



April 2008

# Origins of Unity and Communalism in Gujarat, India

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# Origins of Unity and Communalism in Gujarat, India

## **Abstract**

"Before I tell you what happened to in 2002 ... Do you know the history behind this? Do you understand the origins, how all this started?" To the majority of residents living in the city of Rajkot in the state of Gujarat, India the 2002 riots are comprehensible only as addendums to a kind of perennial Hindu-Muslim communal conflict that they describe as having waged for "*many years*" in the region. But, the central ambiguity to decipher is this term "many years." While it might seem as if residents are referring to a historically significant time period beginning in the medieval ages and concluding now, within minutes of interviewing them, regardless of their gender, class, age or religion, it becomes clear that even ancient history to them is in fact the history of India's independence. The term "many years" is specifically referring to a fairly recent 1990's decade of violent Hindu-Muslim relations, sparked by destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in 2002. This raises the logical question: so why is no one talking about preindependence Hindu-Muslim relations?

The answer to this question becomes fairly evident from interviews. If a Rajkot resident is asked specifically about the earliest pre-independence history of Hindu and Muslims relations in Gujarat, the response if given, usually by an older male Hindu resident<sup>2</sup>, focuses on tale of the Mahmud of Ghazni and his destruction of the Hindu temple at Somanatha. A very general discussion of undefined or dateless instances of "Muslim" capture and torture of Hindu kings and residents follows. Rarely is the distinction of Mahmud of Gazni as a Turkish versus Arabian ruler mentioned. Rarely is the distinction between oppressive Muslim political ruler and oppressive Muslim general citizen made.

## **Comments**

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# **Penn Undergraduate Humanities Forum**

## **Origins of Unity and Communalism in Gujarat, India**

**By Rajiv Bhagat**

## **Introduction**

### **Defining the Problem:**

“Before I tell you what happened to in 2002...Do you know the history behind this? Do you understand the origins, how all this started?”<sup>1</sup> To the majority of residents living in the city of Rajkot in the state of Gujarat, India the 2002 riots are comprehensible only as addendums to a kind of perennial Hindu-Muslim communal conflict that they describe as having waged for “*many years*” in the region. But, the central ambiguity to decipher is this term “many years.” While it might seem as if residents are referring to a historically significant time period beginning in the medieval ages and concluding now, within minutes of interviewing them, regardless of their gender, class, age or religion, it becomes clear that even ancient history to them is in fact the history of India’s independence. The term “many years” is specifically referring to a fairly recent 1990’s decade of violent Hindu-Muslim relations, sparked by destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in 2002. This raises the logical question: so why is no one talking about pre-independence Hindu-Muslim relations?

The answer to this question becomes fairly evident from interviews. If a Rajkot resident is asked specifically about the earliest pre-independence history of Hindu and Muslims relations in Gujarat, the response if given, usually by an older male Hindu resident<sup>2</sup>, focuses on tale of the Mahmud of Ghazni and his destruction of the Hindu temple at Somanatha. A very general discussion of undefined or dateless instances of “Muslim” capture and torture of Hindu kings and residents follows. Rarely is the distinction of Mahmad of Gazni as a Turkish versus Arabian ruler mentioned. Rarely is

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of a frequent question asked in Gujarati during personal interviews that I conducted with over summer of 2005 under a Penn South Asia Studies Undergraduate Research Award grant.

<sup>2</sup> The 2002 riots in the city of Rajkot specifically targeted the city’s Muslim population and therefore Muslims interviewed focused understandably on entirely present issues and very recent history.

the distinction between oppressive Muslim political ruler and oppressive Muslim general citizen made.

These responses reveal, first and foremost, that besides one or two events, stamped into cultural memory, city residents have a significant lack of detailed, unbiased knowledge of the earliest moments of Hindu-Muslim relations in their home state. Furthermore, even if this detailed political history is presumably known by citizens, or well known by local academic scholars in the region or abroad, there is a lack of information about, understanding of, or acceptance of the social history. Hindu-Muslim antagonism examined at the upper political level seems to mask understanding Hindu-Muslim antagonism and its creation at the basic social level, as a social concern of the subaltern, a concern as it remains today in the present.

Addressing these concerns, the goal of this paper is to affirm the role of the political and social pre-independence history of Hindu-Muslim relations, a history of unity and antagonism, in understanding and helping to ease the repercussions of the present 2002 conflict in the Gujarat region.

The paper begins by providing a thorough political history of the inception of Hindu-Muslim relations in the Gujarat region in part I. It then, in part II, moves on to focus on more local primary sources, such as folk culture and Sufi literature, to analyze the social history of this early Hindu-Muslim relation time period, specially investigating the earliest documented moments and themes of unity. Following the investigation of the very origins of Hindu-Muslim relations and unity, the paper in part III focuses on first documented instance of communal rioting, as referring to significant antagonism erupting within social sphere between Hindus and Muslims, in Ahmedabad in 1713. The paper

investigates the reasons behind this communal riot through a historical analysis of the events leading up to the conflict. From this point, the link is made in a short part IV between the causes behind the 1713 communal riot and the causes behind the more recent 2002 communal riots. Finally, in an attempt to use the research work done to address the current conflict in the area, the last part V of the paper illustrates how to use poetry as a means to communicate the link of the past and present to youth in the city of Rajkot to help mitigate current misunderstandings and prejudice.

## **Part I: A Political History**



### **Arab Presence in Gujarat (600-1000 A.D.):**

The earliest records of Muslim presence in the region of Gujarat are a few accounts of Arab traders who came on shore of several current Gujarat cities at the very beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. These accounts provide a first look at the territory of Gujarat and note the strong Rajput forces over the region<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to Arab traders traveling by sea, small Arab raids began to go into the Gujarat region by land. The first raid came in the year 635 A.D. when the governor of Bahrein sent an expedition against the city of Bharuch. However, it is important to note that these raids were not for the purposes of conquering the territory and were more for exploratory purposes. This can be seen in the way the leader of the first raid was rebuked for his decision by his upper lieutenant, “I swear by God that if our men had been killed, I would have taken an equal number from thy tribe”<sup>4</sup> and the kind of observations found in the report from another raid shortly afterwards ordered by next reigning leader Usman, “Water scarce, fruits inferior, robbers impudent, the army if small, likely to be lost, if numerous, likely to perish by hunger or thirst.”<sup>5</sup>

The capture of the bordering region of Sindh by the Arabs led to much more serious attempts by Arab armies to gain control of Gujarat cities. These Arab invasions, from 724-738 A.D, even began to be recorded by Gujarat Rajput leaders. Rulers Pratihara king Nagabhata, the Chalukya ruler of Lata, south Gujarat, Avanijanasraya Pulakesiraji,

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<sup>3</sup> Elliot and Dawson. *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians (E&D)*. Volume I. Early Arab Geographers

<sup>4</sup> Al-Balazuri, *Futuh-ul-buldan*, II, 176-177 (Urdu translated). Osmania University, Hyderabad [from *Mistra's Rise of Muslim communities in Gujarat*]

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, 178.

and also Gurjara king Jayabhata IV all were noted as attempting to thwart these significant invasions.<sup>6</sup> The number and intensity of invasions dwindled over the course of this century, however periodical raids continued throughout the late 8<sup>th</sup> century (notable raids taking place at Portbandar in 758 and 776)<sup>7</sup>.

The 10<sup>th</sup> century marked an influx of Arab traders coming directly to Gujarat region ports from the Middle-East and exploring the area well to report political and cultural practices to Arab leaders in Sindh. Several of these Arab travelers left detailed accounts of the climate and practices taking place in the Gujarat region. One particularly vivid account was written by Al Biruni (970-1039 A.D.), who visited the region in the early period of his life: “There is a road from hence by land as well as by the shore of the sea to Guzerat which is a large country within which are Kambtiya, Somnat, Kankan, Tana, and several other cities and towns. It is said that Guzerat comprises 80,000 flourishing cities, villages, and, hamlets. The inhabitants are rich and happy and during the four seasons no less than seventy different sorts of roses blow in this country. The crops which grow in the cold season derive their vigor from the dew. When that dries, the hot season commences and that is succeeded by the rainy season which makes the earth moist and verdant. Grapes are produced twice during the year and the strength of the soil is such that cotton plants grow like willows and plane trees and yield produce ten years stunning...The men of Kambaya bring tribute from the chiefs of the island of Kis. Sugar from Malwa, badru, and baladi are exported in ships from the coasts of Guzerat to all countries and cities.”<sup>8</sup> His account highlight the immense size and development of the Gujarat region (“80,000 cities, villages, and hamlets”), the good agricultural conditions

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<sup>6</sup> Idem, 194-196

<sup>7</sup> E &D. Volume I. Nadwi, op. cit. 277

<sup>8</sup> E&D. Vol I. Arab Merchants. Al Biruni, (67).

(“strength of the soil” and “produce ten years running”), and the high level of trading taking place (“ships from the coasts of Gujarat to all countries and cities”).

However, in addition to assessing the productivity and success of Gujarat, Arab travelers, at this time, also captured the earliest Hindu-Muslim relations in the Gujarat area. One traveler Ma’ sud, the Arab Herodotus, wrote an account of the nature of treatment of Muslims in Gujarat towns: “In no other Indian ruler’s lands are the Arabs and the Muslims treated so well as in [this]. They have their Jami’ mosques in [this] land and are happy in all ways.”<sup>9</sup> Another traveler Abu Ishaq al-Istakhri wrote about the significant increase of the Muslim population within Gujarat cities saying, “It is a land of infidels, but there are several Musalmans in cities and none but Musalmans rule over them. There are Jama masjids in them.”<sup>10</sup> Inscriptional evidence further suggests that not only were Arab residents, at this time, just temporarily living in towns where they traded, but that they had in fact begun to become powerful and permanent city residents. Al-Bammi family of the city of Cambay, a Muslim family, left several records of their wealth and legacy in the city.<sup>11</sup>

Despite their increasing Arab presence within the cities, with the 11<sup>th</sup> century began the downfall of Arab control over India with the incursion of Turkic military and political power led by Mahmud of Ghazni. While the Arab forces had made their presence established in the Sindh region in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, they had been unable to get into the interior of subcontinent due to the bordering Thar Desert and strong Rajput rule in the Gujarat region. Their control and influence in this confined Sindh region was

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<sup>9</sup> Maulana Sulaiman Nadwi, *Arab-Hind ke ta’aluqat* (Urdu) (Hindustan Academy, Allahabad, 1930), 280

<sup>10</sup> E & D., Volume 1. 27

<sup>11</sup> Z.A. Desai, “Arabic Inscriptions of the Rajput period from Gujarat,” *Epigraphica Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement*, 1961, 1-24.

therefore easily removed as Mahmud of Ghazni began to make frequent raids into the Indian subcontinent beginning in 1001. All that was left of the Arab presence in India was the sizeable population of Arab residents who continued to live within cities and towns, including those within the Gujarat region.

**Beginning of Turkish Rule in India, Establishment of the Sultanate, and Early Turkish Rule in Gujarat (1000-1411 A.D.)<sup>12</sup>:**

*Early Campaigns:*

Mahmud of Ghazni began his incursions into India by first taking the territory near the Indus River in Pakistan and then moving eastward into the Gangetic valley in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Overall, he ended up leading a total of 17 expeditions into the India subcontinent, taking the booty received from each expedition back home to Ghazni, a city in what is now Afghanistan. His last expedition in 1025-1026, resulted in the well-known destruction and sacking of Somanatha temple in the Gujarat region.

While many Hindus in the Gujarat region today claim that Ghazni's sacking of the temple was a driven purely by religious zeal, a better understanding of the historical context of the time period provides a more complicated picture. Ghazni's past incursions involved not only attacking Hindu sites but even Shia Muslims. In these incursions, the

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<sup>12</sup> I have used two respected secondary sources (which are based on extensive Persian, Arabic, and Jain primary sources) to relate this detailed political history: 1) *The Rise of Muslim Power in Gujarat* by Baroda University expert C.S Misra and 2) *India before Europe* by Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot

economic benefit of conquest was a critical driving factor. Furthermore, the conquering of the temple, the central symbol of the city and the region, itself can also be seen as an expression of Mahmud's personal glory instead of the glory of Islam over Hinduism, having marked Mahmud's accession of a valuable and significant trading territory.<sup>13</sup>

Mahmud of Gazni died four years later in 1030 at the age of 59 due to lethal tuberculosis and Gujarat then remained relatively free of intrusion for another 2000 years while the development of the Delhi Sultanate was taking place.

