



Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat

Ornit Shani

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Belligerent Hindu nationalism, accompanied by recurring communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, has become a compelling force in Indian politics over the last two decades. Ornit Shani's book examines the rise of Hindu nationalism, asking why distinct groups of Hindus, deeply divided by caste, mobilised on the basis of unitary Hindu nationalism, and why the Hindu nationalist rhetoric about the threat of the impoverished Muslim minority was so persuasive to the Hindu majority. Using evidence from communal violence in Gujarat, Shani argues that the growth of communalism was not simply a result of Hindu-Muslim antagonisms, but was driven by intensifying tensions among Hindus, nurtured by changes in the relations between castes and associated state policies. These, in turn, were frequently displaced onto Muslims, thus enabling caste conflicts to develop and deepen communal rivalries. The book offers a challenge to previous scholarship on the rise of communalism, which will be welcomed by students and professionals.

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