R.C. Tripathi · Purnima Singh   *Editors*

Perspectives on Violence and Othering in India

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Editors
R.C. Tripathi
ICSSR, Psychology Department
University of Allahabad
Allahabad
Uttar Pradesh
India

and

G.B. Pant Social Science Institute
Allahabad
Uttar Pradesh
India

Purnima Singh
Department of Humanities and Social
  Sciences
IIT Delhi
New Delhi
India

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

R.C. Tripathi is a former Director and Professor, G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad; Professor and Head, Center of Advanced Study in Psychology, University of Allahabad; and Director, Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Allahabad. Presently, he is National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. He is on the editorial board of the *Indian Journal of Psychology*, *World Psychology*, *Psychological Studies*, *Indian Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. He is the editor-in-chief of *Psychology and Developing Societies* (1990–2002, 2011 to the present). During his long and distinguished academic career, Professor Tripathi has been a senior Fulbright Fellow at the University of Michigan, member of the University Grants Commission, India, and member of the Indian Council for Social Science Research. He has published five volumes and numerous papers in edited volumes, besides numerous articles in journals.

Purnima Singh is Professor of Psychology at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. Earlier, she was Professor at the Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad. She is also the current President of the National Academy of Psychology, India, and an Executive Committee Member of the Asian Association of Social Psychology, as well as Regional Representative, South Asia, of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology. She is an Associate Editor of the journal *Psychological Studies*, and earlier an Associate Editor of *Psychology and Developing Societies*. She is also on the Editorial Board of the *International Journal of Psychology*. Professor Singh had received the Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship from the Commonwealth Association of Universities at the University of Bristol, UK. She has to her credit numerous papers in edited volumes, articles in journals and conference presentations.

Contributors

Yogesh Atal MP Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain, India

Rajeev Bhargava Parekh Institute of Indian Thought, Delhi, India

Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam Chicago, USA

Caroline Howarth London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Shail Mayaram Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, India

Alok Rai Department of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

Ramashray Roy Centre for the Study of Developing Societies Delhi, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Delhi, India

R. Barry Ruback Department of Sociology, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, USA

Sarbeswar Sahoo Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT, New Delhi, India

Ragini Sen Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, India

Purnima Singh Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-Delhi, New Delhi, India

Shobna Sonpar Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist, New Delhi, India

R. C. Tripathi University of Allahabad, Allahabad, India

Sunthar Visuvalingam Chicago, USA

Wolfgang Wagner Johannes Kepler University, Linz, Austria

Author Bionotes

Yogesh Atal is a social anthropologist who retired as Principal Director in Social Sciences from the UNESCO. He has written extensively on themes related to poverty and development. He is currently Professor Emeritus at the MP Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain and has been on the governing boards of various national institutes and advisory bodies. Professor Atal has been a faculty member at the University of Saugar, Panjab University, Agra University, and the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi.

Rajeev Bhargava is currently the Director of Parekh Institute of Indian Thought. He was the Director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi from 2007 to 2014. Prior to this he was a Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (1980–2005), and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. Prof. Bhargava is a prolific writer and some of his publications include *Individualism in Social Science* (1992), *What is Political Theory and Why do We Need It?* (2010) and *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy* (2010).

Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam has doctorates in Indology, philosophy and anthropology. She has also been a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Sanskrit Department of Harvard University. She has published extensively in both French and English, on the literature of minorities, exploring themes as the figure of the other. She is currently teaching French language and culture at the school of the Art Institute of Chicago and Western philosophy and French Literature at the French International School in Chicago.

Caroline Howarth is an Associate Professor at the London School of Economics, UK. Her teaching and research examine the ways in which social psychological phenomena are rooted in social life, contextualized, shaped by subjective activity and yet constrained by power relations. She is an editor of the e-journal *Papers on Social Representations*.

Shail Mayaram is Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Her areas of specialization include Islamic studies, religion and politics,

Sufism and political theory. Some of her important publications include *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (2003); *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity* (1997).

Alok Rai was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University. He retired as Professor of English from the University of Delhi. Prof. Rai has also been a faculty member at the University of Allahabad and Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. He has written extensively on politics of language and cultural processes in modern north India.

Ramashray Roy is a renowned political philosopher. He served as the Director of the Centre of the Studies of Developing Societies (Delhi) and has been a National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, a Fellow of the Indian Council of Historical Research, and a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. He is a prolific writer and has written on diverse themes. Among his many books are: *North East: Development, Communalism and Insurgency* (with Sandhya Goswami and Sujata Miri); *Politics and Society*; *Understanding Gandhi*; *Economy, Democracy and the State*, *Beyond Ego's Domain*.

R. Barry Ruback is a Professor of Criminology and Sociology at the Department of Sociology, Pennsylvania State University. He has also taught at Georgia State University. He was a Senior Visiting Fulbright Fellow at the University of Allahabad. He has been on the editorial board of several journals some of which are *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *Environment and Behavior*, *Journal of Social Issues*, *Criminal Justice Review*, and *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*.

Sarbeswar Sahoo is Assistant Professor of Sociology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. He was Alexander von Humboldt Postdoctoral Fellow at the Max Weber Centre, University of Erfurt, Germany. He received his Ph.D. from the National University of Singapore, Singapore. Before joining IIT Delhi in July 2010, Dr. Sahoo was a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

Ragini Sen is affiliated with the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi and Logistics India, Mumbai. Her research focus is on ethnic conflict, group processes, identity politics, secularism and fundamentalism. Dr. Sen has been a Fulbright Scholar in Residence, USA, Visiting Fellow a Johannes Kepler University, Austria, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and University of Picardie, France.

Shobna Sonpar is an eminent mental health professional and did her postdoctoral work at the University of California. She was faculty member at Department of Psychiatry, Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, Kathmandu, Nepal, and she also set up the counselling services at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. She is the author of a widely acclaimed book *Violent Activism: A Psycho-social Study of Ex-militants of Jammu and Kashmir*.

Sunthar Visuvalingam is an independent scholar and researcher on Indic traditions. He has done extensive fieldwork in anthropology of religions in India and was a post-doctoral scholar at Banaras Hindu University, University of Paris at Nantere, and Harvard University with the Center for the Study of World Religions. He has been the Director Research and Development at InformIT (Pearson Education) and has extensive experience in publishing technology and knowledge management. At present, he is directing an international online collaborative publishing project, which aims to disseminate in the English language the work and thought of Abhinavagupta.

Wolfgang Wagner is Professor of Social and Economic Psychology at Johannes Kepler University, Austria, and is affiliated with the University of Tartu, Estonia. His research work is on societal psychology, social and cultural knowledge, identity politics, popularization of science, racism, fundamentalism and social representation theory.

Prologue

Unity in diversity is considered to be the greatest strength of the Indian polity. Of late, however, this very diversity has created challenges for the harmony and social well-being of the society. The increasing friction between various social and cultural groups and the ensuing violence in various parts of the country are seen by some scholars to result from obstruction to assertions of identity by the various social groups. Identity is the most contested today often rallying around issues of power relations, socio-cultural locations, resources, political support and other external interventions. It is also true that in the past three or four decades newer identities have been imposed on group members, at times by state politics and at times by people themselves clamouring to get a piece of the resource pie. This can be seen in the form of increased contestations between groups which in the backdrop of glaring inequalities, appalling poverty and a highly vitiated social and political climate have resulted in increased conflicts between social groups. A large section of the society feels excluded as they are not able to get their due share of the developments taking place which may be the basis of tensions and conflict in the society. These tensions and conflicts often are manifested in the form of violence which in contemporary times seems to be omnipresent in diverse social realms. Numerous scholars have written on violence with various disciplinary perspectives. The problematic notions of violence and nonviolence are strongly influenced by othering processes as well as the types of others that get created in a society. The process of othering plays a role not just in triggering conflicts and violence, but literature shows that the other is also deliberately kept alive to maintain a group's hegemony over others. If there is no other, who would one dominate, who would one look down upon and how would one experience superiority?

The term "othering", which most times is pejorative but is at times functional too, is inevitably ubiquitous in every social situation. Perhaps it is logical to argue that if there is an "I" then there has to be an "other". The notion of "other" is as fundamental as the notion of "self"—it would not be an exaggeration to say that the concept of "self" is the sine qua non of any discussion on "othering". Unless the "self" has been defined, it cannot be differentiated from the rest.

Differentiation is thus at the core of othering. Othering takes place at various levels. It can cause grave implications for society when it is experienced on the basis of ethnicity, religion and nation. It can also be seen in microcosm where people separate into groups based on seemingly mundane criteria like preferences.

Othering has both a positive and a negative side. Othering becomes beautiful when we think of it as diversity but it looks ugly when we think of it as a precursor of violence. In multicultural societies like India, the variety of social groups and categories in terms of religion, region, caste, language and others, add richness to the cultural context and to the life of an Indian. The negative side of this diversity however stems from the assertion of one's own groups' superiority over all others and the tendency to evaluate and assign meaning to other ethnicities using your own as a standard. This is when othering leads to negativity in society, leading to an "objectification of another person or group" or "creating the other", which ignores the complexity and subjectivity of the individual (Abdallah-Pretceille 2003).

This book seeks to offer othering and violence as a vantage point for understanding the Indian society. This volume presents a fresh perspective on violence by focusing on the notion of othering and affirming that central to the understanding of violence in any society is the process of othering. The book takes a multidisciplinary perspective to the understanding of othering. The papers included suggest that societies do not discover their others. Others are created consciously by selecting certain aspects of the others' lives. An other may be selected on the basis of several factors, which subsequently determine the level of othering. In many cases, historical events lead to the development of the other, based on different relationships between social categories. The objective of the process of othering is to create one's own cultural and social space and not share this space with members of the other group. Similarity between different groups is threatening because they can vie for the same created space; hence grounds for establishing differences are always needed. The categories which lead to inter-group differentiation could be many, but most often one category becomes more prominent in defining the other.

This book consists of eleven essays and research papers written by a group of renowned scholars in sociology, psychology, economics, political science and literature. Each chapter delves deeply into the process of othering and examines its intricate relationship with violence—specifically in the Indian context, but with learnings for all multicultural and multifaith societies. These essays focus on debates over citizenship and national identities, the nature of communal riots and post-riot reconciliation, truth commissions, state censorship of 'sensitive' issues, and recent cases from violence-prone areas. The book has been divided into four parts, each focusing on a particular element of othering and violence. The first three include an introduction part on the problematique of violence, construction of the other and construction of identity. The last part on harmony and peace examines possibilities of reimagining our shared spaces and possibilities of better inter-group relations between communities.

The first part includes a chapter by Tripathi (Chap. 1), which attempts to provide a critical perspective to the process of othering and its relationship with conflict and violence. In his chapter, the author articulates the various bases of othering and attempts to elucidate why this phenomenon occurs. He cautions us of the permanence of otherness—once formed, it is difficult to dissolve. People keep on using it for their own or their groups' personal gain. He also takes the position that othering is not just a perceptual phenomenon but has an ontological status. The process of othering is often seen in many multicultural societies where conflicts and violence between culturally differing groups are found to occur more frequently. Contradicting Pinker (2011) who argued that there is a downward trend in violent outbursts, Tripathi takes the position that we are still living in times of unacceptable violence, where even though highly destructive wars have decreased, newer and more prolific forms of violence are on the rise. The author points out that the nature and precipitating factors of violence due to contestations of identities may be different in different cultures. Tripathi cautions that multiculturalism, which might be advanced as an answer to such contestations of identities in the other parts of the world, may not hold true in India as here it is not just the identities that are contested but ideologies come into question too. The position of the author, as well the present book, is that the process of othering is central to understanding violence. In addition, the author also points out that othering may be involved in nonviolent contestations also. However, its nature is different and more reflexive in character. The boundaries of the self and other keep shifting more in situations of nonviolence than violence.

The next three chapters in this part focus on the nature of violence, its legitimacy and prevalence in contemporary times. The recurrent occurrences of violence—be it domestic, ethnic or religious—disturb the social equilibrium. Ramashray Roy (Chap. 2) examines the issue of legitimacy of violence. The author argues that while in most interpersonal interactions people prefer to follow law, there are situations in which this is not possible. It is in such situations that people take recourse to violence to bring order of some sort. The author highlights a major contradiction that we see today. Progress in most societies has been followed by an increase in violence. He has also attempted to provide some plausible answers for this such as increased materialism and self-centredness. Today, there is a rush to acquire material fortune to prosper, causing an obsession with the immediate environment and a disconnect from the larger social world. This disconnect with the larger society has resulted in several vices like lowered morality, unresponsiveness to the need of others and a decline in social order. The differentiation between "we" and "they" has become more distinct resulting in an increase in violence-prone situations. Roy notes that violence in modern times is pervasive, virulent and much more frequent than what it was earlier. The author acknowledges an important role of the state; however, the state does not seem to be fulfilling its duties. This weakness of the state system coupled with the feebleness of the laws has created new strains on society. In this chapter, Roy alerts us to the need to break the vicious cycle of dissatisfaction with material possessions, as doing so would reduce resentment and thereby reduce violence in the society.

In a democratic society the right to freely express opinions is considered to be an important human right that should not be abridged except under very special circumstances. Rai (Chap. 3) in his chapter argues that two elements—assertion of facts and assertion of values—are important in an understanding of free speech. The author asserts that free speech is a fundamental value and should be limited only if it threatens the right to life or leads to violence. Rai brings forth an intricate relationship between violence and the states' understanding of free speech. He argues that the state often supports violence and uses it to inhibit certain behaviours that it is unwilling to prohibit on its own. One needs to understand what is it that prevents and permits a state to abdicate its constitutional duty. Under what conditions can state actions be accepted? Rai also questions the silence of the middle class intelligentsia in such instances, which many a times appear to have made peace with such outrages. He mentions that by combining actions of "spontaneity" and "provocation", the violent actions of the public are more often justified.

Atal in his chapter (Chap. 4) points out that violence is noticeable at all levels in the society. In can be seen at interpersonal levels, such as in domestic violence, and it can be seen between communities and groups in the society as well as between nations. Violence continues to spread and has become more frequent in recent times; in fact, it is peace that is in peril. Despite volumes written on this topic in the various social science disciplines, neither is there any satisfactory theory of violence nor models of harmony to prevent violence. The author provides an analysis of communal violence in India which has most often focused on tensions between the Hindus and the Muslims, the two major groups in the Indian polity. He points out that the British used the policy of "divide and rule" to sow the seeds of communalism and to consolidate their hold in India. Taking the example of the Gujarat riots of 2002 and providing a post-factum analysis of the same, the author posits that though the media and various academicians provide their understanding, these are often limited and biased. The author argues for building bonds of solidarity between groups and communities. There is a need to respect cultural diversity and create shared-ness.

The second part includes chapters focusing on the creation of the other. In most instances the other is not present. We create the other sometimes to strengthen our position, to demonstrate our superiority and at times to even consolidate the identity of our own group. The chapters included in this part unravel the dynamics involved in the process of othering. Mayaram (Chap. 5), and Visuvalingam and Chalier-Visuvalingam (Chap. 6), through the narratives from the Meo in Mewat region and the 1809 Lat-Bhairo riots of Banaras, respectively, depict the complexities of the dynamics of the process of othering.

Mayaram looks at the idea of becoming/not becoming in the context of the narratives from the Meo oral tradition called *Dhamukar*. The author lucidly articulates how the denial of belonging occurs in a community (Meos in Mewat) who see many contradictions between their self-perception and history and the manner in which the state has been viewing them over a period of time. Mayaram presents the challenges and intricacies of a Mewati who aligns his or her sense of territoriality and identity with the region he or she inhabits. The author argues against the

notion of a singular identity and pushes forth the acceptance of plurality of identities, citing the Meo as an example. The idea of otherness is still upheld, resulting in the denial of being and belonging. If we are to sustain the idea of an India, we need to heed to a plurality of identities, not just in the specific case of the Meos but other social groups as well.

In Chap. 6, Visuvalingam and Chalier-Visuvalingam point out that religious traditions aim to contain an innate primordial violence, serving the projects of various religious groups, specially the basis on which these religions have been founded. Any understanding these projects provide reveals the hidden psychological dynamics of creating the other. The authors put forward the view that religious fanaticism, which is at the core of major communal conflicts, occurs because of discrepant worldviews and consequent claims put forth by the conflicting religious groups. These, the authors say, are often beyond logic. Through the universal action of the need to assign a scapegoat, the repressed violence is projected onto 'an other', usually a convenient individual who is sacrificed, expelled, and most often not in a position to protest. This other is believed and even declared to represent the negatives of the entire community. The authors have attempted to reinterpret the notion of the scapegoat through the historiography in the marriage of Lat Bhairon, the martyrdom of Ghazi Miyan and the ritualization of Shia-Sunni conflict during Muharram. In contemporary times, modernity can be seen to fuel the religious divide. Any hope for reconciliation and eventual harmony lies, according to the authors, in rediscovering the shared sacrificial core, which had earlier created the syncretic space between the groups.

Part III of the book includes three chapters examining contestations of identity in the Indian context. There has been a recent increase in the assertion of identity by various social groups in India. Bauman (2001) makes a very interesting comment when he states that "something has gone wrong with the formation of identity in the (post)modern age". Keeping in mind how past generations seemingly handled issues of identity formation in a non-volatile way, it seems that the new dimensions and challenges linked to issues of identity in the post-modern era have complicated the whole process. As a result social identities especially in India are being constantly negotiated in the light of multiple influences and contexts. It is also true that newer identities have been imposed on group members, at times by state politics and at times by people themselves clamouring to get a piece of the resource pie.

Ruback and Singh (Chap. 7), examine group and individual level determinants of violence. The authors argue for recognizing that group and individual level factors play an important role in violence, which have been hitherto neglected by social scientists. The emphasis has been more on the role of structural conditions as triggers of violence, like poverty, economic and social stratification, racial inequality, strong authoritarian hierarchy, control by violence and a limited political opportunity. However, the authors argue that unless people are motivated to indulge in such acts, violence does not take place. Violence thus, emanates from "the minds of men" (Murphy 1953). Basing their conclusions on research in the area of group processes, they also acknowledge the role of group characteristics

(such as de-individuation, in-group identity, competition for certain resources, asymmetric power relations among groups and relative deprivation) in triggering violence. In the light of the studies that the authors had conducted, they argue for both single- and cross-level explanations of individual beliefs and group world-views to understand the collective violence.

Carrying the argument further, Sonpar (Chap. 8) argues that while economic, political, sociological and historical perspectives help in the understanding of political violence, it is also important to understand the personal circumstances and mindset of someone who uses violent means towards political ends. She argues that there is a need to focus on the psychology of individuals, groups and situations. In her study of the militants of Jammu and Kashmir, she explores political violence from a psycho-social perspective, which acknowledges the complex combination of factors within persons, within their interpersonal and group relationships, and within the wider socio-political and cultural contexts. This psycho-social perspective in conjunction with the dynamics of political violence calls for a dialectical and dynamic understanding of the whole individual with his experiences, uniqueness and embeddedness in the larger social, political, economic and historical milieu. Locating herself in Varvin and Volkan's (2003) work, which focuses on dynamics of the person to another, to the group and to cultural discourse, Sonpar takes the position that the psycho-social system is very dynamic and hence, disturbance at one level has repercussions at the other levels. For example, ethnic victimization can change the way that a group's identity is formed and maintained and can have serious effects on personal and intimate relationships with other social groups. In case of the former militants she found that disturbances at the personal level were often understood in the context of the pain of guilt and sorrow of loss in relation to the family, and a loss of the identity resulting in alienation, frustration and the sense of betrayal. One often finds a discontinuity and incoherence of identity which is at the core of many negative experiences.

