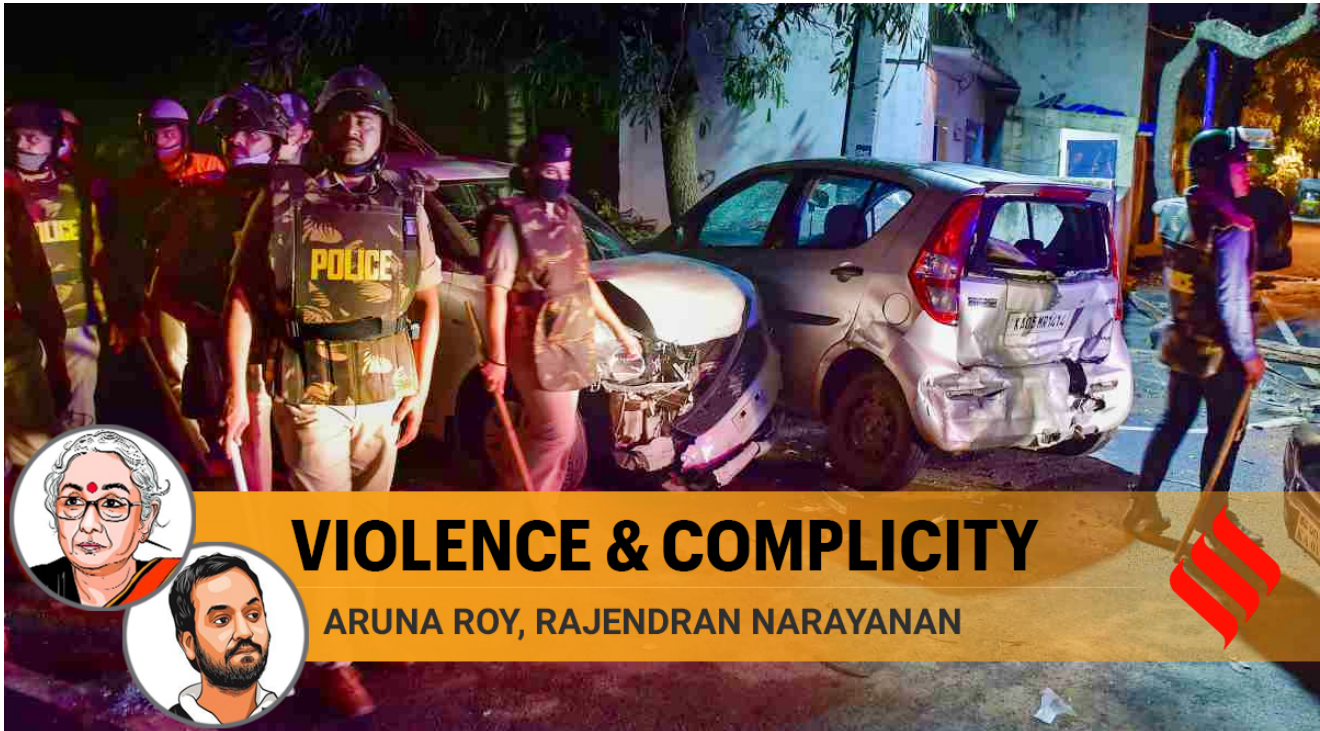


# The trauma primarily to Muslims but also to the entire polity, will take years to heal

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On August 11, violence broke out in Bengaluru claiming three lives and leaving several injured. The violence was in response to a derogatory social media post concerning Prophet Muhammad by the nephew of a Karnataka Congress MLA. While the accused and numerous others, including several innocent people, have now been arrested, the incident has been reduced to ugly political slander. In February, riots broke out in Delhi after incendiary speeches by BJP Union Minister Anurag Thakur and ex-MLA Kapil Mishra. The hate speeches were a deliberate attempt to incite Hindus against Muslims and especially those protesting peacefully against CAA/NRC/NPR. The promulgation of discriminatory laws and policies like the CAA, NRC and NPR, and other violent propaganda, reflect in-built prejudices of the ruling dispensation. And, prejudices only promote violence.

