

24th August 2017, 9:30 – 11 am

Panel 1: **Crisis, Violence and the Public Space**

(**Discussant:** Pushpendra Kr. Singh, **Chair:** Dipankar Sinha)

Un-settled/re-settled lives: Aftermath of Muzzafarnagar (2013)

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When the riots broke out in Muzaffarnagar on 8th September, 2013; the families involved faced violence which has been lamentable yet not unprecedented. The riots evoked memories of other communal violence incidents which have plagued the country. Despite the state of internal conflict in the country, a comprehensive policy does not exist. Not just the policy, the lives of people facing conflict and displacement is little understood. The aftermath of violence has left many families homeless, without adequate health care services and in state of fear. The attempts to rehabilitate those affected by conflict are far and few between.

There are many questions that are raised in the current scenario. Beyond the impact on schooling of children, there is a shadow of violence which affects them. People, apart from the harrowing nature of violence also deal with the loss of home. Home and the sense of ‘native land’ is linked to the identity. What happens to the collective identity of the community? And how does this translate to the identity of children and young people? The narratives of violence become normalized and get woven into everyday imagery of the families who faced them. The identity has absorbed them and shaped it/shaped by it.

The loss of home is also a loss of a way of life. The home then is not the village, but the *basti*. In its nature, the *basti* is a temporary structure. Is temporary structure still a home? The sense of “settling” that pre-empts the setting up of a home is missing from the brutality of the life in camps/slums which either emerge after riots/displacement or the existing spaces become impregnated with the burgeoning population. Violence perpetrated is often not a one-time affair. There is a continued violence in the act of state, either through denial of justice or through difficult conditions which persists for much longer after the incidence is over.

Through my paper I aim to look at the loss of home and then re-making of home in the context of Muzzafarnagar Riots. There will be a theoretical framework to understanding lives of people facing conflict situations. The families affected by riots were given a monetary compensation; some families were rehabilitated through the work of an NGO. The paper will look at the lives of people and narratives which emerge. People pick up scattered pieces and proceed to rebuild lives. The lives being rebuilt can still be at a threat. The issues of communal identity especially in the face of heightened scrutiny of Muslim community need to be understood.

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