Sahoo (Chap. 9) examines the increase in religious violence in the context of the development state, specifically focusing on religious violence in Rajasthan. Increasing communal violence seen in states which have a sizeable tribal population raises difficult questions about the nature of democratic politics, the relationship between religion and politics and the role of the state. The author argues that in order to understand the increasing violence against Christians, it is important to understand the political economy of the tribal society and the larger political developments in India as well as in Rajasthan. He suggests that the role of the non-state actors in Rajasthan who have taken up the responsibility to improve the lives of the marginalized is important in the context of increased violence. Two such major groups which are dominant are the Christian missionaries and the family of Hindu nationalist organizations, both of which carry out development projects in the tribal areas. However, confrontations can often be seen due to a clash of identity, interest and ideology between these two groups. One question that the author focuses on is the issue of power and agency of the tribals and the Dalits in this region. He, however, opines that the tribals do not lack an autonomous agency nor are they easily susceptible to conversion. Sahoo argues that there is a

direct co-relationship between the rise of the Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), to power at the national as well as state level and the increase in violence against Christians and other religious minorities. Any work or contemplation of this should take into account the ideology of Hindu nationalism and its perception of Christianity and conversion. This can be further examined in the context of the decline of secular nationalism and the rise of the BJP to power.

The last part of the book examines an important challenge all multicultural societies are facing today—ensuring harmony and peace. The contestations and conflicts that society is grappling with and the plural nature of the Indian society hold the key to understanding the complexity of inter-group interactions at various levels. While plurality may be the root cause of othering in many situations, it can also be the edifice for harmony and peace. Bhargava (Chap. 10) and Sen, Wegner and Howarth (Chap. 11) in their chapters elucidate some possibilities of harmony and peace.

Bhargava not only lauds Mahatma Gandhi's role in the peace process and acknowledges the importance of structure but also emphasizes the role of institutions to perform similar and related functions like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. Bhargava argues, however, that the role of such institutions is more limited. Though they help in knowing the truth they do not help much in the peace-building process. He proposes that it is important to have a structure in place with a complex set of institutions which may evolve in stages and over a period of time. The author makes an interesting distinction between a barbaric society where there is a complete breakdown of rules and a "minimally decent society" governed by "minimally moral rules". Central to a barbaric society is a cycle of revenge which may in certain situations lead people to commit excesses. Bhargava articulates how a state of moral reconciliation may be reached. He posits three stages beginning with a stage of temporary truce which can be strengthened through institutions such as the truth commissions. Stage 2 sees a minimally decent society and when such a state can be sustained for some time this may create facilitating conditions for stage 3, where forgiveness and reconciliation are prominent, resulting in what the author calls a fully decent society. In such a society new spaces have been created where negotiation rather than force is accepted. Bhargava argues that procedural justice provides people an effective voice in political negotiation. Therefore, in order to break the cycle of revenge, former victims ought to be convinced about the procedural justice of the system, so as to regain their lost confidence and trust. Public recognition of the wrong done to them in the past may help them regain confidence in themselves and trust in others. Of course, this is not as simple as one would assume it to be. The author makes the point that when evil and suffering are publicly revealed, remembered and even acknowledged by the perpetrator, it may facilitate overcoming of negative emotions towards the perpetrator which may go a long way in building peace.

Sen, Wagner and Howarth posit that despite the fact that religion is a central issue in political-identity formation and othering, this is not often recognized. This then underestimates the force of religious belief and the connections between religious beliefs and political views in popular discourse. They take the position that

in order to understand fundamentalism it is important to include historical, social representational and collective dimensions which are responsible for the strong demarcation between "us and them" on the basis of social positioning and identity construction. From the interviews conducted in deprived communities such as the slums in Mumbai, their research shows that social capital is of vital importance in helping these slum dwellers to cope with everyday chores in a context of endemic misery and extreme poverty. Social networks provided them the strength to overcome hardships in life. Transcending religious boundaries facilitated not just survival but also ensured societal cohesion.

The recipe for peace and harmony in multicultural and multifaith societies is enhanced religious tolerance, moral maturation and political change through opening up of communicative spaces between groups and, thereby, facilitating transcending boundaries. When the boundaries are transcended they encourage solidarity, positive inter-group exchange and democracy in such societies.

Taken together, the contributions provide a fresh multidisciplinary perspective to the understanding of violence with a focus on the process of othering. We have to recognize that in multicultural societies, we are products of these pluralities. Therefore, at one point or the other, we must share some commonalities in terms of good and bad experiences. The need of the hour is to keep the good experiences in the foreground. Often there is a tendency to overlook or consciously obliterate the good or the positive experiences as an exception. There is a liable tilt to negativity, which inevitably fuels the process of othering, resulting in conflicts and violence.

Othering creates boundaries and barriers between groups. In the coming years it would be interesting to see the processes adopted by groups to erase these boundaries and barriers to create and enhance common spaces which groups may share so that dialogues and negotiations dominate rather than contestations and conflict. Guarding ourselves against being reactive and recognizing the role of interdependence and consensus can potentially facilitate tolerance and sharing. People from diverse groups should be able to not only appreciate what makes them different but also recognize what they have in common. Ideally, people will cherish diversity, while identifying common values to work towards creating a shared, peaceful society.

October 2015   R.C. Tripathi
                                                                                        Purnima Singh

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Part I
Violence: Its Problematique

Chapter 1
Violence and the Other: Contestations in Multicultural Societies

R.C. Tripathi

Homo homini lupus (Man is wolf to man).

There is a Vedic invocation "*Sarve bhawantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah; Sarve bhadrani pashyantu, ma kashchit dukh bhagbhavet*" (*May all humans be happy and healthy; may no one face unhappiness*), which is routinely recalled by Hindus. Similar prayers of peace can be found in other religions of the world on various social occasions. It will appear that the wolf in man has finally become noble. Steven Pinker (2007), writing on a history of violence feels that the wolf in man has finally become noble. He says:

> Conventional history has long shown that, in many ways, we have been getting kinder and gentler. Cruelty as entertainment, human sacrifice to indulge superstition, slavery as a labour-saving device, conquest as the mission statement of government, genocide as a means of acquiring real estate, torture and mutilation as routine punishment, the death penalty for misdemeanors and differences of opinion, assassination as the mechanism of political succession, rape as the spoils of war, pogroms as outlets for frustration, homicide as the major form of conflict resolution—all were unexceptionable features of life for most of human history. But, today, they are rare to nonexistent in the West, far less common elsewhere than they used to be, concealed when they do occur, and widely condemned when they are brought to light. (p. 1)

Be that as it may, there is little to dispute the view that we are still living in times which are unacceptably violent. Not a day is gone by when some horrific story of man's cruelty to other man does not come to light. And this is true for most societies around the world including the West. The theatre of big wars may have become fewer but humankind has continued to be ever inventive in

R.C. Tripathi (✉)
University of Allahabad, Allahabad, India
e-mail: ramacharan.tripathi@gmail.com

developing new forms of violence directed against individuals, groups and nations. Nell (2006) argues that human cruelty (which, he says, emerged 1.5 million years ago) has found cross-cultural stability because it is gratifying and is used for punishment, amusement and control. According to a WHO estimate, during the twentieth century, collective violence resulted in direct or indirect killing of around 200 million people, not including the injured (Krug et al., 2002). India is no exception. As Brass (2010) observes, collective violence is endemic to most South Asian countries. Collective violence in India is mostly rooted in different types of religious, social and political groups. In fact, India's other name, "Bharat", according to Agarwal (2008), derives from the epic battle (lit., *"Mahabharat"*) that took place involving clans of the tribes of "Bharatas". It may come as no surprise that collective violence, as a primeval meme, defines Indian culture as does the *shanti-path* (*'Sarve bhawantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah'*), a mantra that is chanted for universal peace, happiness and harmony.

Cultures, nevertheless, vary in terms of the type of collective violence which is relatively more recurrent amongst them, and the conditions which bring about different types of violence. Cultures also vary in how they socialize people to deal with conflicts and differences with their own and other group members in different life and social domains. Violence is generally understood as an intentional act that is carried out with a purpose to inflict physical, social, economic, political or psychological harm. It may be directed against the self, individuals within the family—especially women, within communities, and against groups and nations. Collective violence ensues as a consequence of processes involved in the construction of social identity within different social contexts and how they enter into contestations, largely on grounds of loyalty to an ethnic or religious group, a culture or a nation. The process of identity construction is dynamic. Identities are not fixed. They get made and remade through social practice and discourses as suggested by Hopkins and Reicher (2010), and also by social conditions. The case of polycultural societies, like India, is a bit more complex. Almost all identity contestations involve twinning of identities based on context and different kinds of social cleavages. Since India is a relatively new nation politically, the contest is, often, about which group can lay a claim to being a true or authentic Indian or denied such a claim. Since the partition of India took place along communal lines, religious identities continue to be an important ground for contestations. However, it is not the contestations based on religious group identities alone, but identities based on class, language, regions, ethnic group sub-cultures and sub-nationalism which come into contestations. Identities derived from political ideologies too can be seen coming into contestations. So, for example, there are contestations between adherents of Naxalism and the state, secularism and believers in "*sarva dharma sambav*" (equal respect for all religions) supporters, between proponents of "composite culture", called *Ganga-Jamuni tehzib* and "Hindutva" culture, between "Manuvadis" and "Ambedkarvadis". The contest between "Dravidian" and "non-Dravidian" cultures, similarly, goes back a long time. Whether it is the clash between Hindus and other religious groups, or between people belonging to different cultural regions, such as Kashmiris and other "Indians", "Bodos" and "Muslims", people from North-east India and the north Indians, cultural identity

has been used as a factor to explain collective violence in India. Communal clashes between Hindus and other religious communities, such as, with Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in post-Independence India have, of course, received a lot of attention. Such communal violence is attributed to the perception of some Hindus that Hindu culture is under threat from other religions. Both "Hindu" and "Hindu culture" are contested terms. "Hindu culture", as well as its essence, finds different construal from its adherents. They are, often, construed as elements of mainstream culture, which is a product of all Indians who ever lived here. This is in contrast to those who see it essentially as a product of pantheistic values and beliefs of Hindus who have been living here since ages. The modern Indian state has been pluralist so far and subscribes to the ideology of its own version of secularism. The Indian constitution allows religions to have their own personal laws, though the Indian state is declaredly secularist, and there are many critics of Indian secularism. Some point out that it is not secular enough as it supports organization of religious fairs and provides subsidies to Muslims travelling to Mecca for the Hajj. Others believe that secularism is an imposition of an ideology that is essentially western. Bhargava (1998) rejects the arguments of many critics of Indian secularism who see the state as anti-religious, as not neutral, because it favours Muslims by permitting them to define their identity in terms of Islam. The fact is that the sacred and the civil coexist in India. Nevertheless, religious groups do come into conflict almost regularly. Such violence shows no sign of abating. There was a small dip in the curve in religious group violence only between 1972 and 1976, but since then an upward trend is noticed in the number of people getting killed or getting injured, according to the statistics of the PRS Legislative Research of Center for Policy Research (2011).

1.1 Identity Contestations in India

Krug et al. (2002) point out that identity contestations are at the root of collective violence. It, according to them, serves an instrumental purpose for people 'who identify themselves as members of a group—whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity—against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve *political, economic or social objectives*' (p. 215). This is further supported by Brass (2010), who notes several forms and types of collective violence in South Asia. These include violence which shows up in the form of riots, insurgencies, and agrarian and political movements. State violence ensues when the state comes down heavily on insurgent groups to restore order and to establish its authority. In each of these cases, some kind of social identity is at work to mobilize people for what is presented as a common cause. Unnithan (1995) has analysed incidents of collective violence in India recorded between 1947 and 1985 by Mathur (1988) and found that issues related to political identity were responsible for 28 % of the violent incidents, religious identity for 25 % incidents, ethnic and caste identity for 29 %, and linguistic identity for about 9 % of violent incidents.

As we have said above, identities based on membership of groups and communities, ideologies, cultural values and beliefs form the bases of contestations. Contestations may take place not only between people holding different identities but also between multiple identities, for example, between ethnic and national identities that an individual carries. Social norms and social rules of conduct that govern interpersonal and intergroup relationships develop out of contestations of such identities and are used to evaluate individual behaviour and conduct. They also set the boundary conditions. However, the bases for creation of boundaries that create the divide between I and Thou, and We and They, are not the same. I and You boundaries are drawn more on the basis of attributes of self, while We and They boundaries are formed on the basis of a divide that is perceived between the group one feels one really belongs to, and the one that one's own group is in regular contestation with. It is always the identities that come into clash, be they identities based on nations, ethnicity, groups, ideologies or even victimhood. India has been facing contestations on all of these grounds. Hoover and Johnson (2003/2004) hold that most identity-driven violence involves individuals in whose cases social identity involving relations with others has not formed developmentally, but has been 'foreclosed' or it is imposed where there has been an 'absence of choice' of relations. Foreclosure of identities reduces the possibility of their further development and makes individuals to remain stuck with the roles of their significant others, largely due to acquiescence. The partition of India in 1947, which resulted in crossing over of approximately 12–15 million people to the newly created countries and resulted in ethnic cleansing of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan (Ahmed 2004) and large-scale killing of Muslims in India, ended up in creating seemingly permanent others. The two countries, till this day, keep looking for new ways of constructing each other as enemies than as neighbours.

Collective violence is a complex phenomenon. It will be simplistic to think that all violent incidents which ensue from identity contestations are of similar nature and are driven by the same causes. The question with which we need to engage, therefore, is how and why such identity contestations come about. First, let us focus on the how part. Contestation of any kind involves making comparisons with a reference or a comparison group with respect to the desired objects or existential conditions. This often results in feelings of what is called "relative deprivation" (Runciman, 1966). The presence of the other is a necessary condition. Two sets of cognitive processes implicated here are of social categorization and classification. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that development of a social identity requires categorization of individuals into "we" and "they"; an in-group and an out-group. Social identity theory put forward by these two psychologists argues that out-group derogation results from viewing one's group positively. On the contrary, Brewer (2007) argues that in-group positivity does not imply that out-groups will be always perceived in a derogatory manner. However, it remains true that social identities largely get formed based on cognitive constructions that are made by the own group members. They, however, also contain elements of how members of other groups perceive them or elements of what may be called a third person perspective. This facet of social identity is called 'idem identity' by Ricouer (1992), similar to what Cooley (1902) called 'looking-glass self' in case of persons. One does not only identify oneself with a group, but one is also identified by others as belonging

to a group. Identity that develops is as much a result of ascription. Both members of an in-group and out-group make use of history and socio-cultural contexts in their social constructions involving self and the other. Social comparisons are made with respect to economic, political and social gains and are judged on the basis of deservingness (Feather 2015). Not only collective esteem, but emotions of resentment and envy, which feed feelings of social exclusion of groups, result from such constructions. The contestations that follow relate either to maintenance of the status quo by high status groups which overly suffer from "collective narcissism" (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009) or in case of low status groups from their desire for the enhancement of their group status to enable them to find social inclusion. Let us consider an example from recent history. Such a contest of identities was witnessed following the implementation of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission[1] which allowed reservation for people belonging to various backward caste groups. It brought into contest the old caste identities but also led to the emergence of new identities which too entered the contest for social and economic goods. Inter-group hostility and collective violence that followed the Mandal Commission recommendations is explained as resulting from a threat to their status perceived by the people belonging to the high caste and a desire for social enhancement on the part of people belonging to the backward caste groups. Earlier, similar instances were witnessed during the Dravid Kazhagam movement led by Periyar in Tamil Nadu and by Jyotiba Phule and Baba Ambedkar in Maharashtra[2]. It needs to be made clear that identity contestations do not flow out of mere "in-group love" or "out-group hate" or their real purpose is more than just seeking "respect" or "status" vis-à-vis their comparison group. Social status that is bereft of power soon melts away. All groups, therefore, contest for control of the riches, power and enhancement of social status through the rhetoric of social justice and entitlement. Violence that accrues from contested identities in such situations is directed at bringing about change in the social structure. It results because the dominant groups in all circumstances would like to retain their status, while the less dominant seek an equalization of power or gaining of a socially advantageous position.

Contestations which involve religious identities in India, such as between Hindus and other religious groups, particularly Muslims, are different from the

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[1]The Indian Constitution provides that individuals belonging to the educationally and socially backward caste groups will be covered under the affirmative action programme of the Government. Jobs and seats for them will be reserved in government organizations and educational institutions. In 1979 the Indian Parliament set up a Commission under the Chairmanship of B.P. Mandal-(hence, called the Mandal Commission)-to develop parameters of backwardness of caste groups. The report of the Commission led to reservation of an additional 27 % reservation in government jobs in addition to 22 % already made for the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste groups. Its implementation in 1990 led to widespread student protests in North India.

[2]Dravid Kazhgam movement was led by Periyar KV Ramaswamy to oppose the dominance of Brahmanism and to enhance the status of the Dravidians. A political party called Dravid Kazhgam was founded in 1944 with a view to creating a new nation to be called Dravid Nadu. Similar movements which opposed Brahministic rituals and Caste system and sought social and economic equality for the lower caste were led by Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890) and Babasahab Ambedkar (1891-1956) in Maharashtra.

contestations involving caste identities. First, religious groups are considered as a minority or majority in terms of their actual numbers. They are not placed on social hierarchy in the same manner as the low caste groups are. Yet, all groups devise ways to seek distinctiveness within society with a view to increasing the size of the economic, political and social space they control. In case of the low caste groups, this is done through manufacturing of new myths and creation of icons. This, however, is not needed in case of religious groups. The degree of "collective narcissism" experienced by a group or its members is unrelated to its numerical strength. Contestations which involve religious identities are not resolved through structural interventions by the state. They require the creation of conditions that facilitate the development of positive interdependence among groups and forming of dialogical relationships. The problem with the form of contestation of religious identities in India is different in comparison to other countries. The dominant group of Hindus appears to carry mixed feelings about other religious groups, except a few. Most non-Hindus, except Zoroastrians and Jews, are seen as persons who were once Hindus and got converted to other religions, particularly to Islam and Christianity. Hindus, therefore, expect them not only to be culturally in sync with them, but to yield cultural space to them or at least share the same space with them. The attempts by certain Islamic organizations to keep away from participation in the functions organized on the occasion of the International Yoga Day were criticized on this ground by Hindu organizations. Hindus feel betrayed when they find that they are singing a different tune and declare their loyalty to a religion which had its roots elsewhere. Contestations of identities between Hindus and Muslims have become more complex with the creation of Pakistan. Indian Muslims are always called upon to prove their loyalty to the Indian nation, unlike Hindus. Even the national identities of other religious groups get somewhat discounted. The nature of violence and conflict involving Hindus and Muslims can be largely explained as resulting from intolerance to each other's cultural norms and religious beliefs (DeRidder and Tripathi 1992). It is however true that a very large number of communal riots have economic and political bases.

Contestations of regional identities go back a long time in pre- and post-independence India. In contrast to ethnic identities which are associated with valuing belongingness to a group which has a common ancestry, history, culture and regional identities are layered and bound not only by territory but more by a common history, religion, language and culture. It is another matter that different elements may be privileged for mobilization of people for collective action. Linguistic reorganization of states that took place in independent India and started in Andhra Pradesh, for example, privileged linguistic identities. The divide of the state of Andhra Pradesh into Telangana and Andhra in 2014 used history to construct its regional identity. Regional identities, such as seen in the North-east and in Kashmir, result from a totally different source. The contest of identities seen here is, of course, between regions which are historically and culturally diverse but also between regional identity and national identity. Region, for them, is the nation. Some people of this region, therefore, refuse to accept Indian national identity which demands commitment to the Indian nation. The Indian state sees them

as people who reside within the geographical space which is under its control and demand allegiance to the nation. However, this demand is seen as an imposition by the Indian state by some of the people of these regions. They argue that there is little which is common between them and the Indian people in terms of culture, history and language. Thus, there is a clear divide that exists between the social identities which the groups construct for themselves relative to what the Indian state and the Indian people would want them to have. Ethnic assertions are the results of clashes that take place between these two kinds of identities. The result is a double social exclusion experienced by the people of the NE and Kashmir, which fuels collective violence involving groups like, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), National Democratic Front of Bodoland, etc., in the NE region and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahiddin, Jamiat-ul-Mujahiddin (JuM), etc., in Kashmir. First, there is self or voluntary exclusion in which the people of this region choose to exclude themselves from participation in the Indian society, and then the seeming social exclusion of people belonging to these groups by the Indian society, which perceives them as extremists and enemies of the nation. The lack of acceptance of national identity results in violence associated with tendencies of secession and insurrection. This kind of violence is different from Maoist violence, which is ideologically driven and does not involve identity contestations. It has its roots in the exploitation of the poor tribals by the corporate and landlords who, often, have the support of the state. The violence directed at extremist groups of any type, which threatens the integrity of a group or the state, is considered "banal" or "virtuous" because it is directed at eliminating an "evil" (Reicher et al. 2008).