*Brief overview of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate:*

The Turkic raids that followed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century were led by a new leader, Muhammad Ghuri. He began his first campaigns specifically in South India in 1175. However, unlike Mahmud of Gazni, Muhammad Ghuri had a much more of an expansionist agenda, hoping to annex the territories he acquired in India instead of simply taking the spoils. His Ghurid forces made their way into Northern India in 1192, with the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan at the Battlefield of Tarain. Ghurid forces finally reached and established a permanent garrison in Delhi in 1193, led by Ghuri's Turkic slave-general Qutb al-Din Aibak.

Muhammad Ghuri, in his time, had created a complete slave order: a fraternity of Turkic Suni Muslim military slaves, such as Qutb al-Din Aibak, trained by Muhammad himself and appointed to all high government offices. Following Ghuri's death in 1206, these military slaves participated in an intense competition for power. In the end it was Shams al-Din Iltutmish in 1210 A.D. who took full control, consolidating all of Ghuri's conquests into the creation of a Delhi Sultanate. The term Delhi Sultanate itself referred

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<sup>13</sup> Summarization of conclusions made in the research work *Somanatha* by Romila Thapar

to the severing and definition of the Indian portion of the Ghurid Empire from the home territory in Afghanistan, in large part attributable to Iltutmish.

Iltutmish also made several strides to ensure the sophistication as well as the definition of the Sultanate. He encouraged scholars from Central Asia to come into Delhi by offering them land and had Arabic texts translated into Persian, the national court language of the Delhi Sultanate. He made sure to protect the Sultanate from attacks by Mongol invasions.

Another strong leader of the early Delhi Sultanate time period was Ghiyas ud din Balban. He ruled from 1246-1266 A.D. In this time, Balban better unified Sultanate territories by centralizing their administration. He also broadened the base of the Sultanate government itself to include those Muslim elements that had been excluded by a closed oligarchy of Turks. The better organization of the Sultanate allowed it to hold off several Mongol attacks and to begin expansion into regions such as Gujarat.

Following Balban, the next and most significant leader of the Delhi Sultanate was Ala-ud-din. It was during Ala-ud-din's time that Turkish rule began in Gujarat.

Ala-ud-din accessed the throne in 1296, succeeding Firuz Khulji, his father-in-law. The way in which he accessed the throne was radical for his time. Ala-ud-din, by a coup, captured the title from his own family members. His action violated all accepted ethical norms. He was opposed by all except for his followers. So that when he did take power, he took power with no strings attached. He did not have to listen to anyone, not his family, not the very traditional Muslim religious groups, such as the ulema, or the wealthy elite.

With this freedom, as a despot, Ala-ud-din's made radical changes to the Sultanate for its betterment. He began by removing the racial oligarchy that had dominated politics for years. He instead encouraged distribution of power to those who he felt were capable and loyal, irregardless of race or religious sect. As for the military, he reformed his military aristocracy to be based on talent and not on noble birth and instituted a very efficient spy system. These steps were pivotal to ensure optimal stabilization of the Sultanate.

Alu-ud-din also became the first leader to capture the strong support of the local citizens. Alu-ud-din became an idol. He inspired citizens to support the military and political leaders through extravagant public rallies. He fueled their imaginations by making them feel they were all capable of attaining any position based on their merit and eased their financial burdens with policies encouraging employment, price controls, and frequent cash benefits to all. Most of all, Alu-ud-din exuded a strong sense of personality. He embodied the might of the Sultanate and his barbaric splendor claimed followers of all classes, religions, and races.

Finally, Alu-ud-din instituted the imperial expansion phase of the Sultanate. Unlike past rulers who, after carefully claiming a territory worked to fully integrate the new territory into the Sultanate, Alu-ud-din pushed for quick acquisition and then the relative independence of each conquered territory. He did not force newly conquered areas to be linked to central authority or laws. Besides paying tax and acknowledging his title, Alu-ud-din left the rest of the governance of each new acquired territory up to his lieutenants that he put in charge. Alu-ud-din's organization of the Sultanate, with very

little central control of outlying acquired new territories, led to significant future problems of Sultanate stability.

*Beginning of Turkish Rule in Gujarat:*

Several local Rajput and Jain accounts<sup>14</sup> have attempted to explain the reason behind Turkish invasion of the Gujarat region under Alu-ud-din. One explanation has been common to all accounts: the story of Gujarat Raja Karna and his second in command Madhava. The story is about how Raja Karna betrays Madhava by taking away his wife and killing his brother. As revenge, Madhava travels to the Sultanate capital of Delhi and tells Alu-ud-din to invade Gujarat and make Karna pay for his actions. What is interesting about the story is how it explains a very political event in terms of a simple concept of revenge that is completely apolitical. It sheds light on a subaltern population's attempt to make sense of politics around them.

Of course, the well accepted cause of Turkish invasions in historical court accounts and academic circles is wealth. Having heard the extreme wealth of resources available in Gujarat from spies and traders, Alu-ud-din attacked the region to loot it.

The campaign to invade the Gujarat region commenced in 1299. Alu-ud-din ordered two of his finest lieutenants, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, to lead the campaign. They began invading in the Gujarat town of Modasa, then went through the North Gujarat plains, and finally reached the capital city of Patan where Raja Karna resided. Anticipating his loss to the invading forces, Raja Karna fled Patan and the Turkish troops

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<sup>14</sup> Rajput and Jain Accounts: Rasmala, Kamhod-de-prabandh of Padmanabha. Collection in Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India.



therefore ravaged the city, looting its resources and destroying its infrastructure. The troops then retraced the path of Mahmud of Gazni, to destroy and loot temples, including the temple at Somanatha. Following this looting and destruction together, both leaders split up to plunder cities individually. Ulugh Khan plundered the cities of Vanthali and Junagadh, while Nusrat Khan plundered the cities of Cambay and Mainland. In the end, in a surprising move, both lieutenants simply returned back to the Sultanate capital in Delhi to give in their spoils, without making any effort to consolidate the newly conquered territory. Therefore, Raja Karna was able to retake authority and rule of the region.

In 1305 and 1306, with a let up in Mongol attacks on the Sultanate, Ala-ud-din finally had a second opportunity to attack the Gujarat region. To lead this second invasion, he commissioned two new lieutenants, Malik Ahmad Jhampar and Panjuman. The intent of this second invasion was indeed to establish permanent rule in the region. Following the removal of Raja Karna and the successful retaking of the largest cities of Cambay and Patan, the capital, this time Ala-ud-din ordered Malik Ahmad to remain in the region two months and then to choose a lieutenant to rule after this time. Two months later, feeling that Malik Ahmad's appointed lieutenant was not able to rule the land, Ala-ud-din ordered his own brother in law, Alp Khan to move to Patan. Alp Khan ruled Gujarat as governor from 1306 until his murder in 1315.

It is important to note that during this time, in which it appeared the Sultanate finally had a firm grasp over the Gujarat region, the level of control was only over the highest level of the Rajput power structure but not its lower levels. Furthermore, strongholds of Rajput control, such as the entire region of Saurashtra, remained.

Nevertheless, Alp Khan was able to effectively handle managing Gujarat and its immense variety of racial and religious groups. For example, cities in Gujarat at this time contained Muslims of various different races: Afghans, Arabs, and Ismaili Shiah, each with different interests. In addition, the cities contained large populations of Hindus and Jains. Alp Khan made sure to respect these diverging groups, their beliefs, and to facilitate their interaction together.

As he was such a respected and beloved figure, Alp Khan's murder in 1315 led to revolt in the region. Gujarat residents believed Khan's death was planned by the Consulate leaders at the capital. Therefore, in 1316, lieutenants of the Alp Khan, Hyder and Zirak instigated a rebellion to avenge their governor's death. They signaled their anger toward central Delhi authority by burning and killing carrier of news from Alu-ud-din. In response, Alu-ud-din immediately began work on planning another invasion in the area to quell the uprisings. However, in 1316, Alu-ud-din died before he had a chance to set up the invasion. The death of Alu-ud-din led to a retraction of most troops back to capital in order to help decide a new leader for the Sultanate. In this way, Hyder and Zirak were able to take firm control of the entire region of Gujarat and Gujarat essentially succeeded from the Sultanate.

By the end 1316, Malik Kafur firmly established himself as the Alu-ud-din's successor. He immediately sent one of his nobles, Ain-ul-mulk to Gujarat to retake control of the region. However, as Ain-ul-mulk's forces made their way to Gujarat, Kafur was assassinated. Mubarak Shah took over quickly and under him Ain-ul-mulk was successful in quelling insurgent forces in Gujarat. With all territories restored to Sultanate control, Mubarak Shah appointed a trusted noble, Malik Dinar, in charge of the region as

governor in 1317.

Malik Dinar maintained stable control of the region and worked to better integrate Gujarat within the large Sultanate. He made sure Rajputs were kept down, and made improvements in revenue collection to ensure fast and regular collection of taxes and remittance of money to the capital. However, Malik Dinar was able to stay in charge of Gujarat for only a few months. He was replaced by Husam-ud-din in 1318 for a few months, and Husam-ud-din was replaced by Taj-ul-mulk.

In 1320, Sultanate Mubarak Shah was assassinated and Tughluq Shah took over. Concerned about the frequent uprisings in outlying areas of the Sultanate, such as Gujarat, Shah made reducing the autonomy of governors and creating a strong central government his two top priorities. However, even before he could begin to address these top priorities, problems began. In 1321, just one year following Shah's appointment, Afghan rebellions began to take place in Gujarat. These rebellions were caused by anger within local Afghans over new government policies advocating the removal of the elderly, mostly Afghans, from government office and more utilization of Afghans in the military. The rebellions continued to build in size up till 1343 when they reached a climax during the rule of Muhammad Bin Tughluq, Tughluq Shah having died in 1325. In 1343, these rebellions, led by Quazi Jalal, took control of Gujarat. In 1344, Quazi Jalal even assumed kingship of Gujarat.

In response to the declaration by Quazi Jalal, Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq himself, with his lieutenants, went to squash the rebellion at the end of the year. They were successful. But, as soon as one threat was squelched in Gujarat, another erupted.

In 1347, Sultan's own officer, Taghi, led the new revolt with assistance from Afghans who had been conquered in the last campaign. Taghi had worked personally with the Sultan and fought loyally for the Sultanate in the battle against Quazi Jalal. However, fearing that his past atonement for helping rebels would not be forgiven by the Sultan and understanding the Sultan no longer needed him, he became convinced the Sultan would kill him. Therefore, to save himself, he began this revolt which targeted Gujarat's capital city of Patan. Taghi, with his military force, was able to imprison the governor Shaikh Muiz-ud-din and killed many royal officers. The Sultan at once summoned an army under Malik Yusuf Bughra that was able to put down the rebellion and capture Taghi.

Overall, having been more on the defensive side in reacting to traumatic events occurring throughout Gujarat, Muhammad Bin Tughlug finally ran his offensive campaign, targeting the region of Saurashtra to remove all pockets of Rajput resistance.

For the most part, internecine conflict during Turkish rule had allowed for Saurashtra Rajputs to maintain a strong level of control over the area. Therefore, the Sultan's troops faced much difficulty in taking over the region. After three years of intense attacks on Rajput forces, the Sultan was only able to gain control of a few Saurashtra regions. However, following his death in 1350, even all those areas which he had conquered again fell back into the hands of their original rulers.

*Brief Overview of Gujarat Under Firuz Shah, Sultanate of Gujarat, and Gujarat under Zafar Khan:*

*Overview of Gujarat Under Firuz Shah:*

In no other time in Gujarat's history was the conflict between local and Sultanate government greater than during the reign of Firuz Shah.

