginalisation of the Muslims indicates their economic, political and social exclusion from the city. The city has been reorganised on the principle of ‘single community areas’ where no intercommunity mixing is possible (Chaudhary A.B.R 2007 698-99). Spatial segregation means that the children of one community have absolutely no interaction with the children of the other community, no mixed schools, no playgrounds in which children of both communities can play, no *extra curricula* activities that can form the basis of a future solidarity, and no personal friendships that involve visiting each other’s homes, and that involve inter-dining.

Today Ahmedabad has few residential colonies with mixed populations and is divided almost completely into Hindu and Muslim inhabited areas. The difference is that whereas Hindus live both in the poverty stricken and in the affluent areas of the city, Muslims live in areas that only can be described as ghettos. These ghettos are not just poverty stricken, they are deprived of basic amenities, they often lie outside the pale of governance, and they are subjected to hateful stereotyping. Involuntary or forced migration to the ghetto is one indication of lack of choices, which arguably is the hallmark of democratic freedom and of citizenship rights. The absence of infrastructure in these ghettos in the form of a lack of health clinics, educational institutions, provision of clean drinking water, power, proper housing and roads, and in a general environmental degradation is another indication of the downgrading of social and economic rights. The political pact that sanctions this kind of treatment of a section of the population is both exclusionary and oppressive. In the process an entire religious minority has been downgraded from citizen to subject.

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<sup>4</sup> Our research team was threatened by a member of the IRC in Ekta Nagar who wanted to know why we were there and proceeded to tell us that he and not the inhabitants would answer all questions.

<sup>5</sup> The electoral slogan of the BJP, head by Chief Minister Narinder Modi, in the December 2007 state assembly elections was “Vibrant Gujerat”.

## Conclusion

Putzel suggests that one of the preconditions of political stability and of holding a society together is the inclusive political pact. However, as suggested above, an inclusive political pact also requires certain preconditions. For one, political pacts quickly become redundant if the political significance of relatively new elites and correspondingly the political insignificance of declining elites is neither recognised nor registered in renegotiated political pacts. Secondly, whereas politically significant agents and thus contenders for inclusion in the political pact can range from political parties to economic and social groups, in ethnically divided societies, political prudence dictates that the leaders of at least the politically significant ethnic groups are included. This goes a long way in neutralising discontent and feelings of marginalisation.

However, leaders of ethnic groups can only become partners in political pacts when their communities are not structurally discriminated against economically, politically, and socially. History has shown that the exclusion of ethnic groups breeds pervasive discontent and can result in armed struggle and consequent political instability. In the city of Ahmedabad however, an entirely different kind of exclusion of the Muslim minority community has taken place through historical processes. One visible process is the ghettoisation of the Muslim community, which has preferred to herd together in ill-serviced and ramshackle housing clusters on the periphery of the city. Economically, the Muslim community has been more or less marginalised because the location of these ghettos prevents access to meaningful job opportunities. Poorly connected by road, these ghettos have forced a once vibrant working class to join the ranks of informal labour. Socially the Muslim community is subjected to discrimination, hateful stereotyping and exclusion.

Spatial marginalisation of the Muslim community is one visible indication of the general marginalisation of this community from collective life, let alone partnership in a political pact that would ensure stability. Political elites belonging to the majority Hindu and Jain communities have ensured that the Muslims are deprived of a viable role in the economy, equal status in society, and voice in political decisions. Today, for the ruling party of the religious right that has controlled the state since the mid nineteen-seventies, the Muslim minority simply does not count. The predicament of this community seems to have little bearing on decisions taken and not taken.

An inclusive political pact would have meant incorporating the leaders of this fifteen percent of the population. This would have ensured access to structures of opportunity for the Muslim community. However, the community seems to have been marginalised so completely that the existing political pact can continue to lay down rules for collective life, with neither the presence nor the inclusion of this group. Moreover, this exclusion seems to have ensured some measure of peace, if we measure this by the absence of conflict that borders on war.

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