1.2 Identity Contestations and Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is often seen as an answer to contestations of identities by many in the western world. However, a paradoxical relationship appears to have developed between liberal democracies and multiculturalism in today's world. Liberal democracies are seen as political structures which create spaces for the expression and interaction of diverse political ideologies and cultural beliefs, while also accommodating ethnic, national and gender identities. Since these are essential features of multiculturalism ideology, one would have assumed that the two will have no problem in coexisting. Yet, it is in the liberal democracies that multiculturalism faces its most serious challenge, be it in Europe, North America, Asia, Africa or in other continents, where contestations and debates have been replaced by violent confrontations between groups based on religion, region or race. The challenge of political governance in plural societies comes largely from groups seeking political recognition based on ethnicity, religious affiliations and language. Such movements pose grave threats to the nation-states as can be seen in South Asia. In countries which have received a large number of immigrants in the last many decades, an intense debate has followed which seeks to contest the ideology of

multiculturalism. Critics of multiculturalism hold that it is more about protection of the culture of the minority groups than about the minority accommodating to the culture of the majority. Scholars like Bhikhu Parekh (2000) hold that all cultures are plural by nature. Yet, there is an inherent tendency to treat cultures as homogeneous as possible and to retain its centre. We find that people belonging to the dominant groups in the societies, which have opened their borders to people from other nations, often feel that their cultural identity is getting eroded and the cultural space which was once theirs is being taken away by the other groups. Massive demonstrations that followed the horrific killing of *Charlie Hebdo*'s staff in Paris[3] support this view. Social media is full of comments which call for the maintenance of cultural homogeneity. The likely political fallouts of such incidents are all too obvious. The political ideology of the British National Party (BNP) in Britain strongly opposes Muslims coming to Britain, and what it calls ongoing "Islamification" of the UK. Muslim and Sikh children also have been facing problems in France in maintaining their cultural identities because the schools do not permit them to dress differently in accordance with their religious practices. This problem is faced not only in non-Islamic nations, but also in countries which are predominantly Muslim, like Indonesia. The politics, as well as the practice of veiling, are associated with local customs, traditions and practices, and sometimes to contest monolithic construction of Islam (Millalos 2007). In fact, multicultural societies everywhere are facing contestations, often violent, from diverse kinds of groups, even in nations which are not liberal democracies. Recent conflict witnessed between the Hans and Uighurs in Xinxiang province of China is one such example. What is being witnessed today in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria and in Nigeria provides another example. It is pertinent to ask what explains such contestations, the violent ones in particular, or the ones which have the potential of turning violent.

1.3 Othering as a Process: The Other as a Product

We take the view that central to understanding of violence is the process of othering (Spivak 1985). There is, though, another view. Reicher (2007) believes that contestations are understood better in terms of in-group definitions or identity. But the attempt to construct social identity for own groups in contradistinction to other groups is supported by processes of othering. The other is "another self: a mirror and a foil" (Benbassa and Attias 2004) If the other is not stigmatized or run down, securing positive identity for oneself or one's own group may be a little less possible. The other is often the construction of and by the powerful. It is not that weak does not have an other. But othering by the weak rarely, if ever, converts into generalized stigma and its denigration of the other accepted widely. Identity

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[3]There have been two terrorist attacks on the offices of the French satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, in 2011 and 2015. In 2015, 12 people were killed and several injured in the attacks. See: http://news.sky.com/story/1504408/charlie-hebdo-attacks-two-suspects-arrested, accessed June 29, 2015.

formation is the result of dialectical relationship that the self of the first group, or the powerful, has with its other. In a patriarchal society, for example, men provide the standard or norms, which women as the other are expected to follow. These norms feed into the formation of women's identities.

Derrida emphasizes this when he says every culture is haunted by its other (Kearny 1984), as do Lacan (1993) and Foucault (1970). As a post-modernist, Derrida (1998) considers difference as more important in defining identity than unity or sameness. It will be wrong to presume that cultures have only one other which "haunts" them. Most cultures have multiple others. Each culture comes up with its own creative mode/s of othering. Which "other" among these gets foregrounded, and comes to occupy the centre space, depends on socio-political or economic context and conditions. Even the emotions and action-tendencies associated with the others or out-groups are not the same. While a certain group may evoke the emotion of anger, another may evoke fear or contempt (Mackie et al. 2000).

Othering, however, puts aside and ignores the complexity and subjectivity of the individual by objectifying another person or a group (Abdallah-Pretceille 2006). Yet, the other is not exactly a nuisance. Othering needs identity as much as identity needs othering. The emergence of Pakistan and of Bangladesh as Islamic nations may be taken as two such examples which illuminate how political identities figure in the construction of the other. It is also in opposition to the other, as was observed above, that the self is constructed. The process implicated in differentiation between self and other, however, is not the same as othering. Othering implicates exclusion, i.e. denial of rights and entitlements, based on a belief in "essentialism" which permits the powerful and privileged to maintain their dominance over those who they "other" or marginalize (Mahalingam 2003). Othering overlooks similarities.

The differentiation engaged between self and other is more to enable construction of uniqueness for own-group around certain positive characteristics which reflexively are used to define personal selves. Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory uses this as the central idea. Golec de Zavala et al. (2009), similarly, propose the concept of "collective narcissism" which feeds the development of out-group negativity. It develops when apart from in-group identification; individuals make an "emotional investment in the belief of unparalleled greatness" of their in-group. Levinas (1969) takes a more radical view. For him, the other is not the same as "me". But it is also not different from "me" in terms of certain well-defined criteria. Even so, the other is an "absolute other" that one does not even care about. Those falling in the group are considered expendable, undeserving and on these grounds deserving of what Opotow (1990) calls moral exclusion. The other is a generic term for what is "excluded, repressed, suppressed and concealed".

Different kinds of other may be located along the difference to indifference continuum, but the morally excluded kind leans more towards the indifference end, in terms of how the self relates to it. Chakraborty (2009) distinguishes between the self and other in terms of its constitutive elements. The other is that which cannot be accessed from within one's schema of life, be that of an individual or of a collective. But for a society which is haunted by its other, self and the other have

to stand in relationship to each other and have to be situated in the same context. Otherness necessarily involves reciprocality. It will have no ontological basis, outside the relationship involving self and the other or "we" and "they". Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1996) see the process of othering taking place when self represents "what it is not" and "what it does not want to be". The boundaries which separate self from other are qualitatively different in case of different types of others. In fact self–other boundaries emerge quite early in human life. Tomasello (1999) reviews experiments which show that children develop the ability to differentiate between self and other quite early and by the end of the second year they start developing expectations from others which gets reflected in attention seeking and seeking of common goals. This kind of shared intentionality which contributes to the development of cooperative behaviour with others can foster rivalries between groups.

1.4 Psychological Construction of the Other

It is said that societies do not discover their others. They create them through a very deliberate act by selecting certain aspects of the other's lives. There is an Upanishadic saying that "water is one but it is possible to split it with our perception". This is what we do even in case of the people we transact with. Psychologists believe that the human mind functions on the basis of differentiation and categorization. Several interesting experiments have been performed by Tajfel and his colleagues employing what is called a Minimum Group Paradigm (Tajfel and Turner 1979). They show how psychological processes of differentiation and categorization create and set apart a group or groups as different from an individual's own group from which he derives his social identity, even when the basis of making such differences is very frivolous. The other comes to be created as a result of the interplay of two processes, namely "ascription" of values, norms, beliefs and practices that are made to the other group and, a process of "inscription" and "community-building" which results in internalization of certain values, beliefs and practices as belonging to one's own group (Pierik 2004). Norm violation theory (De Ridder and Tripathi 1992) suggests that groups get locked up in conflicts when one of them violates the other group's norms with a malevolent intent. The two processes of ascription and inscription together constitute the process of othering and create the other as a product. Thus, own and other groups come to be created and clear-cut boundaries get drawn between "we" and "they" through the process of othering. The resulting "they" is not distinguished on the basis of being different but on the basis of being the other. "They" are inferior to" we", and "we" are always better than "they". The objective of the process of constructing the other is to create one's own cultural and social space and deny the same space to the members of the other group. In this context, similarity between groups is threatening because in that case they have to vie for the same space as occupied by one's own group members. So, grounds for establishing differences are always needed. The categories which lead to inter-group differentiation could be any, but most often one category becomes more prominent or salient in defining the other.

Construction of the other is characterized by cognitions which are coloured by moral emotions. As Chatterjee (2012) puts it, "the essence of the other bears the burden of un-naturalness, queerness, blackness, feminineness…" (p. 136). Spivak (1985) uses the archival material of British colonialism in India to suggest that the British othering of Indian subjects involved symbolic degrading and followed three lines. These were: making their subjects aware of their subordinate status to the British, treating them as uncivilized and morally inferior, and poor in terms of knowledge possession and technology. The other gets created historically over a period of time and could be based on all such categories which are used as coordinates to define physical, economic, political, social and cultural spaces. Otherness, as stated above, thus, involves a spatial dimension. The constructed otherness is not proximate but quite some distance away from the "we" boundaries. Otherness comes when conditions of group membership are not fulfilled which are based on sharing the same history and, therefore, the same collective memory, possessing the same ideology and beliefs, subscribing to the same norms and practices, all of which give a group its social identity. Once such a construction of otherness comes about, the other comes to be represented as an enemy, a devil and the negative appellations stay. Any attempt to redraw boundaries or at non-othering the other are viewed with a great deal of suspicion. Recent controversies that arose in the country when attempts at "non-othering" of M.A. Jinnah was made by L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh, the flag bearers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, by portraying him as a secular politician attests to this. Suddenly, they became the "other" within the Party because their stand was seen as a "betrayal" of the party. Similarly, Gandhi remains even today an "other" in the collective memory of Pakistanis as "a cunning *bania* [trader]", who uttered "Ram-Ram" while hiding a dagger[4]. Conceding any space to Gandhi in Pakistan, or attempt to change this perception is likely to result in similar outcries as they did in India in case of Jinnah. Such an attempt, it may appear to Pakistanis, will dilute Pakistan's opposition to a Hindu India which holds Gandhi as the father of the nation. In this process, the self–other boundaries between Indians and Pakistanis would become porous, greatly threatening national and social identities of the Pakistanis.

1.5 "Purity" as the Basis of Otherness

Otherness once formed, simply refuses to go away. Smith (1996) shows how anti-Semitism, which some may have thought got buried with the Holocaust, has resurfaced not only in Europe but around the world. In Poland, 38 % people still hold Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Similarly, more than 70 % people in Slovakia endorse the statement that the Holocaust was a just punishment for Jewish sins. Thus, the Jew remains a quintessential other, at least in Europe and

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[4]Time of India, New Delhi Edition, August 23, 2009. See :http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi, Accessed February 14, 2010.

North America. More recently, more than 200,000 Muslims became victims of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia-Herzegovina to make the country "pure" for living of the Serbs. How is this to be understood, or what motivations may account for this? The boundaries between the self and the other are created in order to create a positive identity for self, in an effort to create purity for the self and purity for the own group. Tripathi (1987) points out that the idea of "purity" is germane to Hinduism and "for a Hindu the journey of his life is a constant search for purity and refinement" (p. 238). All the rites and rituals of Hindus from birth till death are associated with purification. Through the act of offering the daily "puja", a Hindu seeks to purify the personal self by imbibing it with divine light. For Hindus, all those are the other who have not found refinement through "*samskara*s" (rites and rituals), or have crossed the permissible limits of impurity, like the "shudras" (lower castes), due to their professional calling.

Hinduism is not the only religion, despite what Dumont (1980) and others will have us believe, which puts emphasis on purity. In fact, there is no religion which does not. All Christians suffer from the impurity of the original sin till they get redeemed by Jesus. The notion of "*jihad*", according to Hussain Haqqani, incorporates both "purity for the self" and "purity for the own group", which is the most prominent driver for all mujahideens. Islam has an elaborate concept of what is considered "*haram*", or sinful or impure. This goal of purity is also achieved by demonizing the other or by making the "pure" of the other, "not-pure" group. And who other than the women of the other group, if this motive is to be fulfilled, can become the target of such defilement? Butalia (1998) points this out when she recounts that close to about 100,000 women were abducted, molested and subjected to all kinds of atrocities on both sides of the border during the partition of India in 1947. She paints a heart-wrenching picture of these women who, according to her, "were paraded naked in the street; several had their breasts cut-off; their bodies were tattooed with the marks of the "other" religion; and in a bid to defile the so-called 'purity' of the race, women were forced to have sex with men of the other religion; many were impregnated" (p. 132). The group to which the women belonged, she goes on to point out, sought to retain their "purity" by not accepting such "defiled, not-pure" women within their folds and abandoned them. In fact, Butalia (1998) presents several narratives where the entire family of Sikhs consisting of women, children and old men chose to kill themselves or were killed by their own family members because they feared being "defiled" or "dishonoured" by the other. They did not want their "Sikhi" to get stained.

A woman's body appears to be a site that is prone to othering across religions. In traditional Hindu families, a menstruating woman is expected to withdraw herself from all household activities, from the kitchen, in particular because her touch will defile food. There are Biblical injunctions against a menstruating woman. She is declared impure and a man is prohibited from engaging in sexual relations with such a woman. According to Jewish law, she is able to regain her purity after she takes her ritual bath, called "*mikvah*" (Wenger 1998, 1999). Couto-Ferreira and Garcia-Ventura (2013) point out that from the times of ancient Mesopotamia, women have been considered as causes of impurity. They also discuss how purity was in those times—in addition to physical cleanliness—also about "etiquette", "order" and "good behaviour".

The meme of purity has also been behind the creation of societies and nations. Both Buddha and Jesus sought to create holy or pure lands. Pakistan, which literally means land of the pure, also came to be created and named in this manner. The rhetoric that was put forward by Muslim proponents of the two-nation theory was that Muslims in India were living in the land of "*na-pak*" (not pure) Hindus. As true believers of Islam, they needed to live in a land that was pure, or "*pak*". While the creation of Pakistan may have served the social and political identity needs of those who sought it, for Hindus, particularly the "*rashtravadi* Hindus" (nationalists) who sought an undivided India, it was seen as the violation of the "pure" body of Mother India.

It needs to be understood that the concern with "purity" is not for moral or hygienic reasons. It is, as Berthold (2010) suggests in case of the American Whites, to exercise power over the "impure other".

1.6 Ideology as the Basis of Otherness

The violent contestations between own and other groups are not only on the ground of religious, regional or cultural identities; there are clashes between ideologies also. One such clash can be seen in the form of Naxalite[5] violence which is fuelled by the political ideology of ultra-left wing Maoists. Naxalite activity obtains more in districts which are high on poverty and illiteracy (Borooah, 2007). Sarkar (2002) sees violence in Gujarat[6] resulting from the penetration of state by Hindu-nation ideology and its contestation with secular nationalism. It may be asked how such contestations relate to violence. Individuals differ on their preferences for their vision of an ideal society and also with respect to how it can be achieved. These underlie political ideologies often categorized as left/right, liberal/ conservative, secular/fundamentalist, fascist/democratic and similar other categories. Psychologists see ideologies as special kinds of social cognitions or as socially represented belief systems, which are related to intergroup attitudes and behaviour (Farr and Moscovici 1984). Ideologies, to the extent they help in self-definition of group members and how they connect with the group, influence the degree to which an individual belongs to the group or is an outsider. Ideologies that

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[5]Naxalites are adherents of radical ideology of the Communist Party of India (Maoist/Marxist-Leninist) who have been in conflict with the Indian Government and the State governments. They have been active in the states of Bihar, Odissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh and Maharashtra. The name Naxal derives from Naxalbari, a village in West Bengal where the first Maoist uprising took place in 1967. The Naxalite violence has weakened considerably over the past few years.

[6]Gujarat Violence in 2002 started with the burning of certain coaches of the Sabarmati Express train which resulted in the deaths of some 90+ Hindu Karsevaks who were returning from Ayodhya after visiting the disputed Ram Janmabhumi Temple. Widespread communal riots broke out after the incident killing a very large number of Muslims (around 800) and 254 Hindus and resulting in huge property damage.

have been studied (see Rosenthal and Levy 2012) include social dominance orientation, which puts emphasis on inequality-based social hierarchy; right-wing authoritarianism, which believes in obedience and submission to authority, also traditionalism; colour-blindness, which emphasizes that race and ethnicity should not enter intergroup interactions, very similar to secularism in India, which seeks to keep religion away from the public domain; multiculturalism, which believes that cultural differences should not only be considered but they need to be celebrated. In polyculturalism, individuals subscribe to the belief that all cultures are connected as they have interacted and influenced each other over a period of time. Polyculturalism comes close to the composite culture discourse in India but is qualitatively different. Composite culture in India is more than a belief as it reflects in everyday living and cultural practices. Preferences which individuals have for such ideologies are also associated with their behavioural dispositions and interactional styles (Jost et al. 2003). McAdams (1995) views human personality as characterized in terms of three distinct descriptive levels. The first two levels consist of dispositional traits, and contextualized and conditional characteristics, respectively. The third level is concerned with identity issues which are descriptive of ideological beliefs, at the core of which are values, political and moral beliefs. Intergroup ideologies have been found to relate to construction of the other created on the basis of race and ethnicity and intergroup interactions. Interesting and counterintuitive findings have emerged in studies that seek to relate ideologies and attitudes which people hold towards out-groups. Vorauer et al.(2009) found that multicultural ideological focus, if primed, makes both the minority and dominant group members direct positive comments at the members of the out-group during interaction. In another study, Sasaki and Vorauer (2013) found that such positive interactions and positive inter-group attitudes are found only in non-conflictual situations, but in threatening situations such effects get reversed. Morrison et al. (2010) also found that multiculturalism when primed in case of white Americans resulted in greater prejudice, particularly for those whose ethnic identity was high. Colour-blindness ideology which, as we observed above, is similar to secularism in the Indian context, has been found to relate to reducing in-group bias in some cases while in some other cases it has been found to increase ethnocentrism and stereotyping. It is only skin deep and does not sustain over a period of time. In fact, the relationship between ideology and intergroup attitude and behaviour has been found to vary as a function of context and social or ethnic group status of the respondent in a number of studies (Plaut et al. 2009).

Few studies have been carried out to relate ideology and intergroup attitudes and interactions in India. This may be surprising because political discourses in India have largely centred on political ideologies involving secularism and religious and caste identities in modern India. Political parties have regularly engaged in othering each other based on political ideologies. BJP, thus, has called Congress and other parties as "pseudo-secularist" and Congress and other parties called BJP as a "Communal" party. Tripathi et al. (2009) looked at how ideological frameworks of multicultural and composite culture ideology influenced intergroup attitudes and reactions to norm violations in case of Hindus and Muslims in India. When asked to give their preference for ideology, a majority of the respondents

(74 %) opted to live in a country which followed a composite culture ideology, followed by a country with a multicultural ideology (22 %), while only 4 % preferred a country which subscribed to a mono-cultural ideology. They found that the likelihood of Muslims who believed in composite cultural ideology in retributive and retaliatory acts to Hindu's norm violation was significantly lower in comparison to those who subscribed to a multicultural-secular ideology.