Firuz Shah became Sultan in 1351. Unlike past Sultans advocating more aggressive efforts to integrate peripheral provinces such as Gujarat, Shah believed it was best to have minimum interference of central government in province administration. Similar to Alu-ud-din, he only asked payment of taxes and tribute of his rule from trusted nobles put in charge of each province.

His interest in conquered provinces was entirely financial. Shah was more than willing to remove a trusted governor official if an adventurer offered a higher bid for the land. In 1373, Shah appointed Shams-ud-din, a businessman, as governor of Gujarat because he offered a higher bid for the position than one being paid by the incumbents.

In turn, province local government administration felt little or any connection with him. In 1388, a new governor Malik Yaqub was ordered by the Sultan to arrive in Gujarat and take over the rule of previous governor Malik Mufarrah Farhat-ul-mulk. Disregarding the orders of the Sultan, the previous governor Farhat-ul-mulk killed the new incoming governor. Central authority became powerless.

*Sultanate of Gujarat to the Founding of Ahmedabad:*

The independent Sultanate of Gujarat was founded by Sultan Zafar Khan in 1407.

Right before and during this time, several more important rebellions occurred within the region and more invasions of Saurashtra took place.

During the rule of Sultan Muhammad Shah, in 1390, Farhat-ul-malk, a member of the local government of Gujarat, imagined an independent Gujarat and began preparing an army to attain his goal. In choosing the army, Farhat-ul-malk actively recruited Rajputs and non-Muslim members and adjusted his ruling policies to support their needs in hopes of recruiting them. In this way, his army represented a kind of united group of people held together beyond racial or religious ties, seeking a common goal.

His approach upset strict Muslim leaders living in the area and his plan for independence was at once relayed the Sultan. In 1391, Sultan sent his best lieutenant to fight the battle, Zafar Khan. Khan won decisively against Farhat-ul-malk's relatively large military coalition.

Following his successful military campaign, Zafar Khan revisited cities of Gujarat to ensure to that all supporters of Farhat-ul-malk had been removed and to further promote the Delhi Sultanate. But, in the process, he also cultivated a large population of his own supporters. He met extensively with his son, Tatar Khan, who worked alongside the Sultan Mohammad Shah. Zafar's son spoke in much detail to his father about the deterioration of the Sultanate at Delhi and the need to act now to improve or takeover the Sultanate for the benefit of all Gujarat residents.

Zafar Khan, at first, was skeptical of the idea. However, after he heard the unfortunate news from Delhi, of Sultan Muhammad Shah being removed and the city being invaded in 1404, Khan decided that action was appropriate. Khan was very worried that there would be no one capable of maintaining the country, that there would be no

manifestations of a kingly authority left. Therefore he organized a militia, renamed himself as Muzaffar Shah on , the first Sultan of Gujarat, and began takeover of perennial Rajput strongholds in the Saurashtra and Malwa regions. While successful in Saurashtra, Zafar was forced to a peace agreement at Malwa.

Proceeding Zafar Khan as Sultan of Gujarat was Ahmad Shah, who took over in 1411. In the same year he became Sultan, Ahmad Shah founded Ahmedabad and made it the center of the Gujarat Sultanate. The city flourished in trade and became a model for its intricate architectural style. Ahmad Shah also instituted his own campaign to takeover Saurashtra in 1414, frustrated with attacks by Rajput warriors. Along the way he destroyed Hindu temples and pilgrimage sites, such as Sidhpore. He furthermore suppressed Rajput chieftains and forced them to convert. However, the most significant aspect of Shah's reign was his instituting of the jiziyah tax, a tax only paid by non-Muslims to help quell non-Muslim turbulent elements.

## **Part II: The Social History**



### The Social History:

The account of the history in the previous section focused mostly on the ordeals and culture of the Hindu and Muslim ruling elite in Gujarat. However, until the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and early 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of written Sufi Malfuz literature and establishment of Saurashtra folk lore, information on the Gujarat Muslim and Hindu non-elite or non-government, local population of was not well captured in writing that could be available today.

#### *A) Malfuz Literature:*

##### Overview:

In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, Sufi savants, learned mystics, and Shaiks were engaged in spreading the message of Sufism throughout India. By the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Sufistic activities expanded into the Gujarat region. The Sufi establishments in the region at this time, the Khanquahs and Jama'at Khanas, served as hospices for travelers and wayfarers and, as training centers of the Sufi religion, but also as open saint-led discussion forums in the topics of ethics, theology, mysticism, and morality. Several writers specifically recorded the discussions occurring at these Sufi establishments which were open and attended to by all members of the society, notably the lower-class and different religious group members. Malfuz literature was the collection of written work that captured these roundtable discussions and also explored thematically, through assessing societal interaction within or around Sufi establishments, the place of the saint in his contemporary society.

Malfuz literature, in this way, allowed for an in-depth look at “almost every aspect of the life of the society [in early 15<sup>th</sup> century] at all levels and in all matters, temporal or spiritual...moods, aspirations, and varied problems of its members, their customs and manner and likes and dislikes.”<sup>15</sup>

Specific Work: Mirqat compiled by Maulana Mohammad bin Abul Qasim

One particular work of Malfuz Literature that stands out in its level of detail on Hindu-Muslim relations at the local level is the work Mirqat compiled by Maulana Mohammed bin Qasim. The work is his personal documentation of his saint, Shaikh Ahmad who lived in Sarkhej area of Gujarat (in present day Ahmedabad).

Maulana Mohammad bin Abul Qasim, the compiler, came to Sarkhej, Gujarat in 1399 A.D. with his maternal grandfather and relatives due to the unsettled conditions in his home Naguar region, caused by frequent raid into the area led by Rao Chonda of Mewar. It was at this time Shaikh Ahmad also settled at Sarkhej. Maulana Mohammed, interested in religious and rational sciences, joined Shaikh’s establishment as prayer leader. In 1416 A.D. he was admitted into Shaikh’s circles of disciples. Overall, from that time of his joining the circle of his disciples for another three decades until the Shaik’s death in 1445, Maulana collected Shaik’s narrative recollections of his past life and specifically his interaction with local community members, including Hindus.

It fact, it turns out that Shaikh Ahmad, in his narratives, relates quite a few incidents of Hindu jogis and Hindu families who he interacted with on a daily basis. In these narratives, he never speaks of them in contempt or disdain. He describes in detail

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<sup>15</sup> This quote (pg. 7 and pg.9) and the general discussion of Malfuz literature in this section is the research work of Ziyauddin A Desai and his book *Malfuz literature: as a source of political, social, and cultural history of Gujarat & Rajasthan.*”

frequent religious debates he would hold with Brahmins at his establishment. In recounting his earlier life, he describes moments of playfully wrestling with a Hindu cobbler's boy.

Ahmad also spends several pages describing how his guardian and mentor Muslim Sufi priest Babu Ishaq did not differentiate between a Hindu and Muslim in a time of need. He tells the story of his local friend Popa Baqqal, a Hindu grocer, who was put in jail for the non-payment of government dues and was released by Babu Ishaq's intercession. The grocery store owner forever was in debt to Babu Ishaq and insisted and tried to give free grocery items to Shaik Ahmad after Babu's death. Shaik Ahmad refused and said it was not necessary.

Furthermore, Shaikh Ahmad clarifies that Hindus treated Muslim saints with equal if not greater respect. He relates a story about when he left Katu for his Hajj he was lodged with great affection and hospitality by Hindus of the upper and lower class. He tells of one specific smaller village he visited in which a destitute Hindu woman took him in and kept him, despite reproaches from her neighbors for housing a Muslim in her house and fear of punishment from the headsman. There are narratives by Shaikh Ahmad illustrating how day-to-day trade relations between members of the city community involved frequent Hindu and Muslim interaction: Shaikh Ahmad frequently sends a Hindu banya to receive his goods.

Moreover, Shaikh Ahmad even goes on to mention how even very orthodox Muslim circles admired aspects of the Hindu religion and culture. He recounts one incident where he received a letter from a strict Muslim Maulana Abuul-Feraj Radiud-Din of Didwana who questioned the Shaikh's commandment that no saint can unite with

god by doing ascetic exercises at home without making the important tours by citing the story of a Hindu friend. Maulana wondered how his friend, a Hindu woman with no sense of compulsory bath, could develop such clairvoyant power with a few days of starving (bride who did not eat out of shyness at husband's house) and how a Muslim faithful like himself, who had given up all for God, could not attain union with god.

Overall, the narratives of Shiakh Ahmad seem to paint a very favorable view of Hindu-Muslim relations at the local level. However, even in mentioning the significant unity, the narratives do note that prejudice does still exist within certain societal members and suggests it exists in specific areas of the Gujarat region. All the narratives indicate that some differentiation exists between Hindus and Muslims, as they can and are separated out, but the narratives suggest that while in a smaller village heavy prejudice remains strong (as the story of the older woman being rebuked for taking in a Muslim), in a larger cities, areas where a heavy trade interaction between Muslim and Hindus is a common way of life, there is significantly less dissension and perhaps more unity and equality.

*B) Saurashtra Folktales:*

Origin

The origin of Saurashtra folk culture can be traced back to charans, who in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, negotiated truces and sang to praise the brave and invigorate cowards at the battlefield. These charans were distributed around the country but specifically concentrated in the Gujarat region. Then, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the various invasions into the well-established Rajput areas, the charans again played the role of telling stories to inspire Rajput warriors to battle on with elegant orations. A few charans even were physically involved in the fighting.

In terms of the language they used, charans continued to adapt themselves to prevalent languages in their time: Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhransha. Gradually, they transformed Apabhransha into Old Rajpootani which they finally turned into Dingal- the primary phonetic poetical medium prevalent in Saurashtra-“the charani tongue”. Dingal was neither a language nor a dialect, but a direct mode of rendering poetry.

Following the 15th century, the charani tongue bifurcated-“one of the streams rolled toward palaces of kings and manors” becoming heroic lore full of hyperbole, “while the other meandered toward huts and villages<sup>16</sup>,” becoming folklore. The central difference became the use Dhuas as the central form for oral folk poetry.

*Duhas were brief, concise poems* in Dingal involved rhyming four-footed couplets distinct from season-celebrating pastorals and complex metrical poetry. With Duhas, courtly ostentation typically associated with poetry was removed and a strong sense of

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<sup>16</sup> Zhaverchand Meghani's *A Noble Heritage*: Introduction on folk-tales

common vernacular was infused in, allowing the spread of folklore orally to all classes, high or low through, and over subsequent generations up to till today.

### Compilation

Zhaverchand Meghani, in addition to being recognized as India's national poet in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was also a Saurashtra folk culture expert, who spent many of his years precisely transcribing Saurashtra folk tales being passed on orally in the region.

He spent four years in the 1920's traveling throughout the Saurashtra region of Gujarat conducting interviews of contemporary charans about their oral tales. Meghani described his experiences documenting bards: "Sitting up, I pricked my ears to catch the words of the verse and jotted them down in my notebook. Dreading being reported against in black and white for a fictitious crime, the singer would glance at the running pencil with slanted eyes and stop singing. I was the one in need and hence it was for me to strive to undo his fear, to assure him of my earnestness...At first he would say, "Oh! It was only a boorish garble of us illiterates. It can't interest you educated folk..."<sup>17</sup>"

Meghani's interest in accuracy was clear, in capturing the verses exactly the way they are spoken. However, Meghani's interviews also confirm that there was a strong sense that folk tales captured the common man, the low income class, the uneducated, "boorish garble of...illiterates," a group that political tales for "educated groups" do not address.

Overall, Zhaverchand Meghani composed three collections of the folktales: *A Noble Heritage*, *The Shade Crimson*, and *A Ruby Shattered*. All the stories were translated from Gujarati to English by Zhaverchand Meghani's son Vinod Meghani and graduate students from Saurashtra University in Gujarat, India. A majority of stories

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<sup>17</sup> Zhaverchand Meghani's *A Ruby Shattered*. Introduction pg. 19

directly addressed issues of Hindu-Muslim relations. A few other stories, in tackling other controversial issues of the time period such gender equality and socioeconomic equality, seemed to promote the same overall message: the need for of equitable, understanding, and united communities in our world.

