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This thesis tries to understand, through text and textual apparatuses, how new identities (victor, victim), new contexts (nationalism, communalism) and new economies (suffering, citizenly) are inserted into the popular public discourse of the nation. It exemplifies what textual narratives can do to foreground the silenced local accounts elided in the fact-driven, archive-building procedures of state and nationalist history. Any definition of the political subject and the imagined public space is continuously subverted, reworked and reconfigured. A deeper understanding of the multiple modes of subversion which take place during episodes of communal violence and the way in which the nuanced cultural dimensions of this violence redefine subjectivity is the central concern.

The effects of communal violence in carving the social world and in defining individual and group subjectivities lead to brutal and tragic re-organisations of self, community, the material world, the social space and the physical space. Transformation in cultural representations and collective experiences of suffering reshape interpersonal responses to violence. They even restructure people's language and reformulate the way in which they speak about other people and places. This necessitates an analysis of the discursive mechanisms which configure and reconfigure existing discursive practices of citizenship in India.

This thesis brings in the Foucauldian archaeological analysis and foregrounds the necessity of construing communal violence and the resultant suffering, not merely as an aberration, but as a part of the everyday life. It focuses on how the nation-state is formulated and reformulated through the conceptual categories of identity, memory and history. So instead of focusing on how things really are or should be, it attends to how national identity and citizenship gets conceptualized, established, negotiated, maintained, and challenged in the discourses of communal violence. I look for what the discourses on communal violence accomplish and what they hide, with special reference to textual narratives on the Mumbai riots of 1992-93 and the Godhra riots of 2002.