1.7 Mechanisms of Othering

The other is always seen as less than human; as not fully socially and morally evolved. The other is morally excluded and is an easy target of both physical violence and structural violence which is subtle, because it is seen as normal (Galtung 1969). Structural violence is more likely in scarce resource environments. The purpose of the process of othering in the scarce resource environment is to create economic, political and social inequalities in an attempt to move the other from the centre to the margins or preventing it to move towards the centre. The other is not necessarily a numerical minority. However, all minority groups rank lower in social power compared to the majority group which not only occupies but also controls the centre. There are diverse arenas in which the game of othering is played out. In all of these, the effort is to grab the prerogative to define the other. This is most clearly seen in the discourses that have emerged recently, namely (i) the Eurocentric discourse, critiqued so very well by Edward Said (1978) and Michel Foucault (1969) (ii) phallocentric or male-centred discourses, which are contested by feminists like Irigaray (1974), and (iii) the post-colonialist discourses of Fanon (2008), Bhabha (1994) and Nandy (1983) to point out a few. Initial encounters between groups begin with indifference. Competition over scarce resources creates negative inter-dependencies and leads to social comparisons between members of the contesting groups, to feelings of relative deprivation (Pettigrew 1967). This in turn leads to conflicts. If there are unfavourable outcomes or frustrations resulting from not attaining the desired goals, or unfavourable social comparisons with respect to economic well-being, social status or political power, they generate a variety of emotional reactions, such as, rage anger, disgust, jealousy, hate, shame, etc. These feed into the construction of the other and the manner in which they are socially represented (Moscovici 1984) resulting in a collective emotional orientation, which, more often than not, is of hate (Halperin 2007). Competition is both a cause and consequence of othering. Othering follows if the groups involved in the competition are embedded within the same social structure and have shared social histories. Othering results from the manner groups, minority groups in particular, are situated within a social structure.

Our argument so far has been that othering is a perceptual phenomenon. But othering, also, has an ontological status. It is a phenomenon which involves social psychological constructions and social representations which form the ground for social structure. Whether it is Moses leading his men out of Egypt or Prophet Mohammed raiding Mecca with the help of his associates from Medina, the other

is always omniscient. The Indian tradition, unlike some, other traditions makes not only humans part of the othering process but even celestial beings. Consider, for example, the Hindu myth relating to the "*samudra manthan*" (*churning of the ocean*), which followed the war between the gods and demons, which was won by the king of the demons, Bali. Both gods and demons are said to be the sons of the same Lord. Nevertheless, the ancient texts of the "*Purana*s" tell us how they maintained great rivalry and fought with each other for the control of heaven and the universe. To regain control, on the advice of Lord Vishnu, the gods decide to associate themselves with the demons to churn the great heavenly ocean. The churning was for the pot of nectar which would make the group that gets hold of it immortal. The churning resulted in the ocean throwing up all kinds of desirable objects, like the goddess of wealth, the moon, and many others, etc., which were shared by the gods and demons. It was when the pot containing nectar surfaced that the war between the two began. Both coveted it because they wanted to become immortal while denying the immortality to the other group. The demons eventually lost to gods, Indra's Kingdom, which they had won because of the help the gods received from Lord Vishnu and his consort. The demons, thereafter, became perennial objects of othering by gods. It is instructive to know in this connection that all the terms associated with the demons in Sanskrit, like, "*asur*", "*daitya*" and "*rakshas*" do not carry negative meanings. The word "*asur*" is actually a derivative from a Persian word "*ahur*", which connotes the meaning of a "spirited or energetic" being. Similarly, "*daitya*" refers to the sons of Diti, one the most respected mothers in the Indian tradition. "*Rakshas*" etymologically means protector. They too were devotees of Lord Vishnu, the God who preserves the world and, therefore, were supposed to be naturally disposed to the work of protection. The negative baggage which these positive terms seem to have acquired appears to have happened much later and may have resulted from the attributes associated with the victors and vanquished. Construction of the other results over a course of time when members of the respective groups seek to take a reflective glance on the event in order to make sense of it. Allport (1958) points out how in the case of Abraham Lincoln, the terms "thrifty", "ambitious" are used in a positive sense but they take on a different meaning when applied to Jews. The semiotic requirement is that one who is defeated or killed comes to be depicted as an evil force by the victors. In all conflicts, it is the in-group which gets valorized while the other group is vilified. What gets circulated is the version of the victors, and it is their narrative which is always considered authentic and, therefore, finds wide public acceptance. The vanquished are denied voice and their narratives find no takers even among their own group members. To give an example, it is only the US historical narrative of the Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor in which the Japanese are held responsible for USA joining the Second World War. There are very few takers of the Japanese historical narrative that the USA was engaging in hostile activities against Japan much before that and had aggressive designs against it. Had Hitler won, probably the Holocaust stories would be not how they are remembered today and are part of the collective memory of the Jewish people. The process of othering is a prerogative of the powerful because they control

the process of meaning making. Their hegemonic position allows them to succeed in "globalizing" their narratives while blocking other "local" narratives from circulating. It is their version which forms the collective memory. The other is also present in the narratives of the defeated and the victimized. The history of India and of India's partition as represented and read in India and Pakistan amply demonstrate this (Kumar 2001).

It may be asked what purpose is served by othering. It is often argued that its one important purpose is to consolidate power relations between groups through production of knowledge about otherness. Another purpose may be to protect the positive distinctiveness of one's, or what Golec de Zavala et al. (2009) call "collective narcissism": an unrealistic belief in the greatness of one's own group. There are, also, several other processes which are implicated in different kinds of othering. Schwalbe et al. (2000) point out to three kinds of othering. These are:

1. *Othering through Oppression*: The oppressed are construed by the oppressors as irresponsible, servile and even depraved. All differences from self/own group (which is the reference point) are seen as deficits. The colonial perception of its subjects falls in this category. The oppressed are seen as "objects" to be categorized in terms of class/caste/race as was achieved by the British through the Indian Census and is held responsible for the emergence of political identities around caste and religion (Dirks 2001). This kind of othering eventually results in stigmatization of the other and in essentializing it through development of stereotypes, as the census carried out by the British did in case of the Indians.
2. *Othering through generation of virtuous selves*: In this process, according to Deutsch, the other gets created in contradistinction to selves which are seen as virtuous and pure. Here, self acquires a moral identity. If the groups did not have the other to vilify, emergence of a positive group esteem will become a nullity.
3. *Defensive othering*: This kind of othering involves using the members of the other group to raise an accusatory finger against its own group members. The purpose is to make the other group members accept their devalued identity by internalizing the beliefs of the powerful about own group members. An example of this would be, women calling other women lazy or unprofessional or the caricaturing of Indians by Nirad Chaudhary (1951). Accepting the devalued identity of the own groups leads to maintaining peace with the powerful. This kind of process of othering operates where one particular group has been the dominant group over a long period of time. How do those who get othered in such a manner react to it, if they do not take recourse to violent ways? There are three possibilities. They can, of course, drop out from the mainstream and accept a marginalized existence for their group members. Alternately, they can break the group into sub-groups and develop new identities based on sub-cultures. Another possible recourse is to seek the patronage of the powerful by accepting a negative social identity for the self.

The construction of different types of other is also an outcome of newly emerging modern states which lay claim to democracy to convert differences based on ethnicity or social class into others. Okolie (2003) discusses how the colonial masters in Nigeria created such ethnic identities to remain in power and to maintain

"distributional inequities". The modern state of Nigeria, continues to maintain these. He argues that it is in the nature of the modern state to create the other. Indigenous ethnic groups in India from the North-east, like the Nagas, Mizos, Bodos and political groups like the Naxalites, Hurriyat in Kashmir are or have been the other for the Indian state.

1.8 Types of Other

If one can distinguish between different types of processes of othering. Does it follow that there can also be different types of others? Cromer (2001) proposes two types of others: *primary others*, which consist of groups in open violent contestations with the own group; and *secondary others*, who get created as the other because of their close association with the primary others in terms of ideology, beliefs, etc. The *secondary others* could be a sub-group consisting of own group members, or could be a sub-group of fellow citizens. The othering results from the process of appellations or demonizing involving attributions of evil intents and negative or abusive qualities to the members of this group. During the period of the Holocaust, the Nazis were the primary others for the Jewish people but there were others holding similar views among the Jewish people and also among the Muslims and Gentiles, as did the Nazis about them. They became the secondary others for the Jewish people. Muslims in India who decided not to migrate to Pakistan and stayed back also seem to have become the secondary others for Hindus. Every now and then, and during riots particularly, they are labelled as Pakistanis and asked to leave India. They are seen as working for a further division of India at the behest of the Pakistani state. Muslim ghettos in most towns are seen by some Hindus as "mini Pakistans". Even supporters of Muslims come to be othered. Because of the support that Mulayam Singh Yadav, leader of the Samajwadi Party in India, offered to Muslims during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement,[7] Hindutva supporters coined a new appellation for him and called him "Mullah" Mulayam Singh.

We have so far discussed the process of othering involving groups where the contestations relate to procuring of economic resources, better social status or positions of power in resource scarce environment for self and the members of own group relative to the other group/s. However, it is the state which is the ultimate dispenser of the resources to groups as well as its citizens. The state emerges as the other in situations where certain groups consider themselves as unfairly treated with respect to social, political and economic dimensions relative to the dominant group in society. Of the three, the social dimension is the most important. As Lord Chesterfield once put it, 'Wrongs are often forgiven, contempt never is. Our pride remembers it forever' (Roberts 1998; pp. 85). To paraphrase the above, the wrongs

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[7]Ram Janmabhumi refers to the site in Ayodhya in the state of UP, which, according to the beliefs of some Hindus, is the birthplace of Lord Ram. They believe that a temple which stood in the place was destroyed by the Mughal King Babur and a mosque erected in its place by his army general Mir Baqi. The mosque was demolished by a large crowd of Hindus in 1992.

committed by the groups are often forgiven but not of the state. For groups which have had a long history of marginalization and unfair treatment of the own group members, the state is construed as the first among the primary others and relationship with it is imbued with emotions of anger and rage. The prime example of this is the case of Kashmiri Muslims, Maoists in various states, the insurgent tribal groups in the North-east, and Muslims of Gujarat. Promulgation of the AFSPA (Armed Forces [Special Powers] Act)[8], in particular, in Kashmir and the North-eastern states has created conditions for othering between the people of these states and the Indian Army, resulting in mutual othering (Tripathi 2011). A large number of residents of these states see themselves as victims of the Indian army which, they hold, consistently violates their human rights. Irom Sharmila, a civil rights activist from the north-eastern state of Manipur, has been on hunger strike for more than 14 years to highlight such violations and for the revocation of the AFSPA. The Indian government's refusal to negotiate with her has further reinforced the perception of the Indian Army and the Indian state as the other, as an enemy, which is both immoral and insensitive, in the north-eastern states.

The state, if not a primary other, is always a probable case for becoming a secondary other in case of all the disgruntled groups in society. There also is a possibility of the presence of several secondary others rather than just one, like it was seen in the case of the Batla House incident[9]. If there are others with multiple identities in society, we may ask which other is most likely to get foregrounded in the process of othering. To the fundamentalist Hindu, the Indian Muslim is the same as the Pakistani Muslim. Post 9/11, Muslims all over the world have become part of intense scrutiny by all state agencies due to a rise in a phenomenon labelled as "Islamophobia". All non-Muslim states everywhere are devising ways to manage Muslims by either presently staying within their country or entering it from outside as immigrants. The process of othering gets privileged by the context. Still, as Zavalloni (1971) found, social identities based on different group memberships are related in the form of concentric circles. Under normal circumstances, it is always the larger category, such as that of the nation within which the smaller categories, based on religion, language, regions and ideologies get subsumed. Thus, a Pakistani Muslim will be more intensely othered than an Indian Muslim.

The problematic of violence and nonviolence is influenced by the type of othering processes as well as the types of others which get created in a society. Intergroup relations and the contestations which surface are largely determined by such processes. Groups in societies which are engaged in mutual othering are also the ones which are involved in violent relationships characterized by competition or

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[8]The AFSPA was enacted by the Parliament of India in 1958, and grants the armed forces special powers to act in "disturbed areas". There have been many allegations of human rights violations by the Indian Army in areas where it has been enforced. The AFSPA has been removed from the north-eastern state of Tripura in 2015 after 18 years.

[9]Batla House Encounter took place in Jamia Nagar Delhi on September 19, 1998 in which some terrorists belonging to the Indian Mujahiddin were killed by the Police. A police officer too was killed in the encounter. The encounter took place subsequent to a series of bomb blasts that had taken place in Delhi and other towns. Many civil society groups and political parties came out to protest that the encounter was fake, and innocent Muslims were killed by the police.

winning and losing. Others are given to competing. Those competing against each other are, more likely than not, going to up as others.

1.9 Towards "Un"-Othering

Let us now turn our attention to relationships which are nonviolent. Do they involve othering? If yes, what is the nature of othering in nonviolent relationships? It will be wrong to assume that such relationships are devoid of contestations involving self and other. After all, Gandhi used nonviolent methods to contest the mighty British Empire. But the othering involved in nonviolent contestations is of a different nature. It is reflexive in character because it focuses more on the self than on the other. Also, the other focused upon is not an external other but the other which has a conjoint relationship with the self. It is often said, sometimes wrongly, that Gandhi was a person who was full of contradictions. But the manner in which he resolved these contradictions by fusing the opposites helps us to understand his manner of inverting the process of othering. Gandhi used compound words and avoided dichotomies. The two terms which occur most frequently in the Gandhian discourse, "Harijan" and "Daridranarayan" (for untouchables and the poor), are also illustrative of his dialogic politics. In dialogic politics, there is no opposition. In it, both the self and the other face each other and engage each other in dialoguing with a view to resolving any contradictions that may be there. It is well known that Gandhi sought the mainstreaming of marginalized groups, such as of the poor, lower castes (untouchables), minorities, women and also of the youth. Gandhi's use of the term "Harijan" (*lit.* children of God) was vehemently opposed by Ambedkar as he felt that it sought to retain the Hindu hierarchical caste order and did not help in the annihilation of the caste system. The first issue of the journal "*Harijan*" run by Gandhi covered the views of both Ambedkar and Gandhi. Coward (2003) discusses extensively Ambedkar's modernistic critique of Gandhi relating to this issue. Dalits oppose the appellation "Harijan" to this day. In fact, the term "Harijan" does not appear in public discourse in India any more. We may ask what Gandhi was trying to achieve through this new coinage. It appears to us that he was attempting to dissolve the dichotomy between the "shudras", or the low castes, and the other high castes through this new appellation, "Harijan". This, he assumed, would raise the social status of "shudras" and simultaneously help in reforming the existing caste system. Ambedkar, on the contrary, was using a different and a more aggressive strategy based on his modernistic views. He wanted the total annihilation of the caste system and argued that political freedom could wait. Gandhi's dialogic politics did not allow him to see these two, the low and the high caste, in opposition to each other. He fused them in his political praxis. Gandhi feared that choosing annihilation of the caste order would lead to violent confrontations between the high and low castes within the fold of Hinduism, and violence was what he abhorred. He was concerned about the conflicts that had already surfaced between Hindus and Muslims. The same semiotic turn is found in his use of another term,

"Daridranarayan" (poor with god-like qualities). It also seeks to achieve the same purpose, i.e. to fuse the poor and rich dichotomy through this compound word and reduce stigmatization of the poor by seeing them as incarnation of God Himself.

The Gandhian discourse on nonviolence is particularly important for understanding the process of othering. This is pointed out beautifully by Sudhir Kakar (2008) in his book, "*Mad and Divine*", where he discusses "Gandhi and the Art of Practical Spirituality". Kakar says that nonviolence requires a constant scrutiny of the self. More particularly, where there is scrutiny of self, it is in inverting the relationship where the other is made the self, and the self the other, that truth is discovered. For Gandhi, nonviolence was not the end, but it was a means to finding the truth. The story of Gandhi's experiment with the truth is the story of his struggle with himself as the other. Kakar goes on to point out that both self and the other in nonviolence do not get essentialized because it is assumed that they evolve continuously and are not bound by space or time. In this process, a series of "meta-selves" emerge which through constant struggle find consolidation creating conditions for the emergence of the true self. However, for that to happen, the self–other boundaries need to be permeable. But that is not enough. Gandhi feels that two qualities of a sentient being, i.e. compassion and empathy, are required for this to happen. His favourite devotional song by the mediaeval poet Narsinh Mehta carries his philosophy and strategy of un-othering.:

> *Vaishnava jana tau tene kahiye je peer parayi jaane re*
>
> *Par dukhe upkar kare jo mun abhimaan na aane de.*
>
> *Devotees of Lord Vishnu are those who feel others' pain*
>
> *Help others in need without ego or conceit in their minds*

There is no other where there is no self, or ego. Morton Deutsch's (1973) crude law of social relationship seems to suggest this also. Deutsch's law says: "*Typical effects of a given relationship tend to induce that relationship*". According to Deutsch, you can turn a competing relationship into a cooperative relationship with the members of the other groups. This can be done by increasing power and resources of the other group and by communicating with their group members in an open and honest fashion. When this happens, the self–other boundaries start dissolving.

The self–other boundaries keep shifting in the praxis of nonviolence, but not in case of violence. In violence, identities are firmly anchored in well-defined categories which are not allowed to be contested nor are left open for negotiation by the oppressor (or for that matter by the oppressed). The oppressors produce identities based on their own constructions. The categories produced by the colonialist, for example, were not contested at the time of their creation nor did they come into conflict then. But they are in contestation now. Gandhi meticulously avoided engaging in "othering of the other" because that would have defeated what he was seeking to consolidate. Gandhi sought to build bridges of minds through a process which has been called "enfoldment" by Sally Gearhart (1982), a feminist writer who holds "either the future is female or future is not" (p. 269). Gaerhart's concept of enfoldment is "just wrap it up, everything, that is in your inclusive enfoldment and add some warm and soft nurturance" (Quoted in Elliot, 2004, September 22).

Three feminine values are privileged by her in support of the process of enfoldment. These are empathy, nurturance and cooperation. Gandhi's support for the Khilafat Movement (Kakar 2008) rested on these values, although it was seen by many of his critics as pandering to Muslim communalism.

Let us return to self as the other notion implicated in Gandhi's nonviolence. There were not one but many others which Gandhi faced as he carried on with his truth experiments. Among these were leaders who wanted India to be a secular and a modern state. The foremost among them was Jawaharlal Nehru. And then there were those who were trying to secure India as a Hindu nation. Both deviated significantly from Gandhi's "Hind Swaraj" model[10]. But Gandhi never engaged in othering the other which we see today happening in Pakistan or Iraq. In fact, when communal riots broke out in Noakhali in eastern India in 1946, Gandhi engaged in othering of the self rather than of the other when he found himself unable to stop them (Kakar 2008). As a psychoanalyst, Kakar interprets that Gandhi saw this as his personal failure, of his "*brahmacharya*" (self-purity). This was because he had always believed that without "*brahmacharya*", a Satyagrahi's (seeker of truth) lust will fail him when the moment arose. He, therefore, set out to test his self-purity by asking his 19-yr-old granddaughter, Manu, to share his bed, to check for any sexual feelings. He thought that it was because of his lack of purity that he was unable to douse the fire of communal riots in Noakhali.

There are two parallel processes which appear to operate in case of nonviolence of the Gandhian type. These are: making use of a dialogic politics where the self–other dichotomies are dissolved and a process of enfoldment is encouraged; and secondly, a process involving othering of the self, not only as an individual but also of own group. Social scientists explain inter-group conflicts as occurring due to structural inequalities, conflict of interests, identity contestations and past histories. Efforts have been made to solve such conflicts by making parties to agree on structural changes or through resolution of conflict of interests and by increasing inter-group contacts. Most of these efforts have not resulted in lasting peace because they have not addressed the issue of changing what makes the contestants adversaries. The challenge lies in understanding the cognitive and affective processes that are implicated in un-othering the other. Un-othering will open up the possibilities of collaboration and trust between groups and attenuate identity contestations.