In terms of a time period that the stories describe, exact dates are difficult as most of the stories are undated and only a few mention names of noted emperors to pinpoint a specific timeline. However, as described earlier, the 15<sup>th</sup> century featured the re-emergence and blossoming of charan folkculture, and experts of these folktales<sup>18</sup> estimate them to come from this century.

### Analysis of Stories:

#### *Method:*

I will analyze in detail general stories (four stories) and stories then specifically about Hindu-Muslim relations (five stories). The analysis of the general stories will, in addition to relevant themes, help unveil and appreciate the complexity of these apparently simple stories. Appreciating this complexity will be vital to properly understanding Hindu-Muslim relations suggested in the next five stories. Overall, I will first provide a detailed summary of each story I analyze and then perform a thematic and close textual analysis to help unpack the relevant themes and suggestions.

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<sup>18</sup> Conclusion based on interview with P.J Raval, head of history department at Saurashtra University

***I) General Stories:***

a) Raja Depal-De from *The Noble Heritage* collection (pg. 14-21).

Story Summary:

Raja Depal-De is a famous king of the region of Saurashtra with its capital city being Rajkot, Gujarat. He has prayed for rains for the current sowing season and the rains have come and therefore to rejoice he takes a trip to the countryside. He approaches the small village of Versal and finds a farmer who is using a bullock and a woman to pull his plough. The farmer even strikes the woman just like he strikes the bullock to keep the plough moving. The Raja at once asks the farmer to stop, however the farmer refuses, saying that given the immense financial pressure he cannot. Raja then asks the farmer why he is using a woman, who is his wife, to move his plow. He calls the behavior inhumane. The farmer responds by saying it is a necessity. He explains that his second bullock died and notes that if he does not plough his family will starve- therefore he needs his wife to pull the plough. He tells the Raja the only way he will release his wife is if the Raja himself will pull the plough with the bullock. The Raja agrees and the villagers all watch as the Raja is whipped and pulls the farmer's plough. After he is done pulling the plough across the field once, the wife of the farmer thanks the Raja profusely for his help. The Raja leaves the farmer a new bullock. Then, after the Raja has left and a few months pass, the farmer finds that the patch of the field ploughed by the Raja is not growing. He curses out the Raja for ruining his crop. His wife decides to conduct a closer examination of the fields to see the problem. She finds, in fact, that pearls are growing instead in the place of crops. The farmer regrets his words about the Raja and says he will



go and thank him for this blessing. Therefore, the farmer sets out to Rajkot to the court of the Raja and thanks the Raja for his help. Raja tells the farmer not to thank him but to thank his own wife. He explains that the pearls are blessing from his wife, which have grown due to her dedicated perseverance, and that when she was released from the plough, she blessed him by giving him the pearls. The farmer feels terrible about the treatment of his wife. He leaves the pearls at the Raja's feet and begins to leave. The Raja tells him to take the pearls, and keeps one pearl around himself to honor the wife's work. The farmer returns home to his wife and says he will never mistreat her again.

#### Analysis:

The story, from the early 15th century, begins with an exclusive focus on countryside. The narration highlights the beauty of the countryside and nature. The hills are described as covered with “velvety green” (14) the sound of the river is conveyed as “khal...khal...khal” (14), and animals of all types and varieties are illustrated. This glorification of the countryside seems to reveal the value of the rural in the time period and in turn also its people—a rather uneducated, low-income group—versus the growing urban landscape and its elite populace.

The criticism of male mistreatment of woman taking place in the time period comes about subtly in the narrative. The narrator, when introducing the farmer's plough, notes, “one of those hitched the plough was indeed a bullock but the other one was a human being – a woman” (15). This sentence embodies how, at first, it seems the main critique of the narrator is that any human is used in his manner. But, it is clear that the narrator is being very specific, “-a woman,” that the problem is that the mistreatment is

happening specifically to women, who is a human being and deserves to be treated like one. As the narrative proceeds, this becomes critique becomes clearer. The farmer is then shown to imagine his wife as nothing more than a possession. He tells the Raja she is his property and he is entitled to do anything he wants to her, marriage being all about ownership (16). The Raja in return calls the farmer not human for his actions, again tying the mistreatment of women to a mistreatment of human beings. Then, nearing the end of the story, the insight and knowledge of the woman is prominently displayed in the text to make the point that even more than being a human being, a woman is a uniquely gifted and talented human being, perhaps even more gifted and talented than a man. It is the farmer's wife who, as the farmer feels the Raja has ruined the crops, thinks methodically about the issue and runs her own investigation to find the truth. The wife is praised as, "a woman of understanding and insight," versus the "boorish farmer" (20). Even the Raja, the epitome of male power, himself honors her work at the end of the story, wearing her pearl on his neck.

However, it becomes clear with the ending and the inclusion of other details in the story that didactic criticism of female mistreatment is not its pure aim. The story ends with the line, "The farmer returned home with the sack of pearls, feel at the feet of his wife and said, 'Charan woman, I have tormented you a lot. Never again I shall. Do you believe me?'" (21) The question at the end of the sentence is disconcerting. It seems to put into doubts the feasibility of the reform, of treating women fairly. The idea is that saying "your going to never mistreat a woman" is not good enough; it needs to be proven and attested to by the victim, the woman. With the criticism of women mistreatment in

marriage then is then the accompanying criticism of the lack of trust and honesty in marriage also in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century of Gujarat.

Another complicating factor in the story is the role of poverty and how that is responsible for all conditions. The farmer's response to all inquiries from the Raja is how, given the pressing economic conditions, this is the only option. It raises the question: in the time period was the inequality toward women really due to evil inhumane actions of man or an unfortunate product of extreme poverty? Even the ending, the idea that the pearls and wealth essentially can solve the problem, seems to suggest the later.

In the end, the story is as much about promoting the importance of the Raja providing help to the farmer as it is about the farmer providing important information to Raja. There is the suggestion that the best Rajas of time, such as Raja Depal-De who is hyperbolized as a kind of God, are able to listen to needs of all members of their population, understand their struggle, and perhaps even sacrifice themselves personally to alleviate the burden-in this case with the Raja attaching himself to the plough, literally putting himself in the position of the woman who is suffering and enduring her pain.

But, the story also suggests that this is purely ideal and often not the reality. The farmer has little trust in or respect towards the Raja. He insults the Raja and has no shame in having the Raja attached to his plow. He only values the Raja when he sees financial benefits of his presence. In this way, the narrative highlights the relationship between political royalty and the common rural man in the time period. The relationship is very weak and needs to be fixed- otherwise atrocious inhumanities can continue to exist in the rural detached from king, state, and civilized authority.

Overall, this discussion of the political royalty and the rural common man fits in well with my project. This story, social source material, provides an account of the countryside and captures the effect of statewide events (such as drought or governmental policy) on the common man, the target of my investigation. In this tale, the primary setting of the story is the rural and the primary characters are the farmers, the king is the one who enters in and out. This is the generalized framework of social tale in contrast to the political tale: the main characters are the local general population and larger political issues come in and out.

b) Garisya Woman form *The Noble Heritage* collection (pg. 8-13).

Story Summary:

The story takes place in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The story is about a family living in the town near current day Junagadh in Gujarat. They are a family of gariysa landholders. The father of the family wants his daughter, Rupali, who is pregnant and getting married, to be escorted to her in-laws by the best guard Gema bhai. Gema bhai is a man feared by all and normally only works for the highest nobles. However, he agrees to guard the cart with Rupali on hearing that lots of jewels will also be with Rupali to the in-laws, so his protection is of particular importance. On the way to the in-laws, Gema bhai doses off to sleep, confident that no one will dare to bother him and attack the cart. Twelve robbers come along the way, discard of Gema bhai, and began to mistreat Rupali. They began to steal all her goods and make lewd remarks about her body. She, in turn,

strikes two of the robbers with a loose stay of the cart and then fights the rest of the 10 robbers by herself and defeats them. However, in the process she suffers many blows and is bleeding from all over. Fury is within her and she travels all the way to the in-laws, protecting herself and the jewelry. Her parents meet her at the in-laws house. They scold her for being so stupid as to risk her life for a mere few jewels. Rupali dies shortly afterwards.

#### Story Analysis:

With a cursory read of the summary, one would assume that this story appears to strongly promote the bravery of the pregnant, young woman. The story then would seem quite revolutionary for its time. However, it is clear on closer examination of the text that the story is illustrating an inability to properly praise a woman's bravery in that time period.

The story presents Rupali's actions as an outburst of unrestrained anger, with Rupali, "no longer being able to contain her wrath" (11). Her actions are portrayed as extreme, even her attack described as, "too powerful" (12). Her communities' reaction to her actions reveals the true message of the story: "the news of her feat had reaches all villages. Everyone was cautioned not to praise or admire her, or her surging fury would not subside. The kinsfolk were told to tick her off, criticize her, rebuke her. If the fury persisted more, the excitement might make her wounds bleed more-she might die" (13). Rupali's surging fury is seen as harmful for her, as much capable of killing her now as it was capable of saving her earlier. Its existence is only justified under the life-threatening

circumstances but is harmful in all other cases. This is the way in which a woman's bravery was imagined in that time period. The last part of the story, in which Rupali's father blames her for her "stupidity" (13), confirms society's attempts to even rather dispel the action then having to face what it signifies for women's rights and capabilities.

The story also emphasizes what society in that time period could have perhaps wanted to have as a message for their society: need for protector of a woman to be humble and take care of her property. It is the Gema bhai's behavior that is heavily criticized throughout the story. His laziness is faulted and in the end of the story, he is very clearly criticized as a "coward" (12), not having the expected strength to protect a woman. The story then advocates the man's need to have fury, to be more masculine and fit his gender, while telling the woman to mostly submit to the boundaries enclosed on her gender by society.

In thinking about my research project, I find that most of the primary source material I read is written by a man and is written about men. There is no space for women in the description of battles and this social source material seems to provide an explanation for the absence of the women, the societal mechanisms in play locking a women in here own sphere. But, even in showing how it is not accepted, the social source material still does capture the iconoclasm of women in the time period.

c) All for One from *The Noble Heritage Collection* (in original version of collection stored in Saurashtra University). (pgs. 1-14).

Story Summary:

Story takes place in the city of Janoon near the present day city of Ahmedabad during the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Raja of the region, Raja Das is preparing for an invasion from the Mongols. He assigns his noble Amitaj to gather the troops and make preparations for protecting the city. With all the necessary preparations made, the city braces for a nighttime arrival of the Mongols. When they do arrive, their military force overwhelms Amitaj and his troops. The Mongols begin to invade into city homes and shops. Raja Das becomes very upset and overwhelmed. Amitaj cannot think of anyone else to call for help. Hoping for a miracle, he shouts for help and finds a group of farmers coming to his rescue and fighting off the enemy. He recognizes the leader of the group as Neil bhai, the lead farmer of the region. After much fighting, the troops of farmers, though seemingly unequipped, successfully wards off Mongol forces from the city. Amitaj is about to go report the situation to Raja Das, when the Raja personally meets Amitaj and congratulates him for his great work in saving the town. The next day Raja Das gathers all citizens and repeats his honoring of Amitaj for his bravery, even complimenting Amitaj by comparing him to a God. Amitaj, as the Raja is about to finish, interrupts him and tells him the truth. The Raja is shocked at first and refuses to believe that Neil bhai and his farmers could be responsible. However, trusting Amitaj's account, the Raja regrets his mistake and at once announces the farmers be summoned to his palace for a great reward. Neil bhai arrives and the Raja showers gifts of wealth on him.

Afterwards, the Raja asks how else he can repay the farmers for their great deeds. Neil bhai tells him there is no need for thanks or rewards. He says that he and his farmers feel that the city also belongs equally to them, and so they must protect it in times of danger. The Raja seems to understand Neil bhai's words and he sends even more gifts to him.

