

BOOK REVIEW

**Gujarat Riots: The True Story, M.D. Deshpande (2022), Second Edition.
ISBN: 978-1-4828-4165-7 Partridge India**

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received on: 20/10/2025

Revised on: 27/11/2025

Accepted on: 10/01/2026

Writing on Communal violence is no less than a slippery path, despite digging into the real story. These Authors are generally assumed to have preconceived notions and be supporters of one or the other side by the reader. One of such crucial writings has been done by Deshpande on the Gujarat Riots, on the contention that the right story about the Gujarat Riots should be narrated. However, the Tehelka Tapes and News of March 2002 have claimed much about the ground story of the Gujarat Riots then the question arises what new Deshpande will narrate? If the Media especially Tehelka has shown the ground story of Gujarat riots. Is this book really worthwhile in understanding Gujarat Riot? Or it is no more than an ideologically motivated imposition of false narrative? These pessimistic questions may arise towards his writings when anyone listens about this work, but once the book is completed by that reader, his/her thoughts would become more critical towards each claim of truth made by Media / Sting operations of Tehelka. Deshpande has been a Student of Computer Science and Engineering, famous for his objective and factual Political writings in India. “Gujarat Riots: The True Story” is one such work that Deshpande wrote at the age of 18 in 2008. The Impact of this teenager is reflected in his words, charged with the emotional underpinnings. Systematic arrangement of 13 chapters with suitable titles, this book develops critical understanding towards news and story served to the reader on Gujarat Riots. Using different media sources and committee reports author has tried to dig a real and full story on the Gujarat riots through cross verification and linking one story to another. The author, Deshpande has started his story from the very past, searching for the reason behind the communal violence in India. This survey of the past and findings of Deshpande is thought-provoking for those who take an instrumental view of communal violence and generally accuse V.H.P. (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) and BJP as their strategy of electoral gain.

The first Chapter of the Book is titled as “History of Attacks on India”. This Chapter of the book traces the History of attacks and their impacts on the lives of Hindus. Especially medieval attacks led by the Arabs to better explain the present condition of Indian society. According to Deshpande, 634 AD marks the first Arab attack led to transition of peaceful Indian society to aggressive design. This whole Chapter is written to give a factual account of attacks made by Muslims on Hindus as invaders, rulers for strengthening their interest from time to time. The next chapter titled “The Godhra Carnage” not only discusses about Godhra massacre but also provides full -fledged account of riots taken in Godhra from 1928 to 2003 on different reason either its partition of 1948 or 2003 stone pelting by Minority on Ganesh idol immersion. Using newspaper headlines as well as historical accounts author has depicted that Godhra 2002 is not the first riots between Hindu and Muslims of Godhra but have a long history of bloody riots in Godhra. Further in this chapter has discusses about torching of 58 Karsevaks, who were returning from Ayodhya in Ahmedabad bound Sabarmati Express. Discussing what and how about the brutal fate of Ahmedabad bound Sabarmati Express, Deshpande has given equal importance to the experience of Survivors of Godhra Massacre as well as reporting of English media. This chapter also focusses on How media worked as opponent to dead Karsevaks by dehumanizing them and blaming them and VHP for their own end.

In Chapter Third Titled as “Role of the Government in Controlling Violence”, through the Comparative study of News printed by especially The Hindu, The Times of India and even anti- Modi/BJP Journals, Deshpande has given a clear account of roles played by Gujarat Government after Godhra in 2002. Chapter Four gives a historical account of bloody riots which happened in Gujarat on very minute reasons for example as this chapter claim that, the first communal riot that occurred in 1714 was due to mismanagement of Gulal on the eve of Holi. Through this account of bloody riots author has replied to those who alleges VHP and RSS affiliates as instigator of communal riots, especially of 2002, that their allegations especially on Gujarat is not more than a narrative created and whitewashed by media and Congress to defame Gujarat and VHP because before the existence of RSS and BJP there was no a smaller number of communal riots.

Chapter 5 titled as “Attacks on Hindus”, this Chapter provides the story of the other side which has been strategically ignored/suppressed by English Media either Electronic or Print. Chapter 6, discusses as title suggests “Attacks

on Muslims”. With the discussion of casualties of the community, Deshpande has tried to problematize the narrative that it was a State Sponsored ‘Program/Genocide’ against the Muslim minority on the contention if it would have been State Sponsored one-way Program then no Hindu would have been shot for saving minorities or no minorities would had enough dare to launch attack on Hindus from 1 March 2002. After discussing these backgrounds, Deshpande in chapter seven of this book, titled under “Concocted Lies and Myths and The Facts”, has discussed 21 major myths about Gujarat riots which Media and other anti-BJP/Modi had been projecting since 2002 until 2022. This chapter mentions all those 21 Myths and debunks them on the basis of facts either provided in SIT report/Comparative analysis of one or other News Paper.