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[10]Gandhi's model lays down a model of development that is diametrically opposed to the model of industrial development which was subscribed to by Nehru and unrestricted exploitation of the environment. His position is reflected in the quote "the Earth provides enough for every man's needs but not enough to satisfy every man's greed".

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Chapter 2
Understanding Violence

Ramashray Roy

> *You must know that there are two ways of contesting, the one by law, the other by force: the first method is proper to man, the second to beasts. But because the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to have recourse to the second.*
>
> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chap. 18 (1989).

What is clear from what Machiavelli proposes in the quotation above is the legitimacy of violence in certain circumstances. He would prefer if the first method—the reign of law in interpersonal relations—were to become the dominant method of conflict resolution. However, he is convinced that the reign of law does not prevail everywhere. There are circumstances in which the law either proves ineffective in checking violence or is flouted with disdain. These circumstances are associated with social conditions in which the law fails in regulating interpersonal relations and in checking the propensity to take recourse to violence. Though several factors may be responsible for this, it is not necessary to go into all of them.

It is necessary, however, to point out that Machiavelli also hints at the unreliability of law as a sole method of keeping and maintaining normalcy, a normalcy that abhors the use of violence in safeguarding the smooth functioning of social interactions free of violence. He has no illusions about the efficacy of law in keeping violence at bay insofar as the peaceful conduct of interpersonal as well as public affairs is concerned. When Machiavelli points to the need for using violence as the ultimate weapon for preventing violence from perverting social life and

R. Roy (✉)
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi; National Fellow,
Indian Council of Social Science Research, Delhi, India
e-mail: ramashray.roy@gmail.com

relations, he is quite clear that it is not for all and sundry to take matters into their hands. What he signifies is that it is solely for the prince to intervene and restore normalcy violated by the occurrence of violence.

But can we be sure that the prince as the personification of law can always be relied upon to take note of the emergent violent situation, or to intervene in time to prevent the situation from getting out of hand, or, more importantly, to be successful in checking the recurrence of violence? Needless to say that there are too many "ifs" involved here. The distance, both physical and administrative, between the ruler and the ruled, the erosion of social control, and the ease with which tempers fly at the slightest provocation—all these factors contrive a situation in which recourse to violence cannot be easily prevented. Moreover, one cannot rely solely on the efficacy of law in preventing acts of violence and in uprooting violence from the psyche of individuals. We should not lose sight of the fact that the law often loses its educative value and fails to modulate the overbearing pressure of self-interest, and yields its place to rational commensuration.

Another question about Machiavelli's advice to the prince pertains to his judgment about the propriety of preferring the way of man rather than that of the beast in a situation where contest becomes unavoidable. There is no doubt that the ways of man are always preferable. However, the question cannot be evaded as to how a person makes a successful transition from the state of being a beast to that of being a man in the act of contesting. One stream of thinking underlines the unavoidability of conflict in a situation where matters of self-interest divide men into two broad categories, "we" and "they". This division becomes instrumental in provoking conflict if interests collide. However, it is claimed that these conflicts can be successfully tackled and overcome by resorting to rational persuasion. Habermas speaks of the effectiveness of "discursive competence" (1979) in resolving conflicts; this is one pointer in this direction. However, it is forgotten that some interest-based conflicts touch such deep-rooted convictions or dearly held entitlements that no rational argument can control the violence with which these are defended.

So it is necessary to address the question of the transition from the state of being a beast to the state of being a man in conducting interpersonal relations, if society has to be freed from incidents of violence. It is a question that statesmen, thinkers, philosophers and sages have throughout the ages preoccupied themselves with. It is universally acknowledged that violence is an unavoidable part of human existence. The old saying that one being is the food of another illustrates this well. As early as the Vedic civilization, it was recognized that there exists an inescapable relationship between *anna* and *annada* (food and the eater of food). Recognizing the disastrously upsetting consequences of the phenomenon of violence that goes beyond the simple biological fact, numerous ways and means—religious, social, political—have been recommended to overcome, if not completely eliminate it. And yet violence persists; moreover, it has assumed serious proportions in modern times. Thus while the phenomenon of violence has been ubiquitous, making its appearance in all varieties of time and space, what is distinctive about it in modern times is its pervasiveness, its virulence and the frequency of its recurrence.

In view of the fact that the scale and the intensity of violence have been increasing over time, there arise certain questions that must be satisfactorily answered before we can begin to understand what constitutes or causes violence, what triggers off its occurrence and its occasional eruption on a large scale. It needs to be kept in mind that every society in the world is afflicted, in one way or the other, with violence that affects individual lives, social relations, national affairs and international relations. The situation is, to say the least, characterized by a serious paradox which, as we shall see later, gives birth to other paradoxes. This paradox lies in the fact that as civilization has advanced from the rude conditions of primitive times to the growing wealth and comfort of modern times, as primitive conditions have yielded to elegant lifestyles boasting of high culture, violence, too, has kept pace. We witness today an unprecedented increase in the incidence of violence in all areas of life.

The pervasiveness of violence signifies a state of affairs where increasing recourse to force for solving existential problems has become a *fait accompli*. Long ago, Niccolo Machiavelli, as already pointed out, talked of two ways of contesting, the one by law and, the other, by force; the first method is proper to man and the second to beast. But because the first is frequently not sufficient, it becomes necessary to resort to the second. When Machiavelli refers to the way proper for man in a contest, he does not by any means offer a justification of the use of force in settling disputes or resolving conflicts. It is, in a more important sense, a public acknowledgement of the inefficacy of the law in taming the beast in man. This indicates that something more effective is required to tame the beast in man, so that social relations in which minimal violence is taken recourse of can be founded. Here one encounters a conundrum: a device that was forged to tame the beast in man must be supplemented and, at times, supplanted, by the forceful assertion of the beast in man, for both legitimizing law and for compensating for its weakness.

The descent of man into beastliness is also indicative of the erosion of the sense of fellow-feeling and goodwill, signifying the loss of a larger vision of life. It suggests that man has become so self-centred and self-engrossed that he lives only for himself. A self-centred man demands liberty which he can exercise for promoting and furthering whatever he considers to be contributing to the realization of his self-defined purposes. It also signifies that he must, on the one hand, compete vigorously with others and, on the other, engage in a continuous battle for removing constraints on his action. It must be made clear here that the state of affairs in which every man must, at one and the same time, collaborate and compete, has overtaken the whole world; this happened with the cataclysmic changes that made their appearance in the seventeenth century in Western Europe. One of the contributory factors is, of course, the far-going change that took place over the passage of time, in the way man viewed the phenomenon of liberty. Broadly speaking, four different significations of the term "liberty" can be identified here. The traditional Indian concept of liberty is articulated in terms of liberation of the soul from its bondage to worldly ties and its merger with the Great Soul. It is the quest of liberation that is considered to constitute a firm foundation for fellow-feeling and sociality. It is asserted that it is only through the love of God that

one can love the creatures of God. The focus of liberty in the Indian tradition of thought is man engaged in the pursuit of the eternal rather than man as the player of different roles in the phenomenal world.

In contrast to the Indian concept of liberty, the Greek concept focuses on man as a citizen. For the Greeks, liberty was more than a right; it was a duty. The citizen owed everything to the city and placed such a value on his freedom to participate in its government that he could not even conceive of individual freedom in any other sense. Thus freedom was just another name for civic obligation. With Christianity, however, appeared the notion that all human beings have equal rights because all have equal moral responsibilities. Hence it is the duty of every man to recognize that others too enjoy equal rights. Christianity juxtaposed *homo religiosus* or *homo credens* against the Greek idea of man as citizen and in stressing, as it did, the moral equality of men, it promoted the idea of equality before law. In contradistinction to all the three different versions of liberty delineated above, the modern notion of liberty, inspired by the Germanic idea of liberty, does include the idea of obligation and underlines preference for independence against all other goods. Nevertheless, the notion of liberty is not liberty for good, but liberty for itself; it does not lead to a moral end but is an end unto itself. It has value because it gives the man of pride a sense of his own worth. It does entail obligation but only in regard to oneself.

Obligation in regard to oneself, when conjoined to the centrality of the pursuit of self-interest or, to put it differently, self-love, introduces two fateful separations in the human world. The first separation that occurs pertains to the isolation of one man from the other and the second relates to the isolation of man from the citizen. It is interesting to note that there was a time when the free play of self-interest was viewed as providing a corrective to human passion in contrast with the earlier times when it was considered to be something condemnable. Note for example that Montesquieu considered the pursuit of self-interest to produce certain moral virtues. The virtues, he asserted, have their root in the commercial spirit which flows out of the coupling of individualism with self-interest or, self-love, and brings with it frugality, moderation, order and tranquillity.[1] Montesquieu maintained that "it is fortunate that men—in a situation in which, when their passions inspire in them the thought of being wicked, it is in their own interest not to be".[2] Also important to note in this connection, is the currency in the eighteenth century of the theory that unfettered pursuit of self-interest lays the foundation for natural harmony of interest. Mandeville's famous dictum of private vice leading to public benefit is a case in point.

Soon, however, depredations of the pursuit of self-interest evoked adverse reactions. Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, was one of the critics who did not find the pursuit of self-interest naturally leading to virtues as Montesquieu had earlier claimed. The reason behind this is what Wolin (1987) calls the endlessness

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[1]See *The Spirit of Law*, Bk. III. a. 7.

[2]*The Spirit of Law*, Bk. 21, Chap. 20.

of needs as the natural consequence of the single-minded pursuit of self-interest. Needs proliferate endlessly and deepen the isolation of one from all others. This happens especially in a situation where the pursuit of self-interest eclipses moral sensitivity, as it is bound to do. As Tocqueville (1959, Book 14, p. 105) notes:

> When the appetite for material pleasures develops more rapidly than enlightenment and habits of freedom in a (democratic) people, there comes a time when men lose control of themselves at the sight of new goods there for the taking. Preoccupied with the single thought of making a fortune, they no longer see the close connection that exists between the private wealth of individuals and the prosperity of all.

The tendency to turn a blind eye to the close connection between the private wealth of individuals and the prosperity of all is consequent upon the separation of man from man. This further leads to the isolation of the citizen from man. To quote Tocqueville (1959, p. 105) again,

> Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself.

This isolation is the product of a mistaken idea that individual ties are essentially and totally distinct from political ties. Working under this mistaken idea, individuals become indifferent to their duties as citizens. It is in this sense that we can appreciate why the convergence of individualism and self-love is thrust to the foreground of human existence. Selfishness may possibly combine with a number of private virtues and domestic qualities; however, this is sure to make them honest men and poor citizens (as cited in Lamberti 1989, p. 184).

The eclipse of the citizen by the self-interested individual is one of the major factors in the deterioration of public life and the emergence of the State as a monolith that has acquired all kinds of monopolies and has developed hundreds of eyes to pry into the private affairs of the citizen. These are not the only consequences of the convergence of liberty and self-love and the isolation of man from the citizen. It also enslaves man himself. And the citizen separated from man is a citizen who has no claim to rights that legitimately belong to a citizen. As Tocqueville (1959, Vol. 2, p. 147) notes:

> There is no need to deprive such citizens of what rights they possess; they voluntarily give them up. The exercise of their political duties seems to them a waste of time, which distracts them from their business. These people believe that they are following the doctrine of self-interest, of which they have but a crude idea, and in order to attend more fully to what they call their affairs, they neglect the chief affair, which is to remain their own masters.

And when citizens lose control over themselves, that is, when auto-control undergoes severe erosion, a situation is created which comes to be characterized by the erosion of sociality. It does not mean the complete annihilation of sociality; it survives but in a greatly transformed shape. It survives only as collaboration, based on expediency, only for mutual advantage in a highly competitive environment. In the words of Tocqueville (1959, p. 147):

> Each of them (human beings), living apart, is a stranger to the fate of all the rest; his children and his private friends constitute for him the whole of mankind. As for the rest of his fellow citizens, he is close to them, but he does not see them; he touches them but he does not feel them; he exists only for himself alone; and if his kindred still remain to him, he may be said at any rate to have lost his country.

Breaking of the bond of sociality is symptomatic of the erosion of morality; when morality evaporates, a person loses auto-control. With the loss of auto-control (or autarchy), a person becomes what the *Chhandogya Upanishad* calls *kamachara* or, Plato's felicitous term: he becomes the slave of many mad masters. This is the recognition of the fact that the ruling element in the interior of man is no more the soul or *nous* which has traditionally been identified as the seat and sensorium of the divine and which, by virtue of this, was the ruler of man's interior. Since the soul has been driven out of power, the effective rule has shifted to multitudinous passions. And since man is ruled by his passions, he is frequently reduced to the level of the beast who, as Rousseau (1923) observes, must find his advantage in the misfortune of his neighbours. This may not always lead to violence; however, it helps develop a social order in which inequality, oppression and deprivation of various sorts prevail. It is this situation that Galtung (1969) identified as "structural violence".

The descent of man to the level of the beast leads Rousseau to reflect again: "What must be the state of things when all men are forced to caress and destroy one another at the same time and when they are born enemies by duty and knaves by interest" (Rousseau 1923, p. 241). The consequences of such a state of affairs are obvious: the prevalence of violence, whether structural or not, in a social order whose animating force is the fear of violence. The state comes into being as a result of this pervasive fear of violence and depends on the rule of law to minimize, if not completely eliminate, violence. But as we will see later, the rule of law usually proves ineffective in curbing and controlling the excesses of violence. It is, therefore, not surprising that all traditional ways of thinking, including philosophical thinking, underline the need to embrace *ahimsa* (nonviolence) as an active principle to guide the ship of life in the turbulent sea of passions. But, then, it must be asked: What is *ahimsa*?

Given this central question, we must ask further: can it be defined, more or less accurately, so as to help us ascertain reliably what violence is and what it is not? Or, can violence or nonviolence be ascertained with the help of certain behavioural traits so that we can trace successfully its motivating factors operating in the interior of man? And, more importantly, if we knew what distinguishes violence from other behavioural traits, will it suffice for us to control it and replace it by nonviolent disposition? That is to say, is the knowledge of what virtue is, enough for us to have virtue? Needless to say that we must make a distinction, in this regard, between knowing virtue and having virtue. The difficulties inherent in defining *ahimsa* lie in the fact that, to take just one example, it is very difficult to differentiate between acts that are manifestly violent and that are substantively nonviolent and vice versa.[3]

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[3]A professor of philosophy seeking to define the Gandhian concept of *ahimsa* was perplexed because of this.

Given the difficulty of defining *ahimsa* in a way that takes care of this knotty problem, it is quite obvious that even the concept of structural violence does not help since it does not point to those dispositions, orientations and attitudes that, when institutionalized, give rise to structural violence. This is so for the simple reason that what is visible or easily identifiable, because it forms a part of the manifest world, is the expression of what is buried deep in the psyche of the individual and is not, therefore, easily discernable. Similarly, when Aristotle defines nonviolence as refraining from silencing anybody by force, it does not help us at all. The difficulties involved with this definition are, first, that it again diverts our attention from what is un-manifest to what is manifest. The reason for this is very simple. Aristotle, just like his intellectual mentor Plato, treats the public realm as that which instils in the individual the virtue of transcending the limitations of his contingent experiences, formed by his groundedness in nature. This transcendence helps him in relating himself to a larger order.

In short, Aristotle holds that participation in public affairs transforms the individual from an *idion* (private) into a *koinon* (communitarian). He argues that men form and reveal who they are in action and speech. "…in acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal propensities" (Arendt 1959, p. 139). The disclosure of who man is occurs through speech and action; it comes to the fore when a person is with others, and neither for nor against them—that is, in sheer human togetherness which is informed by persuasion and nonviolence.[4] Speech and action are modes of *vita activa* and the polis, the political space, is the locus of *vita activa*.

> The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be (Arendt 1959, p. 177).

The important question is, however, how the phenomenon of human togetherness is created and sustained in the flux of time. This is the question which Aristotle fails to answer. Moreover, he excludes the family and the local community as incapable of creating and sustaining the phenomenon of togetherness because he considers them as real as instruments of reasoning. By excluding them from the ken of this question, Aristotle has nothing to fall back upon than the public realm which does not necessarily create human togetherness, except in the physical sense; this phenomenon constitutes the arena where it may be displayed or may not. Aristotle commits the error of identifying the family and the local community as nothing more than a domain of necessity and, therefore, a domain where instrumental reasoning prevails. This prevents him from realizing the importance these have as the primary sources of socialization in values that contribute to the reconciliation of *idion* and *koinon*, that is, the private and the public dimensions of the individual existence. The growing cleavage, between the private and the public is the prime factor behind

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[4]This theme has been extensively dealt with by Jürgen Habermas. See Habermas (1979).

the establishment of the State as the substitute of the rule of law. And, as such, the ineffectiveness of the state itself in checking violence needs to be explained.

This is a significant pointer that should lead us to the understanding that the determination of what is violence and what is not, requires us to focus on more than just what is happening externally; it requires us to take a deeper look, a look into man's interior so as to ascertain how it is formed. The essential make-up of man's interior must then be related to the external in order to gain a reliable comprehension of the phenomenon of violence. It is in this context that we can appreciate the distinction that Jainism makes between *bhava himsa* and *dravya himsa*. *Dravya himsa* or violence done to objects or beings in the external world is directly related to *bhava himsa,* which signifies and symptomatizes distortions in orientation, which one projects onto the external world. This distortion is termed by Jainism as *pramada*, that is, wrong attitude towards life. As Pande (1984, p. 35) puts it:

> *Himsa* (violence), the root evil, has two parts, viz., the presence of *pramada*, or wrong attitude and the infliction of injury to life. Egoistic passions are inherently other-disregarding and constitute *bhava himsa*. The infliction of injury positively as *aghata* or negatively as *pratibandha* (restraint), or any aspect of vital activity, physical, vocal or mental or breathing, etc. constitute *dravya himsa*.

It is under the influence of *pramada* that the individual becomes dead to the well-being of others. He is completely drained of the awareness central to the soul in its pure condition that all living creatures experience to a greater or lesser degree. As a result, he becomes immune to the desire for friendship (*eros*, love) with all creatures. *Pramada* is the consequence of forgetting who one really is, that is, the forgetting of the fact that the soul is pure intelligence and is above the fluctuations of the phenomenal world. All actions that originate in self-forgetting are injurious to others because they are self-regarding and other disregarding. They are symptomatic of the self-aggrandizing tendency of the individual and spring from *bhava himsa*. And since *bhava himsa* is the cause of moral degeneration, repeated recourse to it leads to the break down and corruption of social order as a moral association. When social order loses its status as a moral association, it becomes sick, and a sick society does not allow the individual to prevent or redeem his soul from corruption.

There is thus a definite connection between man's interior and his acts in the external world. As such, it is necessary to discuss: (a) how *pramada* is caused; (b) what happens when it becomes widespread and gets institutionalized and reinforced; and (c) how it has spread in modern times and with what consequences. The prevalence of *pramada* on a very large scale in modern times is the result of a radical change in the way we think, and the way in which we look at things. Our thought-ways and work-ways reflect, in a very large measure, what we referred to earlier as *kamachara* or man becoming the slave of many mad masters [*Republic* (Rep. 329c)]. Such a person, as the *Chhandodya Upanishad* notes, becomes *anyarat*, that is, someone who is ruled by others. Here the ruler is not something or somebody external to the person: the ruler is a part of his own being and dwells

within him. In any case, by becoming an *anyarat*, he has lost his status as a *swarat* (self-sovereign or in Socrates's words *autarch*). It is this tendency of man to surrender his status as *swarat* that induces *pramada* or nescience, so much so that he forgets his own true nature and his place and status in the world. As a consequence, he works under a false notion of himself and his relationship with the world. It is this *pramada* or nescience that all traditional thought-ways identify as the root cause of evil, out of which arises the motivation of acquiring more and more worldly goods. This is what breeds the tendency of what Aristotle calls *pleonexia* (self-aggrandizement) and what the Indian traditions of thought call *matsyanyaya* (the law of the shark). As a consequence, violence, both at the individual and collective levels, becomes deep-rooted and pervasive. To extricate man from his continuous sinking into the barbaric slime of cupidity is the avowed goal of all traditional thought.