#### Story Analysis:

There are several important themes that this story examines: particularly it presents an examination of the effect of socioeconomic differences. It is clear from the beginning of the story that there is this big divide between the nobles and the farmers, a divide that also does not allow information to pass. Only the nobles are told about the upcoming conflict and trusted and empowered to use the information to protect the village. There is, it appears in the time period, a lack of trust in handing down administrative duty to the low-income farmer group, the common man- questioning of the common's dedication and role in the community. Even in times of complete struggle, the noble Amitraj cannot even think of the farmer as a source of help.

Then, the story begins to focus more on the problems of a political history told by the Raja that refuses to accept or consider the contribution of the subaltern, of the poor income farmer. Raja is convinced that Amitraj has done the good work. It does not even enter his mind that a farmer could be responsible. Even when he hears the explanation from Amitraj he is, "stuck by amazement and disbelief" (9), refusing to accept the idea that threatens his clear way of thinking about the issue. Even when he finally accepts the fact the farmers' saved his city, he cannot understand why. As they refuse his praise, claiming it is their duty to serve their town, the Raja cannot understand how a low



income member feels ownership of the community, and resolves by “giving them more gifts” (14).

Similarly, criticizing the inclusiveness of political history is a crucial staple of my work as I am searching the history of the subaltern, the “farmers” involved in any given event. This awareness of this distinction, of a farmer versus leader, even during the 15<sup>th</sup> century is surprising and affirms my desire to make sure I do question the dominant political narratives of the time period and do look at the literature about the rural, about the low-income groups, and about women.

d) Hothal from the collection *A Ruby Shattered* (pgs. 88-124):

Story Summary:

The story is in the town of Dwarka, near the northwest corner of Gujarat, India. The story is set around the late 15th century. It focuses on two Rajput warriors, Odha and Ekalmal, both attempting to steal the cattle of an unfair neighboring ruler, Babhaniya. Odha is a famous king who is courted by all women but who refuses to marry. He runs into Ekamal, a younger youth who he is attracted to and sees as a perfect younger brother. Odha takes on Ekamal and they fight many battles together. They grow very close and form a very strong friendship. Then they are forced to depart and experience feelings for one another that they find hard to express or relieve. Eventually, they do depart and then Odha finds Ekamal bathing in the river. He discovers to his utter surprise that Ekamal is actually a female goddess named Hothal who fought in the armor of a man. Ekamal and Hothal stay together then and get married. However, both want to go home to their own

lands and so Hothal splits and goes her way and Odha is left alone, with nowhere to go.

The story ends.

#### Story Analysis:

This story indirectly deals with the concept of homosexuality. The story illustrates how this concept fails to make any sense to people in the time period and therefore and is quickly replaced by a clear heterosexual explanation.

In the earlier part of the story, when Ekamal still exists and has not been discovered to be Hothal, a significant amount of description illustrates the rather homosexual relationship between Ekamal and Odha. From when they first meet, Odha is described as being physically attracted to Ekamel: “Oh! Odha experienced a wave of affinity oozing from within and settling over his being. He said to himself: what a handsome youth the Creator has shaped!...Why do I feel a surge of affection for him” (96). This pure physical attraction is softened over the course of narrative by the statements indicating the affection is due to Odha feeling Ekamel is like a younger brother or family member. However, when Odha and Ekamel are about to depart it returns again and is even stronger. Odha is convinced that there is something rather feminine, sensitive, and uncharacteristic about Ekamel but he cannot reconcile it with Ekamel’s clear manliness (106). With two very distinct stereotyped gender roles of the time period, the dominating man stereotype must remain separate from the soft, submissive female stereotype-there is no place for the mixture of both qualities, a mixture seems paradoxical. It is this paradox Odha confronts and at once the narrator resolves the problem by turning Ekamel into a woman. Then, once she becomes a woman,

the story quickly turns her into a god almost to explain away her unfeminine qualities. As is the case with most of Meghani's stories, all the complex philosophical dilemmas introduced within the text are mostly all resolved by the end of the story. However, resolved in a way that puts away the dilemma conveniently without truly tackling its subtleties.

## ***II) Hindu-Muslim Relations Stories:***

The following stories examine Hindu-Muslim relations during the time period at the micro level. The distinction in Hindu-Muslim relations in the city versus in rural area becomes clear. Furthermore, the stereotypes of Hindus and Muslims in that time period are revealed. The conflict arising from Hindu-Muslim relations is also well captured in these lavish social tales.

a) To Protect a Women's Virtue from the collection *A Noble Heritage* (pg. 22-31)

Story Summary:

Story takes place in the 1480's with Mohammad Begada as governor of Ahmedabad. Story is about king named Sumaro who rules Sindh. Hebatkhan is a Jat (Muslim community) warrior employed in the regal court. Sumaro lusts towards Hebatkhan daughter's, Samari, and demands her hand in marriage. Hebatkhan refuses and is banished. He is told to run away and that daughter will be captured soon. Hebatkhan leaves Sindh with his kin, the Jats, and goes to central Gujarat. He goes asking

for protection from Rajas in the region. No Raja offers help. Finally, he comes to town of Moli belonging to Parmar Hindu who is crying and preparing for a town death. The king of town, Lakhdiree, asks mother if he can let him in. She is not very happy with decision. Lakhdiree offers Jats a small piece of land from his kingdom where Jats lodge.

Eventually Sumaro's army arrives, but no battle occurs as both sides are well-positioned. The brother of prince Halaja of Parmars defects over to Sumaro after being scolded by brother and tells them to pollute Parmar city well. This leads Parmars to tell Jats to fight and Hebatkhan agrees saying "Tomorrow we shall demonstrate to you that the blood of Jats is filled with Kshatriya virtue as much as is that of the Parmars!" (25) At night, Jat women scold Sumari (beautiful daughter of Hebatkhan) who caused this to happen. She asks how it is her fault for being beautiful. Battle begins next day. Hebatkhan's only son is killed that day in battle. Wife of son shouts at Sumari, calling her a sorceress. Sumari decides to leave on her own and escape, but she is caught by Sumaro's soldiers. As they are about to capture her, Sumari prays to Amma to make way for her and earth opens up and swallows Sumari. Back where battle is occurring, earth is soaked by spurts of blood of the dead and wounded. A Jat warrior named Isaji wounded by the enemy fire lays dying on the Kandola hill. Not far from him lays a wounded Asoji, the Parmar warrior. Blood gushes from the wounds of both bodies. Isaji tries to build a tiny bund with blood soaked earth so that the blood does not flow toward Asoji saying, "O brother...I am building this bund to stop my blood, a Muslim's blood, from flowing into yours and corrupting you in the moment of death" (27). Asoji responds, "Isa! O Isa! How can your blood mingling with mine corrupt my body. On the contrary I am sanctified! Do not stop the blood from flowing this way. Please do not! Let our bloods mingle! Jats and Parmars

are but one! Don't undo what's done!" (28) So Isaji lets the blood flow and mingle with Asoji blood and from that day Jats and Parmars intermarry and mingling of blood immortalized. At the battle, Sumaro has annihilated most of the men and imprisoned Halaji and told Lakhdiree to pay cost of the invasion or he will abduct and convert Halaji into a Muslim. Lakhdiree seeks help from Mohammad Begada, governor of Ahmedabad, who stands guarantee for Lakhdiree paying amount of Samaro and decides to hold Halaji in his custody until amount paid. Halaji Parmar accompanies governor Mohammad to Ahmedabad. Mohammad hopes to convert Halaji into a Muslim there, not by force but by showing him the true light of Islam. He employs four orthodox Brahmins to supervise the kitchen where food for Halaji is cooked. Mohammad makes sure Halaji not offended at all, while employing maulavis to preach essence of Islam to Halaji. But Halaji does not change faith. Finally amount paid to Samara and Halaji is returned to Mooli. But, then suddenly after five days, Halaji comes back to Ahmedabad and wants to be converted. He says to Mohammad that after returning home, he is told family refuses to even allow him to drink their water, saying—"You've been living with Muslims! You're no longer pure!" (28) So then Halaji tells Mohammad, "Since Hindu religion is so narrow in its outlook, why shouldn't I become a Muslim?" (30) So he is converted and then Mohammad ensures that Halaji given land of his own from Lakhdiree. Then, one day Halaji rides to Dhandhooka (outskirt village) and just then cattle-thieves happen to herd away cows from the town. His conscience cries out, "Halji, only your body has converted; by heart you are still a kshatriya, protector of cows and Brahmins. In your presence, how dare someone steal your cows? Do think of pledges of your ancestors! (31)" And so

Halaji fights for cows and dies in the process. Grave of his exists at shrine of Sarvarsha Pir.

#### Analysis of Story:

This story is one of the few recorded by Meghani with a character (Mohammad Begada) who is notable and also well-recorded in the political history. The story provides a glimpse into Hindu-Muslim relations, between rulers and in the city versus in rural areas during the 1480's.

It is clear that communication is frequent between Hindu and Muslim leaders. In need to help in figuring out the situation with the Sindh ruler Sumaro, the Hindu ruler of the Parmars, Lakhdiree, seeks help from the Muslim governor of Ahmedabad in times of need. Lakhdiree feels comfortable knowing he can trust Muhammad to be fair and respect Lakhdiree's side of the agreement, "to [stand] guarantee for Lakhdiree (28).

However, there seems to be a big divide between Hindu-Muslim relations within the city, such as Ahmedabad, and the small town such as Moli. In the story, when Halaji is taken to Ahmedabad, the description of the hired Brahmins in the kitchen seems to indicate fairly high comfort level between Hindus and Muslims, as Hindus can be employed even in the governor's home. Furthermore, there is no mention of prejudice occurring to Lakhdiree in the city. But, in the small town, there is a high awareness of the entrance of the Muslim Jats into a pure Hindu town. Prejudice also exists.

Furthermore, near the end of the story, the rural seems to represent a place of strong Hindu presence and revival. It is suddenly in the town where the converted Halaji becomes extremely aware of his "true" Hindu roots.

This prejudice, of Hindus against Muslims, as represented in the story, is important to examine as it sheds light on the kind of stereotypes that occurred during that time period. The first significant mention of prejudice occurs in the description of the blood of the Parmar and Jat warrior about to mix together. The Jat says, "I am building this bund to stop my blood, a Muslim's blood, from flowing into yours and corrupting you in the moment of death." Religion is clearly seen as something that is part of or affecting a person's biologic makeup. The idea that blood of a Muslim as different and corrupted versus the blood of the Hindu sheds some light on just how religion was imagined in the time period. This seems understandable though if one considers that the biggest differences between Hindus and Muslims hyperbolized in that time period (and even today) was how Muslims ate meat and Hindus did not, therefore suggesting because of diet a clear physiological difference between the two. The second mention of prejudice occurs near the end of the story when Halaji returns to his village. Halaji recounts his arrival back home to the village after living in a Muslim city of Ahmedabad: "After returning home...I felt thirsty. When I stood up to go to the kitchen to fetch a glass of water my babhi blocked my path, 'Don't touch the water jug!' she said. I said 'Bhabhi, you must be joking!' She said, 'I am not! I mean it!' Even then I took it as a joke and started for the kitchen. She however became angry and shrieked, 'You've been living with a Muslim! You're no longer pure!' Being Muslim is imagined here, by Babhi, as a kind of contagious disease that can be spread to others. And, while it seems as though this looks to be a stereotype, something that Halaji feels is "a joke," is it not to his mother. There is little attention given to seeing religion as having to do with the mind, a way of thinking, and lot more focus on religion as having to do with the physical body.

Finally, the story does depict the power of religion, looking at the moment of Sumari's death. Religion is not simply a title or useless component of identity-it has power. Sumari prays for Amma, mother earth, to come save her and sure enough the entire earth cracks open for her as a miraculous phenomenon. However, at the same time, there is not much clear involvement of the heavenly world and its characters in the story. The crack in the earth that takes in Amma could be fortunate circumstance as much as it could be divine will. There is no indication made of the particular god creating the act, as can be found in early Greek classics such as the *Iliad* by Homer and the *Aenied* by Virgil. This, then, again sheds light on the how religion was conceived in the time period and its connection to nature and natural phenomenon.