The Delhi riots had left 53 dead, injured many more and resulted in severe loss of livelihood. Red tape surrounded access to medical attention and the lack of transparency about the arrests of several innocent people point to the deeply compromised institutional response. Meanwhile, several people have been detained and unfairly booked under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. The trauma primarily to Muslims — physical, emotional and psychological — but also to the entire polity, will take years to heal.

## **Opinion: Why Delhi burned: The police, courts and media failed to stand up for rule of law**

The two incidents call to mind the publication of a derogatory pamphlet titled Rangila Rasul or “Colourful Prophet” by Mahashe Rajpal in 1924 in Punjab. The pamphlet showed Prophet Muhammad in a poor light. Mahatma Gandhi raised his voice against the publication. He responded with an article titled “Hindu-Muslim Unity” published in Young India on June 19, 1924: “I have asked myself what the motive possibly could be in writing or printing such a book except to inflame passions. Abuse and caricature of the Prophet cannot wean a Musalman from his faith, and it can do no good to a Hindu who may have doubts about his own belief. As a contribution therefore to the religious propaganda work, it has no value whatsoever. The harm it can do is obvious.” The aftermath of the publication of the pamphlet was bloody and was a reason for the enactment of Section 295A of the IPC — that any person found guilty of “deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs” will be subject to imprisonment. Maulana Azad, a practising but secular Muslim, stated “I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure is incomplete. I am an essential element, which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.”

India is defined by its multicultural texture. A choice of any single strain is faulty. One way to look at this culture is as a land of Bhakti or Sufi philosophers of the likes of Thiruvalluvar, Basava, Tukaram, Bibi Fatima or Kabir, who spoke persistently of fostering peace and companionship of diverse communities. An attitude of intolerance and violence contradicts any faith’s basic tenets of humanism. In fact, most Hindu shlokas end with “shanti”, an invocation of peace and restraint. However, there is now a politically-motivated polarity by intentionally maligning other religions and attempts to legally discriminate against people based on their religion. Many of us born in the Hindu religion, who either practise or culturally remain within its fold, need to ask ourselves some important questions. Is violence against unarmed human beings going to lead us anywhere near the spiritual goals promised by the best in our tradition? Is difference a justification for subjugation or annihilation of life? Will the celebration of a temple constructed on the ruins of another place of worship give anyone “punya”? It is an irony that when the life of Gandhi was taken by a Hindutva fanatic, they should become spokespersons against violence. As Hindus, we stand guilty unless we express our dissent.

## **Opinion | Violence in Delhi was part of a familiar playbook**

Today, the silence of the state is deafening. The calibrated lack of response of the present government to the speeches by their own party members inciting violence, points to their sanctioning of the violence. True religious precepts have repeatedly affirmed that the structure of the place of worship is not necessarily the house of the deity. The temple in Ayodhya is a structure. Any place of worship built on the destruction of another has

questions to answer. In the Ayodhya judgment, the Supreme Court said, “The destruction of the mosque and the obliteration of the Islamic structure was an egregious violation of the rule of law”. And yet, on August 5, the Prime Minister was present at the celebrations of a temple construction over the debris of a destroyed mosque. In contrast, amid the recent riots in Bengaluru, several Muslim youth formed a human chain around a temple protecting it from mob violence.

**Opinion: Behind Delhi riots lies politically-designed, socially-embedded trajectory of Discipline-Hate-Punishment**

To equate nationalism with religion is logically inconsistent since God is believed to be omniscient and cannot have a nationality. Invoking such omniscience, Kabir asks in the song Tu hi tu — “Where are you? In the ant or in the elephant? In the thief or the person in pursuit?” It is a reminder that all humanity is bonded. It has also been reassuring to note that many members of the majority community have resisted CAA, NRC and NPR. What gives us hope is that, even in the worst of times, acts of discrimination and violence can be countered in equal measure with courage and compassion.

Hinduism is a secular religion in its philosophical assumptions, as probably all religions are. Those claiming to speak for nationalism are forcing us to choose between manufactured polarities of being secular or being religious.

***This article first appeared in the print edition on September 5 under the title “Violence & complicity.” Roy is co-founder Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan and Narayanan teaches at Azim Premji University, Bangalore.***

**P B Mehta on Delhi riots: Our rulers want an India that thrives on cruelty, fear, division, violence**