Extrication of man from the web of worldly allurements has traditionally been considered to be the highest spiritual goal that each one of us must pursue. To aim at this goal implies embracing a two-tier view of man's life purposes. Every traditional world view posits this two-tier view: One, the higher life purpose, that is, the quest of self-knowledge or good citizenship or something culturally and spiritually elevating and, the other, the fulfilment of ordinary life needs like the acquisition of wealth, power and prestige Traditional ways of thinking, in most parts of the world, treated both these purposes as equally necessary. However, they were also alive to the danger of falling into the single-minded pursuit of ordinary life needs and warned man of this danger. As a consequence of this, they treated the fulfilment of ordinary life needs as only infra-structural and as subordinate to and to be governed by the value of higher life purpose. As a matter of fact, they considered life without a higher life purpose to be a desert and equivalent to the life of a beast that knows only to go on appeasing his appetites.

But all this was to change in the seventeenth century when there occurred a radical shift in world view. The consequence of this change was the banishment of God from his own creation; the world was thus "de-divinized". It was this de-divinization that Weber (1960) identified as the beginning of the age of disenchantment, the evaporation of the mystery surrounding the cosmos. This disenchantment left man alone in this world, without any viable means of knowing it or solving the problems of his existence. His existence now came to be constituted by his desires and his capacity to reason, which he now used to satisfy his desires. The satisfaction of desires constituted for him his felicity now. As Hobbes (1956) observed long ago, there is no *summum bonum*, no ultimate aim in man's life; there is only felicity which consists in satisfying one desire after another without ceasing.

Going beyond Hobbes, Giambattista Vico identified the satisfaction of desires as being of central importance in the self-making of man (see Bergin and Fisch 1948). The need to satisfy desires forces man to interact with nature, which he does with the help of technology. As a result of this interaction, needs multiply; this makes further advances on the technological front necessary; these advancements lead to further proliferation of needs, which in turn leads to further

technological advances, and so on ad infinitum. This establishes a dynamic relationship between need fulfilment and technological advancement, initiating an open-ended process in which, as Wolin (1987) argues, needs become endless in two important senses: One, they get separated and finally divorced from a higher life purpose and become the ground in their own legitimization and, two, they proliferate endlessly. In this regard Rousseau once said that the fulfilment of biological needs is itself a great moral aspiration. There has come about in modern times, a fusion between material need fulfilment and morality, a fusion which is contrary to the hierarchical ordering that constituted the traditional world view (on this point, see Taylor 1981).

Desire now occupies the centre-stage of man's life and is the only dynamic element in the world; the individual as the centre of energy and enterprise serves collective well-being by securing his own happiness. Individuals are to be considered self-complete and separate from each other. They act in their own interest since they cannot do otherwise; they do not and cannot have knowledge of the consequences, whether good or bad, that their actions are likely to have for others. It is natural and rational for the individual to pursue his own interest, unconcerned with what happens to others; it is natural because his desires have been endowed to him by nature; it is rational not only because the satisfaction of desires will ensure his happiness but also because if he does not look after his own interests, nobody else will. Implicit in this perspective is the view that there exists a natural harmony, or at least the possibility of evolution of such harmony, in myriad diverse interests. Even if something defers this harmony from emerging, the Invisible Hand that squares up tensions and introduces compatibility between interests being pursued by a large number of people, is always present. However, experience shows that this Invisible Hand frequently gets enfeebled, falters and fails.

The radical change in world view, the change that underlies and gives a definite shape to human existence today, has made the quest for felicity the main objective in man's life. The centrality of this quest is a clear indication of the fact that there is no longer anything more valuable than the life of passion. When a life of passion becomes the sole objective, certain malign consequences, both for the individual and the collectivity he forms a part of, follow naturally and unavoidably. A life given simply to the fulfilment of ordinary life needs, involved in production and reproduction, can have only pleasure as its end. Such a life is irrational because it does not respond to, or even accept the claim of certain rationally determined ends. Rationality here does not mean "calculative reasoning" but *prajnana* or *sophia*. According to this view, when pleasure in the material sense becomes the end of life, it induces a pattern of life that, to use Cooper's term, is open-ended. It means that:

> …it bids us maximize in our lives as a whole the amount of certain good, but without specifying at all what this maximum may be. It leaves it entirely to us, in principle at any rate, to alter our mode of life in adjustment of changing circumstances and altered capacities for enjoyment as our lives themselves develop. There are no fixed principles of living, though, of course, there may be a variety of summary rules recording our own or others'

experience of the common situation of life and the pleasure or pain that usually issues from various courses of action takes in them. Such rules are only rules of thumb, however, and not fixed principles… (Cooper 1975, p. 83).

Significant in this perspective is the fact that in the absence of fixed principles deviation from past ways of thinking and doing things becomes easier. Also, striking out on one's own, if it proves to yield greater pleasure, it becomes a natural mode of action. It is therefore not surprising that modernization has been defined by Unger as the constant breaking of habitual modes of thinking and acting. Once traditional constraints on action, particularly action aimed at gaining pleasure, are lifted, man reverts to his natural condition; and natural man is spiritually blind. The centrality of the need to satisfy desires as a means not only of securing felicity, but also of personality development and civilizational progress, presupposes a particular account of human nature "in which actions are the expression of, or are caused by, desires, and according to which, chains of practical reasoning always terminate in some "'I want' or 'It pleases me'" (McIntyre 1988, p. 21). What is also distinctive about this perspective is that the translation of this expression into reality, into the salubrious management of man's pragmatic affairs is not possible unless, as Hobbes (1956, p. 76) underscores, one has power not only to retain what one has but also to gain what one wants, even if it becomes incompatible with similar attempts by others. Thus, one must create, acquire or mobilize power resources for satisfying one's desires. And power, in this perspective, signifies nothing more than bending others to one's own will in order to realize one's self-defined purposes (Weber 1960).[5]

The play of power is enacted in a social environment in which human ends are multitudinous and limitless, but it is characterized, at the same time, by the scarcity of means to satisfy these ends (Unger 1975, p. 65). This situation reduces humans to a highly competitive and potentially violent race. Central to this state of affairs is the strategic importance of the exercise of individual freedom, both for determining one's purposes and for realizing them. But the realization of self-defined purposes requires the conversion of freedom into power. And since everyone is engaged in the same enterprise, social life and relations become intensely competitive; individuals and diverse socio-economic interests vie with each other for articulation, ascendance, and control. To win in a situation of scarcity, it becomes important to ensure privileged access and control over strategic societal resources by the use of superior power. No wonder efficacy in performing the entrepreneurial tasks of transforming society and nature, in provisioning and in laying a firm foundation for the good life of modern conception, are the basic factors that form and sustain the modern identity of man (Taylor 1981).

Efficacy, in this perspective, means ensuring privileged access to, and control over, scarce societal resources in relation to others or, as Mahatma Gandhi (1969, pp. 8–9)

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[5]"Power (*macht*) is a probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber 1960, p. 162).

notes, establishing maximum inequality in one's own favour. Taking note of the unrestrained tendency of man in modern times to acquire more and more worldly goods, Dewey (1962, p. 116) characterized modern man not in the Cartesian sense of *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) but in terms of "I own, therefore I am". That is to say, his character is no longer shaped by the idea of who he substantively is, but by what he possesses in terms of worldly goods. It is in this sense that man, as Wood (1972, p. 100) observes, has become an externalized creature, nothing more than a bundle of interests which cannot be realized without always looking outward and interacting with the external world. The transformation of man into an externalized creature has certain ramifications both for himself and the collectivity he is a part of. As an externalized creature a person comes to live what Aristotle calls an *apaulistic* life, a life given to hedonistic indulgence, given solely to the pursuit of pleasure. Living an *apaulistic* life, man becomes like a vessel full of holes. No matter how much and how long one fills such a vessel with water, it remains empty. No matter how many desires man satisfies, satisfaction always eludes him. Such a person is like a loathsome bird that, as Plato remarks, excretes as rapidly as it eats, and is constantly doing both.

A person bewitched by the pleasure gained through the senses, is accustomed only to hate and fear, and shun[s] that which is hidden from his eyes [and has] to be grasped only by the intelligence and by philosophy…." (in Bluck 1955, p. 80). One of the entities hidden in his interior is the soul, which happens to be the seat and sensorium of divine. It is by virtue of this that the soul is considered to be the ruler of man's interior, providing him proper guidance to chart out a safe course in the seething and turbulent sea of life. But when the soul's rule ends, passions become rebellious and take over the function of ruling. Submission to appetites signifies, as Nussbaum (1986, p. 137) puts it, changeability of the soul:

> A soul kept in such a way is at the mercy of any ruler. Such a soul can quickly change its course in obedience to new mastering desires. And because its desire leads it, so frequently, to attend to vulnerable things it can too rapidly be stripped of what it really values.

When the soul is deprived of what it really values, it loses what Theodore Lowi calls auto-control. With the loss of auto-control, it becomes extremely difficult to make a distinction between what is right and what is wrong. It reinforces what Rousseau calls self-love, and in the rising tide of self-love moral sensibility is drowned. This is so for the simple reason that satisfying desires is, as already pointed out, both natural and rational; scarcity accentuates competition for privileged access to and control over societal resources; this, in turn, lifts all restraints on acquisitive tendency and promotes the attitude of "beggar thy neighbor".[6] Reason is supposed to exercise effective check on the depredations of rebellious desires. However, rationality in modern times signifies only calculative, prudential and instrumental reasoning. When the soul is under the rule of passions, reason becomes cramped and deformed; it then ceases its search for the true and the

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[6]For a useful discussion, see Hirsch (1977, ch. 1).

good; it is, as Plato points out, wholly consumed in *Logezimenos*, that is calculation (*Republic* 366a, pp. 6–7), or what economists call cost-and-benefit analysis. And since rationalism does not recognize any authority beyond itself and does not allow the divine to influence its working, it leads to what Dobbs (1987) calls "rational commensuration." It is not surprising, therefore, that reason which was supposed to control the excesses of the pursuit of self-interest, has been reduced in modern times to the lowly status of the hand-maiden of desires.

The evisceration of moral sense is thus the direct consequence of cupidity. This is symptomatic, as Aristotle underlines, of the zeal for life, but not for good life (*Nichomachean* Ethics, 1257b 41, see Cooper 1975); "good life" is to be understood in the traditional sense, that is, a life ruled and disciplined by morality. The zeal for life is marked, as Hobbes (1956, p. 64) observed, by a perpetual and restless desire of power after power. This restless desire transforms a people into a multitude of separate men who cannot be said to form a community, but only an open field of power drives, in competition with each other. The original drive of power, Hobbes further observes, is aggravated by diffidence of the competitor and by the lust of glory in successfully outstripping the other man (p. 81). In the race of life we must strive to have no other goal, no other garland, but being foremost. In this race "continually to be outgone is misery, continually to outgo felicity. And to forsake the course is to die" (Hobbes 1978, p. 491).

Since Hobbes does not recognize, as do most of political thinkers subsequently, the sources of order to lie in the soul as the reigning principle, inspiration can be exercised only by passion that is even stronger than the pride to be a paraclete and that is the fear of death. Death is the greatest evil (s*ummun malum*), and if life cannot be ordered through orientation towards a s*ummum bonum*, order will have to be motivated by the fear of s*ummum mallum* (Hobbes 1956, p. 113). Out of mutual fear is born the willingness to submit to government by contract; when the contracting parties agree to have a government, they "confer their power and strength upon one man, or assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, the plurality of voices, unto one will" (p. 112). This reduction of the plurality of voices into one will, however, fails to sustain order even though it can create one. The creation of public order on the basis of the collectivization of individual wills is undertaken to check the depredations of desires and to protect the weak from the ambition of the strong. An artificially created public order does not and cannot concern itself with legislating or regulating desires; it must only take them as given. As such, it can only hope to take care of the adverse consequences of actions by individuals and groups (see Spragen Jr. 1981).

However, in this the State, as we shall see presently, fails miserably. As Freud puts it, man in modern times is like the modern State which is continuously confronted with the mob out on the street, destroying public property to get its demands met. The rebellion of the id which Freud talks about is a forceful pointer to the elimination of the s*ummum bonum* as the highest principle regulating and directing life activity. With this also disappears the source of order, both from individual and social lives, for order in the community rests on *homonoia*, that is, on the participation in the common *nous* or *xynon* (shareable commonality),

as Heraclitus calls it. And since the community of men formed by the creation of public order is reduced to a multitude, badly divided by cupidity, *homonoia* is disrupted. A society marked by multitudinous ends that are divorced from shareable commonality lack the conscious effort to nurture the sense of community comes to be marked by relations of hostility and collaboration. However, hostility and mutual dependence are based on the nature of human ends and on the scarcity of means to satisfy them (Unger 1975, p. 65). Concerned with the promotion of interests in a situation of hostility and collaboration, men enter into alliances which prove tentative, precarious and fragile (Ronen 1979).

We must underline the fact that modern age is the age of self-determination; it has witnessed the rise of self-defining subjects. Self-determination without the freedom to determine purpose and adopt ways and means to realize it is vacuous. The exercise of freedom signifies disengagement from the external world, with a wish to control it and bending it to one's own will, for serving one's own end. To exercise freedom is not only to de-socialize experience but also to discard old roots, tradition and all that the past signifies, and to look to the future for perfection. The self imagined in modern consciousness is not an accomplished fact, but only an alluring, shimmering possibility which can be actualized only by removing, wilfully and resolutely, all obstacles and hurdles erected by society, its conventions and contrivances. As Marx observes:

> All fixed, fast, frozen relations with their ancient and vulnerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new forms become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with his sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind (Marx 1977, p. 38).

The sober senses that Marx talks of are usually guided by self-love. Predominance of self-love propels men to exercise freedom by removing obstacles to untrammelled action and resisting external pleasure, oppressive and "inauthentic" aspirations imposed by society (Taylor 1979, p. 157; Unger 1986, esp. Intro.). The self that sees freedom in setting aside all external obstacles and impediments is characterless, however much it may be couched in glowing terms like "rationality" and "creativity". Such a self, treats the world as mirror of itself; the world is seen to exist to fulfil the self. Meanings in the world become psychomorphic, the sense of meaningful and impersonal life disappears. As Sennet (1977, pp. 176–177) points out:

> There are no human objects or human relations with a reality all their own. The peculiarity and the destructiveness of this narcissistic vision is that the more the environment of the human being is judged in terms of its congruence with or subservience to self-needs, the less fulfilling it becomes. For the very reason that expectations of fulfillment are at once so vast and amorphous, the possibilities of fulfillment are diminished. Because there are no boundaries between self and other, experiences lose their form. They never seem to have an end or definition of completion.

The self that Sennet and others describe is, in effect, protean—always in the making, always making demands on the external world and becoming aggressive when frustrated or hampered in getting what it wants. Out of frustration or because

of stiff resistance the "I" of modern times, makes alliances with others and is thus transformed into "we". But every "we" that is formed has its own counterpart in a "they". The division of the multitude that modern society is, in "we" and "they", transforms politics into a process of reciprocal resistance, politicizes traditional socio-cultural referents of identity formation, and initiates a process of war of one against all. Violence is born precisely out of this state of affairs. Thus, there is a direct relationship between the "rebellion of id" and violence. Freud talks of the need of a "superior element" to pacify and curb the unruly "mob of desires". But the superior element that tradition identified as the soul is in banishment. As a result, only the State, ushering in the rule of law to maintain order can be relied upon. However, as we have already suggested, both prove to be ineffective.

The State in modern times is considered to be a providential check on human cupidity, as well as a means of protecting the weak from the strong. But like the Olympian gods, the State is supposed to be above the flux of social life and relations; however, it displays passions just as the Olympian gods did and gets involved in human affairs. As such, it proves a weapon in the hands of the strong to keep the weak out of the heaven of the good life that the modern times are trying to establish on this earth. The State is defined by Max Weber as the authority that enjoys monopoly over the means of violence. However, this monopoly has been seriously challenged by the three types of weapons identified by Raymond Aron—the sub-machine gun, the tank and the atom bomb. These weapons are supposed to be the means of bringing about change in a situation where the *status quo* has grown oppressive. Aron (1968) further observes that an order of some kind continues to emerge as a result of the dialectic interplay between these three weapons. This, in turn, has brought about changes. According to this view, the sub-machine gun represents guerrilla warfare, the tank the struggle for power between two or more States, and the atom bomb stands as the surrogate of catastrophe, the ultimate weapon to impose a particular image of reality on the recalcitrant and apparently impermeable *status quo,* representing a malign configuration of adverse socio-political forces.

If Aron is correct in his analysis, it is quite evident that there exists a paradoxical situation which defies all efforts at rectification. The very emergence of different kinds of weapons as harbingers of liberation from oppressive *status quo* is indicative of the growing feebleness of the mighty state as the protector and promoter of human welfare, or as the providential check on man's cupidity. The State as the centralized political authority endowed with immense power is now confronted with growing difficulties in safeguarding its authority. The sub-machine gun has effectively challenged and thrown into doubt the State's legitimacy. And this has happened at a time when the State has gradually acquired monopoly over more and more spheres of political life. As a result, too much power has come to be concentrated in only a few selected institutions and is available for use only by a few persons.

Existing along with the growing debility of the state system is the feebleness of the rule of laws. Paradoxically, while attempts are made to improve the machinery of the rule of law to make it more efficacious, it develops new points of strain.

Needless to say that the rule of law represents a serious institutionalized effort and is based on a trans-individual perspective that is universal, so as to rid the political system of arbitrary rule. However, law itself represents in modern times an outcome of the will; and the will can be changed frequently. As such, law-making becomes subservient to power game. Furthermore, law is ineffective if it does not evoke respect for itself in the minds of the people. But since the pursuit of interests makes people blind to finer things, rationality induces only rational commensuration, or calculation of costs and benefits that come out of disobeying the law. That is why it is said that man is corrupt not because he is irrational, but because he is rational.

The growing feebleness of the rule of law is indicative of its inability to give satisfaction to various socio-economic interests. Accumulated resentment breeds violence, especially when the normal procedures of resolving differences and conflicts prove ineffective and therefore futile. And as this consciousness takes firm roots, disrespect for law aggravates. It is in this situation that cupidity can be controlled by morality but, as Aristotle points out, "it is not possible to be a morally good person, in the strict sense, without practical intelligence, nor practically intelligent without moral virtue" (NE 1144b, 31–32, see Cooper 1975). How to break this vicious circle is the problem all of us must concern ourselves with.

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Chapter 3
Free Speech, Violence and the State

Alok Rai

Our discourse consists of two basic elements: assertions of *fact* and assertions/ assumptions of *value*. Often, indeed, the two tend to get confused in actual practice. Thus, facts are presented (and contested and rejected) with the emotional investment that one necessarily associates with value. Value, by definition, is not *intrinsic* in the same sense as *facticity*—i.e. value implies a valuer, an agent who *invests* something with value. However, while facts are often sought to be presented with the emotional investment of values, value-assertions and assumptions are sought to be passed off with the *objective* authority of fact, thus seeking to exonerate (or camouflage) the necessary agent who must *make* the investment with value.

It seems obvious to me that it makes little sense to argue about facts. This side of the more arcane reaches of theoretical physics, disagreements about facts can generally be resolved by referring to the gross world in which facts have their being. Thus, consider the following assertions:

1. Until its demolition in 1992, a structure known as the Babri Masjid stood at the site where something called a "makeshift temple" now stands;
2. There was a temple that once stood at the site where the Babri Masjid stood till 1992;
3. The said temple was demolished in order to construct the Babri Masjid;
4. People have believed for centuries that the Babri Masjid was erected at the precise site where a temple commemorating the birthplace of Bhagwan Shri Ram had stood;

A. Rai (✉)
Department of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India
e-mail: alokrai@gmail.com

5. There should be a temple commemorating the birthplace of Bhagwan Shri Ram at the precise site where until its demolition in 1992, a structure known as the Babri Masjid stood.