B) The Deed from the collection *A Noble Heritage* (pg. 55-76)

Story Summary:

The story takes place during the early 15<sup>th</sup> century near the current day city of Baroda in Gujarat, India. The story is about two lovers, who are Hindu Rajputs living in the small town of Ananda, who want to be married. Father of the bride (her name is Raajba) tells man that he must pay thousand rupees in cash to get married to his daughter. So, the man goes to moneylender for help and has to sign deal with moneylender that until he returns loan money, he has to treat wife as a mother or sister and so must keep his distance. Therefore the couple is married and goes off to live together but sleep with a sword separating them in bed. Finally, once making their way to capital of empire, they



encounter a Muslim governor who is fascinated by the pair of riders-he says, “an exquisite pair of riders created by the Allah, no doubt.” He offers them an opportunity to work for him and they agree. Then, on the way back to Baroda, Raajba saves life of the governor from lions attacking. The governor does not know Raajba is woman, since wearing armor. At the palace, Raajba and her man together, but cannot get close to each other.

Raajba at night, in grief, sings out spontaneously about being separated. The wife of the governor cannot sleep that night and hears the song. She says that “Around midnight I was standing in balcony when I heard a deep sigh. Even the walls began to throb by the exhaling hiss charged with sheer feminine anguish. I also heard a duha expressing the loneliness that could have erupted only from a woman’s heart” (58). She tells governor that one of the two in the couple is a woman and that the men and women are somehow separated. They do a trick of spilling milk to prove it is the case. Then the couple tells emperor about the loan and emperor agrees to pay it. The couple then leaves to go back to their home and live happily ever after.

#### Story Analysis:

The story presents the reader with an account an interaction between 15<sup>th</sup> century Muslim royalty and low-income Hindu residents. There seems to be no indication of stereotyping or prejudice by the Muslim governor, who takes up the couple based on their dignified appearance, and throughout the story never refers to them based on their religion but based on their circumstances. The Hindu couple also treat the governor with respect, “bowing their head” (61) to him.

The story also indicates a heartening unity between women that transcends socioeconomic and religious boundaries. As the wife of the governor says, “I also heard a duha expressing the loneliness that could have erupted only from a women’s heart,” she reveals her ability to sense the poor Hindu girl’s struggle because she is women herself and understands the pain. There is then this link between women, their shared experiences of love and perhaps subordination to the male patriarch, that binds them closer together and that no distance- religious, economic, or cultural- can break apart. The moment of this story when all are asleep except for the wife of the governor listening and the Hindu women sobbing best illustrates this concept.

C) O Bhagirathi from the collection *The Shade Crimson* (pg. 71-79):

Story Summary:

The story actually takes place in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century in the city of Junagadh, Gujarat during the reign of Akbar. Story is about a charan (folk singer) who is told to sing a Muslim prayer by the city emperor because of the quality of his voice and because he has said to have sung it beautifully before. The story begins with Nagajan who scorns the hour of Muslim prayer by carrying a smile and is a member of the imperial court. He tells the emperor that the mullah has no idea how a prayer should really sound and that Rajde-bhai is able to sing prayer in right way. So, emperor asks Rajde-bhai to sing Muslim prayers, but Rajde bhai begs king not to let him sing prayer, that he is a pure Hindu. But, Nagajan, “to wreak vengeance upon Rajde for an ongoing age-old feud” (72), tells Emperor not to believe Rajde bhai’s complaints and that his “call of the Divine is

renowned all over the empire” (73). So, emperor becomes adamant and brushes aside entreaties of Rajde. Rajde tells Nagajan, “you have succeeded in destroying my life, but I do not intend to let you disgrace by death” (74). So, as he is told, Rajde goes to mosque and ascends the top steps and delivers a great singing of the prayer. The Muslims call Rajde a Pir (an enshrined holy man believed to have Devine powers. Muslims and as well as Hindus revere, worship, and propitiate Him through their lives). Radje, after singing, begins descent down minaret and as approaches the final step to parapet, Nagajan strikes his final blow saying, “Rajde-bhai, when you die, should you be buried like a Muslim or cremated like a Hindu?” (77) In response, Rajde climbs back up and joins his palms on singing duha verses in anguish and entreaty-sings to rivers, asking them to cleanse him. In response, “The thronging congregation could not comprehend the urgency in his words and the pining pathos in his voice, but their hearts absorbed and echoed his intense piety” (77). As he continues to sing to the incarnation of Seeta, the turret of the mosque begins to shake, rocks quiver, a rift develops in mosque ground and widens and water springing from its depths and begins to overflow. Then Rajde undoes the knot on his waist-sash and reveals that he had stabbed himself before arriving. And after finishing his invocation, water comes and submerges the steps and washes him up to his head and then went away. “This was the moment when Rajde’s soul departed from his body” (79)-the last line of the story.

Story Analysis:

The story illustrates, in more detail, Hindu-Muslim relations in Gujarat cities during the earliest periods of Akbar's rule. It is a well accepted historical fact that Akbar was a proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity and therefore promoted large number of Hindus in government service. And it is seen here, that two Hindus work closely with the Muslim governor of the city. What is more important though is that both Hindus and their words are respected by the Muslim governor. Court member Nagajan feels comfortable expressing his scorn of Muslim prayer to the governor and telling him how it can be better. The governor fully listens to him and takes his suggestion to have Rajde bhai sing the verses. The fact that the Muslim governor allows a Hindu to sing the verses is another point that support the good relations between the two groups.

But, it is not only the governor who accepts the Hindu singing Muslim prayers, it is also the crowd of common Muslims who accept and praise Rajde bhai at the mosque. Rajde bhai is allowed to go to mosque and ascend the highest step there. After his great singing, Muslims praise Rajde bhai exorbitantly. They even refer to him as a "Pir," a god. The concept of a Pir, during that time, represents the unity between the groups. A Pir is a god worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims. It is a concept that both groups respect and share. Finally, even when Rajde bhai begins delivering a Hindu prayer, Muslims admire it and feel its "piety."

The real conflict in the story is never between Hindus and Muslims, but is rather between Hindus themselves. But, it does become clear, that from the Hindu point of view, a prejudice is held inside against Muslims. Clearly, Rajde bhai feels very uncomfortable having to sing a Muslim prayer, feeling that he will be impure if he does. There is, as illustrated in the story "To Protect a Woman's Virtue," a feeling of contamination by

being near a Muslim. But, it is shared within Hindus, something that Nagajan also feels and discusses only with Rajde bhai as a kind of inside joke. It is best symbolized by the final scene in which Rajde bhai has stabbed himself inside and continues to deliver a glorious prayer to the Muslim crowd, veiling his pain internally.

However, in addition to specifically discussing Hindu-Muslim relations, the story does also seem to showcase the power and importance of religion in general- as what Rajde bhai prays for actually occurs. After reading the story, the reader is left with the feeling that their world is shaped by the gods and prayers, the results of prayer are tangible.

D) The Indomitable Twelve from the collection *The Shade Crimson* (pg. 81-95)-

Story Summary:

The story is based on an ode titled Nishaanee, composed in Dingal during the 15<sup>th</sup> century by a Meer (Muslim poet community) poet named Karaman Krishnana Chotala. The story begins in village of Thorala, Gujarat by focusing on brotherhood of twelve Hindus led by Visal [never referred to by their religion in this way in story]. Eleven belong to a community of parijiya charans and one belongs to bawa. They cause no trouble. But, then a charan, who is spiteful of Visal, sneaks into the imperial court and tells Sultan that Visal is trying to undermine imperial will with his arrogance. Sultan is surrounded by Muslim groups: Afghans and Iranian warriors. Emperor is upset and decides to meet Visal. Meeting is arranged. As he walks up to the Sultan, Visal salutes ,

but does not salute the Sultan. He salutes his sword. The emperor asks why not bow before him. Visal responds, “There are only two worthy of obeisance: one is Allah and the other is the Primordial Force that created the Creator. All the remaining are brothers. Brothers embrace; they don’t bow, o emperor! Neither you are nor I am superior to the other” (85). While outwardly the Sultan gets mad, internally he is fascinated by the unabashed words spoken by an honest man. So Sultan outwardly challenges Visal to battle or seek obeisance. Visal wants to battle. As Visal prepares to battle with brotherhood, the Sultan regrets his calling for battle saying, “A blunder on my part! A grave blunder it was! Twelve innocent brave ones are about to be killed simply because they are proud, and stubborn too! Oh Allah! I erred. This mayhem would blemish my record” (89). Sultan wants a way out and a member of staff (vizier) tells him there is way in which they can position themselves so that Visal is forced to surrender. Sultan agrees but Visal does not allow this to happen. They show themselves proudly and the Sultan remarks, “To defend self-respect and dignity, these men are prepared to give up their worldly desires and are walking into the jaws of death! Who among my soldiers would be able to bear the mighty slashes of these swords?” Then the brothers speak to a Brahmin for spiritual guidance and begin the battle. But, Visal tells them all to kill troops except for the emperor, saying, “we shall not raise our swords against his person. An emperor is regarded as the twenty-fifth apostle. He is revered to be benefactor of millions.” So they fight and as they do the emperor/Sultan watches saying “in admiration,” “O Allah! O Allah! Look at them! How earnestly they fight and die for their honor!” The brotherhood fights very well. Then, fearing loss of all his warriors, the emperor commands use of arrows—this kills the brotherhood (stabs them). They then lay on the ground and the

emperor arrives and asks to be introduced to them. But, his accompanying minstrel pokes at the bodies while introducing them and Manju, the shepardess, shouts at him for desecrating bodies. The Sultan is embarrassed and leaves with his army. Finally, only 11 out of 12 members of brotherhood fighting, 12<sup>th</sup> arrives and realizes his brotherhood dying (being burned in funeral) and goes into the fire to die with them.

#### Story Analysis:

This story features the Sultan, the highest ranking Muslim official in the government, interacting with low-income Hindu warriors.

Throughout the story, the Sultan shows a great respect for the Hindu warriors. He is proud of their honesty and proud of the way in which they fight. He even tries his best to avoid having to injure them. But, he is torn between his true feelings inside toward the warriors and his duty as the Sultan. He acts against the Hindu warriors because he must protect his standing as the Sultan, as controller of the land. He does not attack them or mistreat them because of their religion. This is an important distinction that needs to be emphasized when seeing battles between Hindus and Muslims. It is often a question of territoriality and ensuring proper governance that leads to what appears to be anti-Hindu/Muslim attacks.

It is also important to note that the head of the Hindu band of warriors, Visal, also respects and honors the Sultan and his Muslim faith. When he first meets the Sultan, while he does not honor the Sultan personally with a bough, he does acknowledge "Allah." Finally, Visal also tells his group to kill everyone except for the emperor. He

respects the good work the Sultan does and his important administrative position of power.

E) D) The Killer of His Son from the collection *A Noble Heritage* (pg 85-92):

Story Summary:

The story, set in the 1430's, is about a boy who is the son of the elected overlord of the Panday Hindu village: Mandordarkhan who is a Muslim. The story begins with the town celebrating the festival of Holi, known for its colorful festivities, when a Hindu visitor arrives. He does not want to get smeared and still the town folk persist and he whips out his sword, and the blade slips out and kills the son of Mandordarkhan who is outside. Shocked, the visitor runs away. The town folk go to their overlord and tell him his son has been murdered. Mandordarkhan at once gets on his horse and goes after the visitor (Hindu Charan). He finds him and asks him why he did what he did. The visitor tells him that he came since his family is starving and needed to come to the village dressed nice to speak to the overlord for food, that didn't mean to kill his son. Mandordarkhan at once gives the visitor his horse so the visitor can escape the town mob trying to kill him. The visitor asks for Mandordarkhan's name and Mandordarkhan responds, "The only name is that of Allah." After this, he gathers a group of villagers and tells them that "Did he kill my son intentionally? The overlord responds, "Do you know how many of his sons, just like my prince, are starving at his home? My son's death was preordained. It was so willed by Allah, the Almighty."



### Story Analysis:

Just looking at the structure of the town in this story is revealing. The Muslim overseer, Mondordarkhan, is elected in charge of a town of Hindus. This is novelty, given the high level of anti-Muslim prejudice normally present in the rural areas in the time period.