Chapter 8 titled as “contrast between 1984 and Gujarat riots” Deshpande has taken a critical and objective understanding to find the difference between 1984 anti-Sikh riots and 2002 Gujarat riots. Deshpande has applied his reasoning to argue that how congress government became blind and forgot Godhra while making statements against Gujarat Government as in the past in 1984, Only one killing of Indira Gandhi that also from two terrorist led huge massacre of Sikhs and not a single congress person either in Delhi or else in India was arrested. In contrast to that from the very first day Gujarat government started taking action to curb riot by preventive arrest and through the order of shoot at sight. The figure of arrested Hindus was thrice than Muslims. Chapter 9 titled as “Role of the Rivals and Media in Instigating Violence” Deshpande’s research on Godhra has been based on Media and different report especially SIT. But he had not even spared Media for its Minority appeasing attitude and Congress involvement in instigating violence especially when normalcy was declared in Gujarat. Chapter 10 titled as “Some Courts Judgement”, this chapter reflects pragmatic reality of Judicial and Media organization which for their own career and profit advancement attach themselves to certain preconceived ideology. This Chapter of Deshpande discloses how hereditary and political loyalism effects the decision of Judges as well as news of Media.

When someone is promising for correct and real story and he forgets to Tehelka means he is just trying to impose another half and twisted truth. That has not been missed by Deshpande and he titled 11th chapter of his book as “TEHELKA LIES”. Revisiting the reports of Tehelka and its arguments, Deshpande has exposed that those sting operations which were

done, were at first against the privacy because these reporters met these people as writer on Hindu Nationalism and Secondly each exposed person has admitted that Modi arrived after Naroda Patiya killings, but facts and official records say that this is one of the blasted lies. After debunking Myths of TEHELKA, writer has tried to show the findings of SIT on major myths to support his objective claims in chapter 12 titled as “Findings of SIT”. This Chapter not only discusses SIT findings but also the bias and difficulties that R.K. Raghavan and his team faced. How Sanjiv Bhatt one of the IPS cadre officer’s claim was given more preference by the Amicus Curiae and Raju Ramchandran than findings of SIT. The reason behind such a tendency, which Deshpande has reflected, is Amicus Curiae and Raju Ramchandran’s anti-Modi preconception and affiliation to the left Media.

Last but not least, after discussing and debunking myths related to Gujarat riots, it becomes general curiosity to find the cause behind these lies. Understanding this Deshpande has titled his last chapter as “The Causes of Lies”, author through various examples either its reaction of Indian Muslims on “Danish Cartoon” or no criticism of Afghanistan’s Death Penalty on the conversion from Islam to Christianity has convicted Pseudo- Secular thinking for step motherly behavior of Media and Congress and its allies towards Hindu causes. Deshpande has charged pseudo-secularists of contempt of tradition, who remain slave of Colonial Mindset and even author himself has admitted that the same is being imparted to next generation of India. According to the author, unawareness about India’s ground history to intellectual classes as well influence of colonial policies has created a slippery slope which despite various efforts led further sustenance of colonial Mindset.

This work of Deshpande brings true story of Gujarat Riots by debunking approximately 21 major myths. This book is not only account of facts but also provides good instinct to think critically about what is served to you may be cooked truth rather than reality. Deshpande’s work over Gujarat riots is really truth-telling and balanced, but he also remains conservative to English Media and ignores the Vernaculars as trustworthy and insightful source for Gujarat. Even he had tried to show biasness of English media but remained very narrow in his approach without giving attention to either Editorials/ Edit page articles. Author has taken SIT report as one of parameter to cross verify others but in his own book’s chapter, either Chapter 10 titled as “Some Courts Judgement or chapter 12 titled as “Findings of SIT”, which has also reflected ideological underpinnings behind judgements and preconception of

Ramchandran Raju and others about Gujarat riots and involvement of Modi. In that context to maintain objectivity and quality of truth Author in each chapter at suitable places discussed the ideological underpinnings of that source he cited as well as even to prove impartiality of the R.K Raghavan and his team author argue that when SIT conducted research and survey that time rule was not of Narendra Modi's Party BJP but Congress, the opposition of BJP. This style of using oppositional source like outlook or other by Deshpande makes his story more real and objective. Deshpande has tried to reflect the causes of lies over Gujarat riots but he had constrained himself from giving solution to overcome the tendency of becoming more and more colonized.

Anjani Kumar Rai,

Research Scholar,
Department of Political Science, University of Delhi