1, 2, 3 and 4 are factual assertions, and are therefore amenable to proof *and disproof* by (and only by) recourse to evidence. Thus, 1 is true, 2 is possible, 3 is almost certainly untrue, until someone provides evidence to the contrary. Proposition 4 needs a little attention. Thus, it involves an assertion about "belief"—in fact, about a belief that has been held "for centuries". This is a factual assertion, and must rest on proof. Thus, I can confidently state that it is *currently believed* by a number of people that the Babri Masjid was erected at the site of a demolished temple—indeed that the temple was demolished precisely in order to facilitate the building of the Babri Masjid—cf. Proposition 3. Of course the fact that it is so believed does not make the belief "true". That further assertion must rest on further proof, further evidence.

Proposition 5 is qualitatively different—it is a value assertion, i.e. it can be neither true nor false. One may seek to persuade someone who is unpersuaded by 5 not by recourse to any evidence but by arguments that appeal to *other* values that the sceptic may hold dear—i.e. by persuading him, for instance, that the consequences of *not* building the said temple will be destructive of social peace, which the said sceptic may hold to be a high value. Alternatively, of course, the reluctant sceptic may just be hit on the head. A certain bedrock investment of value in one's own body is practically universal. The latter course may, however, be said to violate a fundamental value of civilized discourse, free speech, which includes the right to believe, and to *not* believe.

However, the detail of this particular matter—the truth/untruth of particular assertions, etc., is not of immediate interest to me. I wish merely to draw the obvious philosophical conclusion that it is futile to argue about facts. But what about values, i.e. **can one argue about values**? This is also inherently problematic in the sense that values are axiomatic assumptions in the light of which we *evaluate* the world, and arguments about the world. That is why, normally, values do not get *stated* in discourse. And it is only the encounter with values other than one's own that forces one to become conscious of one's own values *as values*, i.e. as contingent *investments* in the world of cold, objective facts. Other persons, other investments. Despite the anodyne suppositions of the official discourse of "values"—that all "good" people are agreed about what "good" values are—it is precisely the possibility, and reality, of *dissonance* that makes the question of values intellectually interesting and politically problematic.

Even a minimal acquaintance with the cultural record, or indeed experience of the world, makes it immediately evident that conflicts between values—perhaps most interestingly, within individuals, but of course between different people too—are endemic. Value conflicts—affiliation to different, and sometimes even conflicting values—are indeed the norm. And it is at this point that the discourse of values intersects with the discourse of free speech. Because the only way in which such conflicts can be negotiated is by arguments, by giving reasons, by

appealing to other *values*, possibly more fundamental values—which implies the possibility of a *hierarchy* of values—or at least to values that both the disagreeing parties share a loyalty to.

It is in this sense that free speech is not just one value among many—the NCERT, that precious institution, drew up a list of hundred in the dark age of Murli Manohar Joshi and J.S.Rajput! It is the fundamental value. I asserted above—a value assertion, not a factual one—that the only civilized way of addressing value conflicts is by the unfettered exercise of free speech. Any cultural configuration of values that does not give a foundational status to free speech would scarcely be recognizable as a culture.

In the real world, however, the kind of "ideal speech situation" that I have described above is subject to various constraints. One of these constraints is in fact the State. In the first, liberal, instance—before the complications set in—the State appears less as a constraint than as a *guarantor* of free speech. It is indeed the ineluctable constitutional duty of the liberal democratic state to enable the exercise of free speech. A state that fails to do so—Modi's Gujarat is an obvious example—is metastasizing into something else.

In practice, however, the foundational right of free speech may, and often does, come into conflict with other comparably foundational rights, and in that situation any particular State is forced to set up some regime of censorship in which the right of free speech may be subjected to certain limitations. The obvious examples here are those of pornography and hate speech. But I do not wish to get into the details of those arguments here—nor even into some spectacular hybridizations of the two, hate-speech-as-pornography, which we have witnessed in recent years. I wish to state only that even in the *limit* cases of disgusting exercises of free speech, there have to be *arguments* against them: i.e. the right of free speech may be trumped, but only by other, comparable rights, including the right to live without violence and the threat of violence.

The question of violence is as central to an understanding of the State as free speech. It is thought to be one of the *defining* features of a State that seeks to maintain a *monopoly of* violence. Of course, this monopoly is variously described—whether by liberal theorists or by, say, anarchist critics. Further, this monopoly of violence is cloaked with the legitimacy of the law, including of course the law of censorship, which is also a kind of violent curtailment of the right of free speech.

Having said this, I am now in a position to identify the phenomenon that I wish to examine. This is, quite simply, the phenomenon of what might be called censorship from below, the development of street violence and, more generally, the threat of street violence, as a means of curtailing the exercise of the right of free speech, both directly and sometimes through the manifest complicity of the State.

There is no cause to get hot and sectarian at this point. One can always pretend that one is talking about the Taliban, who are consolingly distant. [Actually, between the time of the writing of the paper and its publication, the Taliban have come altogether closer—both in the Pakistani and Indian incarnations. I refer to the guardians of our public morality, such worthies as Raj Thackeray and Pramod

Muthalik.] Alternatively, one can balance the mobs that appeared to protest against Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* against those that, protesting against Laine's book on Shivaji—praised be his name!—ransacked the Bhandarkar Institute, or, discovering a sudden, late interest in painting, damaged Husain's Saraswati—praised be her name, too. I am not interested in making a party political point here—still less in pouring scorn on the pathetic, benighted men who do the actual deeds. But what is the significance—larger or long term—of this phenomenon of censorship through street violence that cuts across parties and communities?

The first aspect under which I wish to consider this is from the perspective of the State. Prima facie, there is something peculiar about the State consenting to dilute its monopoly of violence by sharing it with sundry street others. This happens, of course, in the terminal stages of failing States, when the gangs appear and the looting begins: but normally, it is the State that sends inspectors and collects taxes. But are we, here, confronted with that phenomenon, when we observe the Indian State failing to apprehend the criminals who openly and avowedly, commit the most public of crimes: Delhi 1984, Bombay 1993, Gujarat 2002, take your pick. [Once again, the Pakistani State (?) making "deals" with the Swati Taliban is an example from across the border.]

One possibility, it appears to me, is that the State might be using street violence as a form of surreptitious censorship, as a way of inhibiting certain forms of expression and behaviour that it is unwilling to prohibit on its own; of allowing people to do things that it is unwilling to do on its own. This is worrying enough, but it points towards a possibly deeper problem; i.e. what is it that prevents a State from doing itself what it is willing to condone the doing of by mobs? What is it that prevents, and permits, a State to abdicate its constitutional duty? If the reluctance to act—whether against those who are alleged by the mob to have caused offence, or against the mob itself—is a pretence, why is the State pretending?

It might be instructive at this point to remember Gandhi, who used the deliberate breaking of the law as a form of moral education, as a way of opening up, with public-pedagogical intent, the gap between law and morality. After all, satyagraha was a brilliant technique for working away at this gap, thus steadily eroding the moral basis of colonial law. What we confront in various ways, and particularly in the matter of censorship through street violence, is similar—and indeed, a pedagogical intent has been explicitly avowed both officially and unofficially: the exercise of violence by the Hindutva mobs of Gujarat was explicitly intended to "teach a lesson". One may ask what the lesson is? And who are its supposed beneficiaries, direct and indirect? What is the larger purpose? The answers are evident in the case of Gandhi. But what about these lumpen teachers?

It might be suggested at this point that the willingness of the State to bend and buckle under street pressure is a measure of its democratic sensitivity, its respect for the will of the people. Let it be said quickly that, in respect of the kinds of actions that I am talking about, the will of the people has never been ascertained and further, even the bowing to hypothetical majority pressure can only be done within constitutional limits. But the deeper crisis to which I am alluding concerns

the moral legitimacy of the State itself. Could it be that the present order—symbolized by the State—has come to lose its moral legitimacy, *even in its own eyes*? If the State is perceived to be lacking in democratic legitimacy—such doubts assail the leaders of coups, for instance—then it might find in the mob, in the crowds of aroused lumpens, a simulacrum of the legitimacy that it lacks. In that bankrupt moral condition, even the more horrible things appear worth doing *because* a mob wants them done. In a polity like India's, there is always a majority of people who are, in general, disaffected. Since this hypothetical disaffected majority is potentially part of any mob, any mob is, by easy extension, a substitute for a majority.

In such a situation, it would appear that the tolerance of the State for the mob's challenge to its authority—i.e. its monopoly of violence—is, paradoxically, a way of reinforcing, of shoring up *its* legitimacy.

The other aspect under which I seek to examine the phenomenon of street censorship is that of the apparent unconcern of the intelligentsia, the more or less educated middle classes. Barring the occasional splutter—a few signature campaigns, the usual left-wing suspects—the great urban middle class of India appear to have made its peace with the outrages I have mentioned above. It is back to the business of consumption, dreaming the dream of globalization. Can it be that they do not know that the extra-legal exercise of violence is one of the surest signs of fascism, of a State that is seeking to bridge the gap between its authority and its eroded legitimacy by condoning and sometimes even encouraging street violence?

Another and more cynical interpretation of the silence of the urban middle class is that it stems not from historical ignorance, but rather from a calculation in which the curtailed freedoms of others—including, be it said, the right to life and livelihoods—are deemed to be a price worth paying. [The transaction is morally identical to the one in which a former U.S. Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, was quoted as being willing to "pay the price" of the deaths of a half a million Iraqi children—in order to bring democracy to Iraq by force of arms!]

Another and even darker reading suggests that the violence is *itself* the pay-off—it is justified not because it *leads* to other things—though it does that also, witness the looters who came not only on foot but also on cars and scooters. It is self-justifying not only for the pathological and desperate elements, but also for those impatient others who seek assurance that the State is not too "soft" to deliver on the promises of globalization. For these latter, the same middle classes, the violence—condoned, coordinated, connived in—is the earnest and guarantee of a deadly intent, a fatal determination that *cannot* be openly avowed.

There are two concepts whose salience in public discourse needs to be explored in the context of the street censorship of free speech, namely, "spontaneity" and "provocation". It appears that a certain kind of person can be easily "provoked"—by unread books, by thoughts unheard. And once he (and, *I am afraid*, she too) is "provoked", his actions, violent and therefore illegal, are automatically accorded the absolution of "spontaneity". Modi's infamous invocation of Newton's third law—action−reaction, Godhra-genocide—simultaneously absolved both the

murderers and Modi himself, the constitutional head whose sworn legal duty was to prevent the violence and apprehend the violators. But the law is disarmed by the magic of "spontaneity".

However, there is an asymmetry in this dance of provocation and spontaneous violence. Thus, it is not open to me to react with spontaneous violence to the often provocative utterances of Messrs Advani, Togadia, Thackeray, Joshi. Why? Because I am an educated "pseudo-secular" liberal? My uncouthness will appear fake, "unspontaneous". Thus, by the combined action of "spontaneity" and "provocation", we are in the process of handing over the public space to the barbarians.

The "free speech" consequences of this process of brutalization may appear a little surprising—although they have been commended, in the context of the NCERT textbooks, by the Hon'ble Minister himself. Quite simply, he offered the "solution" that the books would not deal with anything that anyone found controversial or provocative. The resultant textbook would be a timid consensus document, incapable of addressing, or of empowering students to address, the complex issues of our time. There is an educational argument here, but right now I am merely concerned with the free speech implications of the assumption that nothing controversial may be said, for fear that someone somewhere might be *provoked* to *spontaneous* violence. A culture that allows such a development has already lost its connection with the fundamental value of free speech.

There is one last and difficult question: what about the "free speech" of those who seek explicitly and through the public exercise of violence and the thread of violence, to curtail the free speech of others. I have already mentioned the standard limit cases of pornography and hate speech. Even here, I would suggest that the curtailment of free speech must be handled with extreme caution, even as we recognize that there might be cases in which that right must be abridged—though we might not agree about *which* those cases are.

In cases where the exercise of free speech explicitly involves violence, or the threat of violence, or even an incitement to violence, it is imperative for the State, by virtue of its aforementioned and necessary monopoly, to disaggregate the violence from the free speech. And the violence—threat, incitement, whatever—must be dealt with as such, irrespective of the particular ideology with which it is associated. Any State that compromises with violence is, *ipso facto*, consenting to its abdication.

But what about free speech as such, even of kinds that I (or you) might find offensive. After all, as Orwell said, if freedom means anything at all, it means the right to say things that other people, perhaps even majorities, might disapprove of. If, however, the fundamental value of free speech might still permit of abridgment in some few cases, I suggest that this process of abridgment may be conceptualized in two ways. One, one may approach the question of abridgment via a notion of *competing* rights and *competing* values: classically, the right freely to utter "Fire!" in a crowded hall demands abridgment, the utterer's right to free speech being trumped by the implicit value of the lives that would be endangered by the exercise of that right. (If, however, there really is a fire, then the right becomes not merely defensible but is also transformed, even, into a moral imperative). But

one must be wary of global trumps, such as the "terrorism" that is used by quasi-legitimate states to abridge fundamental rights. Each abridgment of the right of free speech—each "trumping"—must be explicitly argued, its "reasons" explicitly laid out.

The other and, to me, more important way of thinking about the matter of the abridgment of right of free speech is through the conception of democracy. Thus, either an opinion is held by too *few* people to be *consequential*—this is easy—or by too *many* to be *suppressible*—as is the case, I believe, with the ideology of Hindutva. It must be engaged with—and encouraged itself to engage with others—at the level of argument. But where its adherents resort to violence, it is reasonable to suppose that there are no further arguments—i.e. no free speech issues—and the violence is purely and simply violence. No State can compromise with that and still call itself a State. Thinking through democracy, then, there is a narrow zone wherein abridgment of the right of free speech just *might* work, and might even be justified. But outside that narrow zone, it is either, on the one side, *unnecessary* because the confidently liberal state can tolerate eccentric marginals because they have no effectivity; or, on the other side, *useless*, because power has already slipped into the hands of the brutally intolerant psychopaths, and the once-liberal democratic state is about to become fascist by falling into the hands of the psychopaths—or marginal and irrelevant. The brutal history of post-colonial South Asia offers examples of this entire range of unattractive possibilities.

Chapter 4
The Climate of Violence and the Concern for Communal Harmony

Yogesh Atal

While celebrating the end of the twentieth century the world heaved a sigh of relief that the much-dreaded Third World War did not happen. The collapse of communism, and thus the end of the era of the Cold War, was certainly a cause for celebration. It was regarded as a major achievement of the United Nations. While the League of Nations failed to arrest the factors that led to the Second World War, the United Nations seemed to have succeeded in averting the crisis of a possible Third World War that loomed large on the globe. The UN was created to reconstruct the world that had been devastated by the ravages of war, and to assist the Third World countries in their quest for freedom and development. It was seen as an instrument, as the preamble to the Constitution of one of its agencies—UNESCO—states, "to construct the defences of Peace in the minds of Men". Surely, it goes to the credit of the United Nations that the Third World War has so far been prevented. But the non-recurrence of war at the global level is not an index of the absence of violence. Estimates suggest that more than 100 local wars and confrontations have taken place in the last five or six decades that have claimed some 20 million lives, made several million people homeless, and thousands others as refugees living in strange environments. After the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the new nation states in that region have witnessed not only economic

Y. Atal (✉)
MP Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain, India
e-mail: yogatal@gmail.com

calamities but also bloody confrontations along communal and ethnic lines. And as we discuss here the phenomenon of violence we are anxiously watching the Iraq-America war that has global implications, and has involved many countries on both the sides of the dispute. The United States has alleged that the Security Council of the UN has failed to fulfil its responsibilities and that is why she has taken upon herself the duty to free the world from the weapons of mass destruction that are stored in Iraq. While the justification offered sounds like a plea for eradicating the prospects of violence, the path chosen to do so remains violent. Violence continues to prevail and spread; it is peace that is at stake.

Various countries of the world spend about $950 billion per annum, which constitutes 6 % of the global income, on strengthening their defences. During the Second World War, defence expenditure was only 1 % of the global income. Even in 1981 the expenditure on defence was 25 times larger than the amount given as development assistance to the countries of the Third World. Data show that a modern tank costs enough to build storage facilities for 100,000 tonnes of rice or for the construction of 1000 classrooms for 30,000 children. The cost of one jet fighter equals the cost of 40,000 village clinics that would treat ordinary diseases that take toll of countless lives.[1]

Absence of war does not mean presence of peace. Mini wars and internal conflicts that threaten the solidarity of the people are much more dangerous. September 11 or December 13,[2] the war in Iraq, the fear of Al Qaeda, or the butchery of Kashmiri Pandits in a small village[3] are grim reminders of the growth of terrorism and a culture of violence that characterize the beginning years of the third millennium. The report of the UN Secretary-General for An Agenda for Development has this to say:

> The absence of peace is a pervasive reality in many parts of the world. Most people must strive to achieve their development against a background of past, present, or threatened conflict… Societies whose economic effort is given in substantial parts to military production inevitably diminish the prospects of their people for development… Preparation of war absorbs inordinate resources and impedes the development of social institutions.

What we are witnessing today is a worldwide concern over events that disturb peace. Growing incidence of violence is one indicator that perturbs all. It appears that as we proceed on a path to modernization and development we also gain higher points on the index of violence. Violence is noticeable at all levels: in bilateral relations between nations, in ethnic and communal conflicts within nations, in inter-group relations within communities, and in interpersonal relationships both at the domestic front and in the larger arena of interactions. It is a phenomenon

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[1]These are calculated by Western standards. With the same amount of money, many developing countries can achieve much more.

[2]September 11, 2001 is known for the terrorist (attach) attack on the World Trade Centre towers in New York; December 13, 2001 saw a similar attack on the Indian Parliament but was foiled.

[3]It happened on 24 March, 2003.

that occurs in all kinds of settings, urban or rural, even tribal, in modern and traditional cultures, amongst the well-educated sections and the illiterate masses, and in both rich and poor countries. The omnipresence of this phenomenon has challenged many theories of violence that were derived from various ideological premises, be they Marxist or developmentalist. A good deal has been written on violence. Several case studies of violence have been produced. And yet there is no satisfactory theory of violence in sight.

It is recognized that what is problematic is not violence. It is the diagnosis that poses a real challenge to the social scientist. Nobody disputes the occurrence of violence, but considerable disagreement is seen when its causes are identified or when its cure is suggested. There is a tendency to jump to conclusions on the basis of manifest causes or to lift analyses of previous events in different settings and apply their findings disregarding the role of socio-cultural contexts. There is also a tendency to offer solutions without properly investigating the case in question. We must admit that the social sciences do not have any readymade solutions to offer for the containment of violence or for prevention of any future occurrences. There are no known prophylactics.

There are many steps to be taken. First, we need a proper typology of violence. Then for each type of violence, empirical studies would be needed in different cultural settings to develop a comparative perspective. We will also need to evolve a methodology for the study of violence. Berk (1972, pp. 113–114) has recounted the main difficulties in the collection of data related to violence. Let me mention them:

1. Events during crowd behaviour usually occur rather quickly.
2. Many events occur at once.
3. Actions are often taking place over a relatively wide geographical area.
4. The occurrence of collective behaviour is difficult to anticipate, so that investigators interested in the phenomenon usually miss the activities.
5. Mob processes (as compared to the results of mob processes) leave few traces, and frequently the best one can do is gather retrospective accounts.
6. Crowd participants are unlikely to take time out from what they are doing to cooperate with an investigator. And even if they would, the suspicion that a researcher might be a police officer or informant would interfere with a serious interaction.
7. Crowd participants or persons who happen to be present during collective violence frequently have very salient vested interests in the interpretation of the phenomenon. Their accounts are thus especially vulnerable to conscious and unconscious distortions.
8. The high risk of personal injury persuades many researchers to study crowds from a distance.