The Muslim leader supports Hindu festivals such as Holi. The leader's son is involved with the local Hindus in celebrating the event as well. When his son is killed by a foreigner Hindu, Mondordarkhan does not see the crime as a Hindu killing a Muslim but a foreigner killing his son. In fact, it is not until the very end of the story where we, the readers, are informed of the actual religious background of the foreigner. Even when the Mondordarkhan does come face to face with the Hindu, he empathizes with his struggle and treats him very well. He attributes his son's death not to the Hindu but to the will of Allah.

The story is interesting to consider in the context of the 1713 riots which will be discussed in the following section. Both stories have very similar contexts and beginnings but radically different endings.

### **Part III: 1713 Riot in Ahmedabad**

## **A) Introduction:**

### **i) Defining “Communal Riot”**

The 1713 riot in Ahmedabad has been noted by Indian historians as the earliest recorded communal between in the history of Gujarat<sup>19</sup>, but also in the larger history of India. However the phrase “communal riot,” used by historians to describe this first riot, needs to be clearly delineated.

Communalism expert, Christopher Bayly, argues that word communal is an adjective applicable only if a specific degree of extreme violence is found in a riot caused by religious differences<sup>20</sup>. He only classifies the modern riots after 1992, with significant death tolls, as communal riots. Paul Brass characterizes communal riot as a riot simply between Hindus and Muslims at any level<sup>21</sup>. The historian P.J. Raval, who I spoke with at Saurashtra University, explained to me that the word communal riot referred to a conflict between many local, often low-income members of the Hindu and Muslim community, part of the social versus the political history of a region. I define communal riot as defined by P.J. Raval.

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<sup>19</sup> Based on interview with P.J. Raval, head of history department at Saurashtra University

<sup>20</sup> C.A. Bayly (1985): “The Pre-history of Communalism? Religious Conflict in India 1700-1860,” *Modern Asian Studies*: Vol. 19, No.2, pg. 177

<sup>21</sup> Bass, Paul: *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

ii) Recording of the Event:

The event is recorded in two of the most famous primary sources used to document political history of medieval Gujarat: the *Muntakhab al-lubab* by Khafi Khan and the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* by Ali Muhammad Khan. Both of these texts very briefly recount major political events; therefore, the lavish description of a social 1713 riot is very surprising.

a) *Muntakhab ul-lubab* by Khafi Khan:

The *Muntakhab ul-lubab* contains a year-by-year, prospective description of political events taking place in Gujarat from 1605 to 1719. Khafi Khan, the Persian author, completed the work in 1722. When published, Khan claimed the work was based on personal observations or on the verbal testimony of people who witnessed the event.

Khafi Khan himself was the son of Khwaji Mir, a historian, who held a high station under Prince Murad and then served government positions under the famous Emperor Aurungzeb. Khan disapproved of the way his father was treated by the government and therefore, in his history, is known to be fairly critical toward the involvement of the government.

b) *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* by Ali Muhammad Khan

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* contains a retrospective account of political events taking place from 1700-1754. Ali Muhammad Khan, the Persian author, completed the work in 1756.

Ali Muhammad himself was a revenue official who, on his appointment to the Gujarat revenue office in 1748 found that the office was obsolete, with no political or military function do to external chaos, and therefore began looking up old records. He worked with a Hindu subordinate at the office to piece together the history of his time from the records.

### **B) Description of Event:**

i) Description of event from *Muntakhab ul-lubab* by Khafi Khan<sup>22</sup>:

After Daud Pani Khan became Subadar of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, in the second year of the reign, on the night when the Holi of the Hindus is burnt, a certain Hindu, between whose house and the house of some Musulmans there was a court-yard common to both houses, prepared to burn the holi in front of his house, but the Musulmans prevented him. The Hindu went to Daud Khan, who frequently favored the infidels, and argued that he had a right to do as a he liked in his own house. After a good deal of talk and importunity, the right to burn holi was allowed. Next day a Musulman, who dwelt opposite the house, desiring to give an entertainment in honor of the Prophet, brought a cow and slaughtered it on the ground that was his own house. All the Hindus of the quarter assembled in a

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<sup>22</sup> Eliot and Dowson. *Muntakhab-ul lubab Khafi Khan ; translated and edited by H.M. Elliot, John Dowson.* London: W.H Allen and Co, 1886

mob around the Musulmans, and the Musulmans, being unable to resist, went into their houses and hid themselves. The Hindus grew so bold and violent that they seized a lad of fourteen or fifteen years old, the son of a cow-butcher, and according to the statement of one of the citizens who fell into their hands, they dragged the boy off and slaughtered him. The report and sight of this outrage drew the Musulmans together from all quarters; the cry for a general disturbance was raised, and a great concourse them assembled, and among them several thousand Afghans, in the service of Daud Khan, eager to defend the honor of Islam, without caring to please their master. The Afghans of the suburbs and the inhabitants of the city assembled together into a great crowd, and went off with one accord to the house of the kazi. The kazi, seeing the mob, hearing the disturbance, and thinking of the partiality of the Subadar, shut his house upon the people. Reports say that upon the hint of the kazi as to the conduct of the partiality of Daud Khan towards the Hindus, the Musulmans set fire to the dore of the kazis house, and began to burn the shops in the chawk and the houses of the Hindus. In the riot, many shops were destroyed. They then went off with the intention of burning the house of Kapur Chand, a jeweler, and an active infidel, who took a leading part in this business, and was an acquaintance of Daud Khan. He got notice of their intention, and, with a number of matchlockmen who he collected, he shut the gate of his ward of the town and showed fight. Numbers of Musulmans and Hindus were killed. The riot reached such a pitch that for three or four days all business and works in Ahmedabad were suspended. A large number of leaders on both sides resolved to appeal to the Emporer. Daud Khan placed his own seal on the petition of Kapur Chand, and the kazi and other officials having certified to the violence

of the Musulmans, and it was sent to Delhi. Shaik Abdul Aziz [and other Musulmans] went in person to Court.

ii) Description of event from *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* by Ali Muhammad Khan<sup>23</sup>:

In 1713 Ahmedabad city experienced a serious communal riot that lasted two days. The immediate occasion of the riot was provided by the offensive attitude assumed by some Hindu Bania shroffs of the Jauhariwada towards the locality's Muslim inhabitants during the Holi festival which was celebrated with uncharacteristic abandon by the otherwise staid Banias. Revelry and merrymaking degenerated into offensive social behavior when Hari Ram, manager of the Madan Gopal Sarraf's establishment, caught hold of a Muslim passerby and humiliated him by throwing at him color, dust, and mud. The victim, enraged at this defilement at the hands of the infidels, immediately got in touch with Mohammad Ali. The Waiz or preacher, an influential religious dignitary, and informed him of the morning's episode. Mohammed Ali was properly indignant and summoned the city's Muslim population to the Jama Masjid (main mosque). Muslims of all categories- preachers and artisans alike and Sunnis as well as Bohras-congregated at the Masjid. The Bohra delegation was led by their leader Mulla Abdul Aziz. A decision was taken to march en masse to the Jauhariwada to take revenge on the Hindus. A crowd formed and

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<sup>23</sup> Translation of the event in *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* recorded in article Capital and Crowd in a Declining Asian Port City: The Anglo-Bania Order and the Surat Riots of 1795, by Lakshmi Subramanian published in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1985), pp. 205-237

tempers ran high, with the more voluble shouting, ‘Din Din.’ An attempt was made to involve the Qazi Khairullah Khan, in the protest march, but in vain. The crowd, dismissing the act of prudence as cowardice, went ahead with their plans-their houses were attacked and in the general scuffle, Abdul Aziz the head of the Bohra merchants, had still time to sort out his personal differences with Kapur Chand Bahnai, the Nagarseth of Ahmedabad. Both Bahnai and Abdul Aziz took vantage positions on opposite housetops and pelted each other with stones. Bahnai turned out to be more resourceful than Abdul Aziz and persuaded the unemployed Muslim soldiers to assume defense of their own brethren. The intervention of the administration came two days later by which the the riot had subsided.

### **C) Comparative Analysis of Riot Description:**

#### i) Similarities:

Both accounts of the riots share several important details. In terms of the actual occurrences of the event, both accounts mention the Holi festival as a preliminary cause of the riot. In the *Muntakhab ul-lubab*, the partiality of Duad Khan in regards to the Hindu burning of Holi begins the riot while in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, the offensive attitude of participators in Holi begins the riot. In both, it is the Muslims who are rioting against Hindus. Specifically, both accounts have Muslims of various different castes and classes coming together to unite as one to riot against the Hindus. Finally, both accounts have Hindus crossing the line and inciting the Muslim community to attack. In the *Muntakhab*



*ul-lubab*, Hindus come in and kill the son of a cow-butcher to incite the Muslims to lead the attack. In the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, a Hindu goes too far in throwing Holi on a Muslim, inciting a response. Following the attack, in both accounts, only Hindu villages and shops are attacked.

ii) Differences and Narrator Bias:

There is one major difference between the two accounts as well. This difference can be explained in part by the background of the reader.

The biggest difference between the two accounts is in regards to the early details of the riot incident. In the *Muntakhab ul-lubab*, the dispute involves government official Daud Pani, who rules in favor of Hindus to cause the commotion. The partiality of the government toward one group is what is responsible for the riot. This account is fitting, given Kafi Khan's tendency to be critical of politics in this time. This criticism stems from his dislike of the treatment of his father and his found throughout the *Muntakhab ul-lubab*.

But, it is important to note that in *Muntakhab ul-lubab* that the event is recorded on that date it is happening, not retrospectively as in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*. In this *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, the dispute between Hindus and Muslims begins with a Hindu crossing the line and throwing Holi on a Muslim. In this case, a conspicuous cultural display is responsible for the observed riot, and this focus on the important role of culture and cultural behavior fits with the other writings of Ali Muhammad Khan, often highlighting the centrality of culture.

## **D) Secondary Causes of 1713 Riot:**

### Introduction:

Of course, both accounts provide primary causes of the riots: whether it be anger over the partiality of the government towards Hindus or at the flamboyant actions of Hindus. However, it is important to realize there must have been very important secondary causes of this riot that contributed in setting the stage for this riot, so that even a small incidents that occurred during Holi could become such a divisive event between Hindus and Muslims, all of a sudden and for the first time in the history of the region. What are these secondary causes?

A full investigation of the political and social history, prior to the riots, unveils that three critical secondary factors emerge: Economic Burden, Local Political Instability, and Formation of Muslim Identity.

### I) Economic Burden:

A look at changes in taxes, major natural disasters, and riots related to economic changes 63 years before the time of the riot [Table 1] reveals how economic burden was a critical secondary factor.

It is first important to consider the taxing inequality occurring over the years. Beginning first in 1665, there was an excise tax put on the population, with a greater tax on Hindus than on Muslims (5 cents versus 2.5 cents respectively). Then, in 1673-1674 there was a tax exclusively on Muslims, again propagating the division between Hindus and Muslims.

Add to the taxing major natural disasters that made the taxing rather unbearable for Muslims, by increasing prices of foods and basic necessities. Famines occurred in 1650, 1685-1686, 1685-1697 and especially in 1681 and 1685-1686 significant price increase followed. The only noted documented instances of rioting of any kind before 1713 took place to protest these price increases. In 1681, due to high food prices, on the Idd festival, the viceroy returning to his residence after prayers was confronted by mob of rioters throwing stones and rubbish at him<sup>24</sup>. In 1685-1686, the son of the Kazi, high ranking member of the city who was in charge of fixing prices, is brutally attacked.

Finally, add to this financial burden, an additional burden caused by increased taxing on the entire population with times of war against Hindus and costs of building Muslim mosques, also further polarizing the groups.

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<sup>24</sup> Gujarat (India) *Gujarat State Gazetteers*. Ahmedabad. Gujarat State: Directorate of Govt. Print., Stationery and Publications, 1961

In this way, it can be imagined how immense economic burden on groups could lead even a small spark between the groups to ignite into a full scale riot.

