This paper explores how Muslim families in urban India who are affected by violence against them make a living after the carnage is over. It appears that a large section of Muslims work as self-employed artisans, mechanics or small entrepreneurs. For this reason, it is not difficult for them to begin their economic life once again once calm is restored. In many ways, ‘ethnic’ victimisation of this sort probably strengthens the need among Muslims to be as economically self-sufficient as possible. Experience has probably demonstrated that this is the best survival strategy.

The experience of being victims of ethnic violence leaves Muslims with two principal economic options. The first is to firm up their independence as entrepreneurs, mechanics, welders, etc., and the other is to be part of the police or administrative services. The latter option has not worked out well for them even though there are many Muslims who are well educated. This class of qualified and literate Muslims also veer towards setting up their own establishments, rather than working for the government.

However, it is not as if Muslims are autarkic in their economic operations. They do depend on Hindu clients and service providers, but they have also an independent base of their own which gives them a modicum of economic security. While they might be able to resume their professions and businesses with relative ease, what appears to take much longer is finding alternative homes, recreating social ties and feeling relatively safe once again.

By paying attention to the relationship between returning to their economic lives, which are not that insecure, and resuming their social lives, which can often be very difficult, it is possible to glimpse the factors that encourage certain political and lifestyle decisions among Muslims in areas affected by episodes of violence.