## II) Local Political Instability:

It is important to consider how local political instability can impact a population. The way it works is that if a population has a strong faith in a local politics versus a larger national politics and then if in that same consistent system a significant change occurs that threatens that systems viability, then that population is dramatically impacted by this change and violence can occur. An examination of the local government and its structure nearing the 1713 riots seems to indicate political instability significant enough to cause or easily spark conflict between Hindus and Muslims.

### Early Political History:

Looking at the earliest political history of Gujarat from Part I, it is clear to see that extreme loyalty to local politics is inherently part of Gujarat. This extreme loyalty has been forged in part by both high turnover of power over Gujarat by different groups and in part by the ways in which the Sultanate used to be structured.

Turnover of power over Gujarat defines the state's early political history. During the beginning of Turkish presence in the region during the time of Alu-ud-din in 1296, Turkish forces first completely took over the region, and then immediately left and returned power to the hands of Hindu rajas, such as Raja Karna. Similar important moment of turnover of power occurred in 1316, when the followers of the first governor of Gujarat fought to take control of the region and succeed from the Sultanate.

Succession occurred again in 1347 as a revolt led by Taghi and Afghan rebels. This

frequent turnover of power of Gujarat led to residents being able to find stability only in local political structures that were consistent<sup>25</sup>.

In addition to turnover of power, there was also a heavy push toward honoring the independence of states that are part of the Sultanate, such as Gujarat, during the early political history. Ala-ud-din began this trend during his reign, in which he rapidly expanded the Sultanate and only asked that newly acquired territories maintain allegiance to him and provide him taxes. Then, under the rule of Firuz Khan in 1351, even more independence was given to provincial territories such as Gujarat. Finally, in 1409 Gujarat itself declared its independence under Zafar Khan. All in all, citizens living in the cities of Gujarat, in this way, barely felt larger political changes of the Sultanate and much more significantly felt local changes<sup>26</sup>.

#### Political History near 1713 Riot:

An important political event in 1710 indicates the level of local political loyalty among residents. The changing of this local administration itself in 1713 seems to in large part explain the conditions of uncertainty and fear that caused the riots.

In 1710, Emperor Mauzzam Bahadur Shah was a follower of the Shia sect and sent an order that the word wasi was to be added to the titles of the Khalif Ali in the recital of names of the prophet's successor. When the Khatib of Ahmedabad, who led prayers in Jami masjid, acted on the orders, there was a protest by Muslim city residents and he was warned not to repeat it. Next week, the Khatib continued and he was dragged

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<sup>25</sup> Conclusion made by P.J Raval , Head of History Department at Saurashtra University

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

Table 1: Economic Burden Chart<sup>27</sup>

<b>1650</b>	Famine like conditions in Gujarat
<b>1665</b>	Excise duties introduced at the rate of 2.5 per cent for Muslims and 5 per cent in case of Hindus
<b>1668- 1670</b>	Local tax on sale of cattle at 2.5 cents Muslims, 5 cents non-Muslims
<b>1673- 1674</b>	Jazia tax on all non-Muslims. Paupers, children, lame, blind, and insane people were excluded from this outpost. If Hindu embraced Islam, exempted from the tax
<b>1681</b>	<i>Riot against unprecedented high food grain prices</i>
<b>1684</b>	Famine and further rise in food grain prices. <i>Son of Kazi attacked by crowds</i>
<b>1685- 1686</b>	There was draught and famine and there was scarcity of food grains resulting in even more significant increases in prices.
<b>1691</b>	Money sanctioned by government for the conservation of several mosques in Ahmedabad
<b>1693</b>	Money sanctioned by government for repairs of city walls, repairs of water-channel of Karani which supplied Jami Masjid, repairs to Masjid in suburb of Ahmedabad, and for rauza of Abu Turab in the city.
<b>1694- 1695</b>	There was heavy mortality at Ahmedabad in consequence of destitution, flood, and pestilence.
<b>1695- 1697</b>	Widespread famines
<b>1699</b>	Masjid and madrassa at Ahmedabad completed at significant government cost
<b>1713</b>	The emperor has sanctioned expenditure of one lakh of rupees from local treasury to raise troops and collect artillery to meet the impending danger of Maratha invasion.

and stabbed. The emperor thus withdrew the order<sup>28</sup>. The following event in 1710 illustrates how little respect was shown toward the emperor's orders by the population. Citizen loyalty was directed toward local officials.

In 1713, right before the riots, Daud Khan was appointed as viceroy. He entrusted the civil administration to the Decanni Brahmins (Hindus) who had accompanied him from the South. For the first time of the history of the city, Hindus entered the local government system. This was a major change for all citizens, especially Muslims living in the city, who were left with a great deal of uncertainty and fear. They had relied on the stability of the local government for many years and this change was abrupt and

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Gujarat (India) *Gujarat State Gazetteers*. Ahmedabad. Gujarat State: Directorate of Govt. Print., Stationery and Publications, 1961

unsettling. Therefore, even a small incident, such as the Holi incident, could tip them to unite together and defend themselves.

### III) Accentuation of Muslim Identity

One critical feature found in both accounts, *Muntakhab ul-lubab* and *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, is the detailed description of Muslims, of all types, uniting together during the course of the riot, under one shared Muslim identity, irregardless of subset or class.

In most Gujarat cities, from the early years of the Sultanate, there was quite a heterogeneous group of Muslim residents, including: Persians, Afghans, Arabs, and Ismali Shiah. There was even frequent fighting in between these Muslim groups. Most notably, in 1321, Afghan rebellions began to take place in Gujarat, against the Sultanate and its Muslim leaders. However, several Hindu attacks threatening the Mughal Empire and Islam in general helped to bring Muslims of these various backgrounds closer together in Gujarat cities, specifically Ahmedabad.

The first series of Hindu attacks came from the Marwards. This kingdom of the Marwads was annexed by the Mughal emperor Aurungzeb in 1679. This annexation led to the series of attacks that lasted from 1679 to 1707, leading to a significant state of fear within Muslim populations in Gujarat cities, including Ahmedabad.

The next series of Hindu attacks came from the Maratha and were much more significant. The Marathas came from the current region near Mumbai and Pune. They started by invading Mughal forts, led by their leader Shivaji, beginning in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. They continued to attack all parts of the Mughal kingdom for the next one

hundred years. Very openly promoting Hinduism, the Maratha invasions led to significant fear within Muslim populations over Hindus within their regions and their safety.

Several times, Maratha forces were able to come within a very close proximity to the city of Ahmedabad. In 1707, the Marathas came within 5 km of city. The Viceroy at the time, Ibrahim Khan, collected for of troops (Muslim and Rajputs and Kolis) that were deployed at Kankaria to meet invading Marathas. The people of the suburbs and adjoining villages of Ahmedabad were not sure about the ability of the army to resist the Marathas and so flocked to the city of Ahmedabad for protection behind its walls. This led to city streets being crowded and rampant fear about Hindu takeover. Then, again in May 1711, the viceroy's defeat of the Maratha force just 20 km away from Ahmedabad saved the city.

But, how did the proximity and constant fighting of Marathas and Marwards get conveyed to the people inside the city and create confusion and fear? The answer is: an efficient communication system informing the local public about the conflicts occurring outside or near the city walls.

Research on Mughal communications has, in fact, shown that even members of the low-income classes had significant access to news services in 18<sup>th</sup> century Gujarat. The work of Jain trader Benarsidas in Gujarat illustrates how effective communications systems were even as early at the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup> According to the trader, news and letters traveled frequently and rapidly. He heard of Akbar's death while at Jaunpur, and though he gives no date his description, implies that news traveled very fast from Agra.

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<sup>29</sup> All information discussed from Farooque, Dr. A.K.M. *Roads and Communications in Mughal India*. New Delhi : Jagowal Printing Press, 1977



Within ten days word came of Jahangir's accession and everything became normal. Benarsidas also mentions that during his frequent journeys to different parts of the countries he was constantly informed of the affairs of his home and family: runners delivered letters to him along the way.

Therefore, it is likely that residents within the city heard of attacks of Hindu groups across the Mughal Empire. Then, when those attacks became even closer to their city, the anxiety increased and, with enemy groups that heavily promoted themselves as Hindus versus Muslims, this led to a polarization of Hindus versus Muslims in the cities. By the time of the Holi incident, fears were high and then with the incident tensions erupted.

**Part IV:**  
**Linking Past and Present: 1713 Riots and 2002 Riots**

### Introductory Section: Getting up to 2002 Riots:

Of course, between the first recorded communal riot in Gujarat in 1713 and the most recent communal riot in Gujarat many events have occurred. I will extremely briefly highlight a few of the key moments that have significantly impacted Hindu-Muslim relations. Each one of these topics can and do have several thousand pages of literature written about them.

Colonial British rule has been noted to have led to a strengthening in the divide of Hindus and Muslims. British rule in India lasted from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century up till independence in 1947.

The independence movement itself, especially with partition of India and the formation of Pakistan, lead to the most significant recorded conflicts between Hindus and Muslims.

Finally, the accession of a Hindu National party in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Gujarat, especially with the election of noted pro-Hindu leader Narendra Modi, has led to perennial struggle of Muslims in the Gujarat region, culminating in 2002 riots which led to death of over 2000 Hindus and Muslims.

### 2002 Riots and 1713 Riots:

While there are significant amount of differences between the causes behind the riots, some causes are shared and thus illustrate that some factors behind Hindu-Muslim rioting in Gujarat are inherent to the region.

One common cause of both riots is economic disparities and economic burden. The role of a heavy economic burden in promoting the 1713 riot has been discussed.

Currently, based on my interviews in the city of Rajkot, Muslims feel that the government taxes them more significantly and harshly than Hindus and this leads to immense financial pressures on an already majority low-income group, fueling violence seen in 2002.

Another common cause of both riots, very closely related, is local political structure. In Rajkot, the Modi government itself played a central role in creating the riots themselves and people's distrust in the government led to even more rioting.

Finally, the third and final shared cause is the role of media and identity formation. Just as the communication networks, during the time of Maratha attacks on the city of Ahmedabad, facilitated polarization, current media networks displaying anti-Muslim activities around the world and in other areas of Gujarat helped to alleviate the 2002 conflict.

In this way, it is disturbing to see how much the present still mirrors the past.

## **Part V: Poetry as a Conclusion**



### **Explanation and Conclusions:**

#### Analyzing the Poem:

There are two layers to this poem: the typing and the painting. Typed in black are the many factors involved in the Hindu-Muslim relations (govt, money, religious castes (sunni shea.), media, unknown, language battles). The black paint and red paint highlight the factors the writer of the poem thinks are important—in this case the stereotypical factors: of Hindu and Muslims against each other (circled in with black paint), the role of the government or as in earlier times the conflict being seen as a political problem (underlined with black paint), and lots of bloodshed (red paint). But, what about highlighting the unity there? What about highlighting and understanding the money involved, or the woman (role of the woman) very much hidden in this conflict, and really what about the common people who are hidden in the red blood, but being almost blocked out by the government issue—this is the key point. This is why on the top of the poem the rules are to find the woman, the common man. But, again we don't have a name, but a space for the name (as stated in the top text—"sign my name"), its open for many different authors, many different people can apply their paint and circle those terms that they think are important. This is the "multiplicity" of the view of conflict.

However, as the line in the top of the poem indicates, “the paint is leaking through” so that once someone applies the paint, their view, it leaks through the original black and white ink paper so that an accurate view of all the factors becomes impossible. That is the biggest problem.

Finally, there is no date at the bottom, because as my presentation explained, the factors that cause the conflict have not changed in some sense since the first conflict in 1713.

#### Function of Poem:

Abstract poetry, as the one I created, appeals to a youth audience, pushes limits of creativity, and makes students really question words, their formation, images in regards specifically to media which can strongly influence thoughts and is a huge deviant factor today in thinking about the riots.

#### Future Goals:

There needs to be a greater effort on having early Gujarat history textbooks focus on the local social histories in addition to famous political state histories. In other words, students should be encouraged to see the history of Gujarat as multidimensional and inclusive of all castes and religions. As much as possible, primary historical sources also need to be integrated into textbooks. Students should come to see the early history of Gujarat as a multiplicity of narratives.



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