It is no wonder that most of the studies of violence are post-facto analyses and are based on secondary sources of data such as newspaper reports or official

statements and, occasionally, on interviews with the victims or those who claim to have witnessed the occurrence. One also finds these studies replete with all kinds of suggestions that look humanitarian and grandiose but are questionable in terms of their operationalization. Objectivity is the first casualty in such analyses. We shall return to this point later.

Many analysts in social sciences have used conflict theories to explain the phenomenon of violence. For example, some scholars have found George Simmel's framework quite helpful in the analysis of violence.[4] Simmel talks about superordinate and subordinate relationships in a given social structure and suggests that interaction between the two groups proceeds through four phases namely: competition, conflict, accommodation and finally assimilation. He regards the situation of accommodation as quite unstable as it leads to violence when the subordinate group challenges the super-ordinate group. There is an implicit assumption in this formulation that once the process of assimilation takes place, the chances of conflict are virtually reduced to nil. Simmel, to be sure, was not interested in analysing a specific case of violence; he was more interested in explaining how a society achieves its integration. It is therefore incongruous, to use his framework to explain the instances of violence—particularly collective violence as exhibited in communal violence or ethnic violence—that are caused by fractures in the previously assimilated societies. Eastern Europe is witnessing this crisis in terms of renewed cries for ethnicity. Indian culture's assimilative character was greatly damaged by the colonial rule, due to the invocation of primordial loyalties. The ruptures were caused by political factors and the tensions created as a consequence have serious political implications. To understand the communal angle in Indian politics, and the role of violence in it, we need a different paradigm. The recipes and prescriptions advanced earlier have failed. There is serious need to carry out research and to synthesize findings of such research with previous analysis to pave the way for a proper understanding of the disruptive phenomenon of communal violence and to propose formulae for communal harmony.

I must confess that I am no authority on communalism, I have not carried out any empirical research on the riots, and I do not believe that the social sciences have any readymade prescriptions to offer which can cure the cancer of communalism. When social scientists speak on such issues they generally speak as concerned citizens; their social science background may help them choose relevant variables to assist the diagnosis but that alone does not qualify them to become doctors to prescribe medicines that will work. Even a medicine, to be accepted as a cure requires to be tested empirically. Pharmaceutical companies do warn of adverse consequences and specify the conditions in which a particular medicine may work reasonably. But that precaution is not taken by those who offer unsolicited remedies for social malignancies. Communalism needs a thorough diagnosis in order that adequate measures may be taken to halt its spread.

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[4]See Grimshaw's (1972, pp. 35–36) article "Interpreting Collective Violence: An Argument for the importance of Social structure" in *Collective Violence.*

Communal riots in India have a long history. Historians are of the view that "communal identity did not exist in the ancient and medieval periods of Indian history" (Thapar et al. 1969, p. 37). In fact, they attribute the introduction of the communal element to James Mill who periodized the history of British India into Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization and British civilization. Such characterization located communal conflicts in the second period, which is also called the mediaeval period, and led people to believe that the earlier period was free of tensions and conflicts—a point that is disputed by Romila Thapar. It is interesting that "communal riots", in India have become synonymous with "Hindu-Muslim riots". In becoming so, the term Hindu becomes all inclusive (in the sense that distinctions of religion like Jain, Sikh, etc., are forgotten), and conflicts and violence occurring between the Muslims (such as between Shia and Sunnis), or between the Hindus of different sects are treated at a different level. Quite naturally then, communal harmony signifies harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Before we address the issue of communal harmony, let us have a look at the pattern of such riots. The first reported riot occurred, incidentally, in Ahmedabad in 1730 on a trivial issue of colours being thrown by Holi revellers on Muslims. Between 1730 and 1924—a long period of 194 years—only 39 riots were recorded, which occurred in 28 cities in Northern India. But the communal frenzy reached its peak in 1947–1948 as a consequence of the partition of the country and mass movements of people across the borders of the two new nations. Analysing the data on communal riots, Sharma (2000) finds that between 1950 and 1992 as many as 8175 riots took place with an average of 204 riots per annum. Sharma observes "the first 20 years of Indian independence were relatively peaceful as during that period… only 630 riots took place, making an average of 38 riots per year". His analysis suggests that most of the incidences of communal violence took place in six states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Punjab and West Bengal that suffered the blunt of partition have remained comparatively peaceful. Of course, the Khalistan movement in Punjab saw horrible violence inflicted by the militants. We are also told that 90 % of such communal violence took place in the cities.

For developing an approach to communal harmony, it will be necessary to ask as to why such incidents occur only in a few states, and mostly in cities. Are other states of the Union, and the rural habitations examples of communal harmony? What are the basic differences—demographic and socio-cultural—that explain the presence or absence of communal riots? Also do we take it that the period between two riots in a given context is characterized by communal harmony? If so, why does such harmony get disturbed to occasion a communal clash? You will agree with me that it is not that easy to offer a panacea. We need a holistic, and not a clinical approach.

Nandy et al. (1995), in their book "*Creating a Nationality*", argue that there is an over concern with communal violence. They are of the view that all inter-communal conflicts are not caused by communalism. Comparing the Indian data with the casualty statistics of the United States, they reached the conclusion that "casualty figures… do not add up to the total number of homicides in a respectable

North American metropolitan city. However, in recent times these figures have sometimes risen dramatically. 1990 and 1992, for instance, were particularly bad years. The Indian figures still remain remarkably small when viewed in the context of the nearly 900 million who inhabit the country. For example, the other large, multi-ethnic, open society, the United States, though one-third of India in population, had in 1990 more than 30,000 cases of homicide (about twenty times the number of people killed in communal violence in India" (Nandy et al. 1995, p. 9).

Romila Thapar, however, regards the spurt of communal violence a consequence of the rise of "communal ideologies". To quote Thapar (1999, p. 1), "if in the middle of the century Muslim communalism succeeded in establishing an Islamic state in the form of Pakistan, the coming of power of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in India at the end of the century reflects the resurgence of Hindu communalism—for at the heart of the BJP lie the organizations which are working towards the establishing of a Hindu state in India".

This is not the occasion to elaborate on the different interpretations of history, nor am I competent to do so. But one thing is clear that the British imperialists who wanted to keep the multicultural society of India divided along communal lines to manage the polity sowed the seeds of communalism.

It was with the arrival of the colonial era that a political unity at a level higher than the regional entity could be established. Different regional regimes coming under a single colonial umbrella constituted the country. And since these entities signified different subcultures, including religious affiliations, the constitution of the emerging political unity came to be described as "plural society". The phrase had two connotations: it was plural compared to the society of the colonizer that was "single" and homogeneous; secondly, it was plural in the sense that the constituents of the colony were "not one" single homogeneous whole and that different societies were joined together to make a plural society with a common administration. The colonizers emphasized the distinctness of the constituents and fostered their separate identities to keep them divided and yet to ensure their allegiance to the crown. The policy of "divide and rule" promoted the concept of plural society to emphasize heterogeneity and separateness. Thus, the colonial rule consolidated the regional regimes into a larger political unity but tried to create fractures in the evolving unity of a complex culture by highlighting the differences and fostering them. This was a good example of Parkinson's principle of management.

The end of the colonial era brought new challenges. The former colonies had the important task of transforming the "plural societies"—that is the "divided" subgroups—into a multicultural society by breaking the insulations planted by the colonial powers and opening out apertures of interaction between the various groups to create an atmosphere of amity and congeniality. This task was named "nation building", the main plank of which was to foster national integration. The freedom movement prepared the groundwork for this. The leaders of this movement made efforts to unite the people of different regions and religious persuasions under one banner to fight out the colonial rule. The need was to ensure that the unity thus created continued in the post-colonial phase. In India, this new ethic

was given the name of "secularism"—to rise above caste and religion, and protect the interests of the minorities. The case for such an approach was strong for India. Unlike Pakistan, what remained of India was still a society composed of different religions, including Islam, the number of adherents of which was as large as the size of the then West Pakistan although it constituted only 11 % of independent India's population. This situation is very different from the situation in East Europe where USSR and other communist countries broke up into small national entities with the disappearance of the epigenetic entity. The Indian partition was a case of break-away, of reneging; East Europe presented cases of breakdown of artificial superstructures. What is common, however, in the two scenarios is the rise of internal conflicts—described as communal riots in India and ethnic conflicts in East Europe. Where for Indians Pakistan became a reference group, both for positive and negative orientations for different sets of people, such reference group orientation is absent in the case of East European countries in their new incarnations.

There is a need to distinguish different manifestations of multiculturalism. Broadly speaking, we can speak of three sets of societies: societies of the First World; societies of the new collapsed communist world (or the Second World, now usually referred to as "Countries-in-Transition"), and the societies of the so-called Third World—"so-called", because with the disappearance of the Second World, one cannot talk of the Third.

Multiculturalism in the first set of societies is caused by the arrival of people in substantial numbers from different cultures, particularly from the societies belonging to the second and the third sets. Such arrivals are not new, what is new is the fact of migration in large numbers and their ghettoization in the arriving countries that has allowed them to live their sandwich cultures.[5] The task of managing diversity in the context of these societies is to promote the values of multiculturalism in their native population, which had been socialized to live in a single culture society. Socialization of the young will now have to have a multicultural dimension so that they learn to co-live with people coming from other cultural stocks. Simultaneously, the children of the migrant families would require such socialization that they do not just remain oriented to the culture of their origin but also imbibe the elements of the culture of their adoption.

In Eastern Europe, the collapse of communism meant a breakdown of multiculturalism. The Soviet Union got split into a number of new nation states. In some other countries of this Bloc, partitions took place along ethnic lines and the post-communist phase witnessed a series of ethnic conflicts. The ideology of communism that fostered solidarity gave way to a different kind of ethnic nationalism, which fractured this unity and unleashed forces of ethnic cleansing.

In the countries of the Third World, as has been said earlier, the tradition of multiculturalism received a renewed emphasis as part of the nation building

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[5]See Atal (1989) for the Concept of "Sandwich Culture".

process. The task was to destroy the insulations created by the colonial powers between different ethnic and religious communities. That continues to be a stupendous task. In the Indian context, the partition of the country, based on the two-nation theory, left an indelible mark on the psyche, and created mistrust between the two religious communities. The Kashmir issue that continues to foster animosity between the two neighbouring countries has made them "enemies". The history of the last 50 years has been a history of conflicts and wars between India and Pakistan. And the war has taken several forms, including the media war. It has also influenced domestic polity. Despite all manifest efforts by successive governments to promote communal harmony, the country has witnessed horrible instances of communal riots. The most recent instance of such communal carnage was the riots in the state of Gujarat that killed innocent people, including women, children and the physically challenged, belonging to the two communities, namely the Hindu and the Muslim.

Events in Gujarat have once again ignited the debate on secularism. While the full story is not yet known there seems to be a general feeling that it was a consequence of rising communalism in the country. But what governs this discourse is not a cool analysis. The ghastly scene of Godhra and its aftermath in the whole of Gujarat evoke only strong emotions. No one is condoning violence, but the people on either side of the communal divide are blaming each other for it. It is not yet clear what prompted Godhra, but Godhra's ramifications could have been anticipated. Non-anticipation and alleged non-action on the part of the State government has certainly caused, again, an anticipatable political windstorm.

In highlighting the Gujarat episode the media has played an important role. For doing this, it has been both eulogized and criticized. Some have even alleged that the media is responsible for creating tension and disturbing communal harmony. What people outside of Gujarat know of the happenings in Gujarat is mostly via the media reporting.

In their enthusiasm to meet deadlines and to be ahead of their competitors, sections of the media flashed not only the instances of arson and gruesome murders, but also jumped to conclusions regarding the culprits, and the performance of the government. Given the scale of post-Godhra calamities spreading all over Gujarat, it is quite natural that Godhra has receded in the background. For the media, news soon becomes stale, and they look for fresh instances of newsworthy happenings. What one receives from the media over a period of time is a "course of events", in a chronological order, interspersed with a sprinkling of opinions and comments from the chosen few, and hasty conclusions, even premonitions. One news channel, for example, went so far as to say that Gujarat was a "laboratory" for the "Parivar people". Bias, it seems, is not a prerogative of the politicians alone.

It is difficult to comment on the Gujarat episode, as we do not know the true story. Different storytellers have told the story from their respective vantage points. If there are different versions, and if there are contradictions between them, then it becomes difficult to rely on any one of them. At best they are half stories, and several halves do not make one whole. The construction of the true story will require consolidation of all the available information and data, and objective

verification of different versions of the story. Such a *post factum* analysis will be possible only when peace returns. But again, we will be handicapped by the absence of dependable descriptions of what actually happened at different places during the period of disturbance. Reconstruction of such an episode is not an easy task.

It is difficult to be objective in our assessment of the situation. However, one thing is quite clear. It is not a simple "*x* leads to *y*" kind of case. Like any complex social situation, "*x*" is a composite of several variables and the effect "*y*" is also a congeries of several happenings. But all is covered under the easy label of "communalism" and is given a political garb. Quite naturally, political parties are not hesitating to walk over the dead bodies to reach their different destinations.

Academicians are no different. The committed ones do not hesitate in taking sides or in broadcasting their views under the shield of their specialization. This is what a noted sociologist, Dipankar Gupta, did when he announced in his piece published in *The Times of India,* that social sciences have failed and need to be replaced by, what he calls, *Social Forensics*. As part of that new science he recommended an autopsy. Since his was the only piece that I have come across from the pen of a social scientist on the Godhra-Gujarat episode I am still unable to detect the target of his attack. I need not remind him that even at the present stage of social science development the strength of social science expertise lies in *post factum* analysis, and not in predicting, with a sense of certainty, the future course of events. If autopsy is what he recommends, that is what *post factum* analysis partly does. And once the prefix "social" is used for forensics, it also gets admitted into the community of social sciences. Dipankar Gupta should know that an autopsy has limited value; it can help identify the immediate cause of death—poison, or strangulation, murder by a sharp weapon, suicide—but it does not tell "who" did it or "what motivated" the criminal to do it. Fingerprint experts trained in dermatoglyphics are then needed to compare the fingerprints collected from the crime site with the suspects; but these experts do not do the autopsy. The hypotheses generated by Dipankar Gupta go beyond mere autopsy. But hypotheses are not facts; they demand field verification. Social forensics cannot escape that requirement.

In the Gujarat context, questions about the credibility of the media are also being raised. Credibility is not the same thing as relevance, or even desirability. It should also not be confused with "being interesting". What is written may be "less interesting", even "boring", or "irrelevant" to one's interests, but by that token it does not become less credible. The credibility criterion is also not applicable to signed, "opinionated" articles. One knows what to expect when one reads Prabhash Joshi in *Jan Satta*, or Amulya Ganguli in *The Hindustan Times*. But these should not be confused with what appears in these newspapers as news. There may be disagreement with the opinions of Joshi or Ganguli but the credibility of their writings is not questioned. The credibility question in such cases arises only when plagiarism occurs.

The credibility of TV is yet another matter. The story that is presented by a TV channel depends on the footage provided by the roving TV camera. Since the camera is not omnivoyant, it records only that which is viewed by its lenses. Things

not witnessed by the camera go unrecorded and unreported. In this regard, let me quote from a comment made by Vir Sanghvi, editor of *The Hindustan Times*. In his article on "Kalam and the power of the TV" (June 23, 2002) he observes: "television is a medium that focuses more on style than substance… The manner in which Kalam is perceived tells us something about the power of TV to alter the way we regard our politicians and public figures". Referring to the portrayal of Vajpayee, Sanghvi writes: "When we see Vajpayee on TV, he still walks with the slightly awkward gait of a man who has to get used to his new knees. Stop him outside a government building, stick a camera and microphone into his face and begin shooting questions and you will get nothing out of him. He will answer in bland generalities, the replies will be brief, almost monosyllabic, and the pauses will be interminable… Somebody who only knew Vajpayee as the good natured but essentially uncommunicative fellow we see on TV would completely miss the real politician, the veteran strategist, the astute manipulator and the quietly determined man… TV can show us the man; but it can also miss the point". Sanghvi rightly alleges that "TV rarely, if ever, gets the players into the studio. Instead, it gets the punks, the non-entities and the publicity hounds who rush from channel to channel in the hope of becoming famous… But what TV does do is shape the way in which we judge people".

Those publications, which claim to be the mouthpiece of a particular ideology or party, do suffer from lack of credibility because of their explicit bias. But where the bias is implicit, doubts can be raised about the veracity of the news itself.

It would thus appear that the credibility of the media hinges on their reporting the news. The reliability of the news depends on the manner of its collection, and the selectivity in its reporting. Since most newspapers spend between 3 and 7 % on news collection, they are heavily dependent on secondary or even tertiary sources, in most cases governmental sources which, for a variety of reasons, may doctor the information or even insulate certain happenings from observation. News from out-of-reach places is generally brief and distorted with no mechanisms to verify their credibility. Lack of space, priorities of the paper as determined both by the policy of the paper, the reader-demand, and the judgment of the news editor influence the selectivity of a story. In this process, either the entire story may be rejected, or its details appropriately curtailed. It appears that in such circumstances what people criticize is not the credibility of what is reported but the selectivity of the media.

There is another sense in which people wrongly blame credibility. With the invasion of the TV and cable channels that run programmes and give news updates round the clock, readers of the newspapers find the news in them to be old, stale and incomplete. In the news chase papers are losing the race. To compensate for it, they are taking recourse to *post factum* analyses and overviews.

The arrival of the television, and earlier the radio and the transistor, has certainly lifted the literacy barrier, and exposed more people to mass media. But the truth still remains: our mass media is in fact a class media that is beyond the reach of the vast majority of the poor living in remote rural and tribal areas. They figure in the media only when something untoward happens to them—riots, mass

murders, cruel rapes, *sati* or a disaster. But they do not have means to check the credibility of what is reported on their behalf.

Communication theory suggests that the impact of media cannot always be seen in terms of changing the attitudes or opinions of people. It is most effective as a reinforcement device. People watch what they wish to watch. Such selectivity is now available to the audience because of the multiplicity of the media adds to the reinforcement function. The channels that specialize in telecasting religious discourses have gained popularity among those who are religiously minded. Only in those areas where people have an open mind can an innovation or an idea supported by the media have a reasonable chance of finding its buyers. The media used by the *Jehadis* and the terrorist groups are directed towards those who can be easily bought over, or towards the victims, so as to shatter their images.

Multiplicity in the media has increased competition and broken the monopoly of newspaper barons. The user of the media now has the power to choose and reject. He has now more to choose from, and too much to discard. What he discards is what he considers irrelevant, uninteresting, or inconsequential even when it may be credible.

In such a context, no easy generalizations can be made about the role of the media. For each medium, the role will have to be reviewed in a particular societal context by careful content analysis of the messages and rigorous survey amongst its audiences to measure the impact of particular programmes. Of course, one general comment can be made: the new audio-visual media have made their reach much vaster. They have succeeded in breaking the barriers of literacy and distance. There is now greater and varied exposure to communication, and to a much larger audience. Obviously, its impact on people's attitudes and opinions and on their cognitive maps is phenomenal. The increasing reach of the media and the variety of channels have not only attracted large audiences, but have also affected coverage of topics and the speed of reporting. While commenting on the rise of violence, particularly in rural areas, one should verify whether there is a rise in actual instances of violence or whether there is better coverage of violence related events. Fifty years ago, with poor transportation and communication infrastructure, many events happening in our rural hinterland and in areas distant from metropolitan centres never got reported. Now that there is better and speedy reporting, readers may feel that the graph is rising. It must, however, be admitted that with the changing times the character of crimes committed and the profiles of criminals are also undergoing changes. It would be too fallacious to associate violence and crime with poverty or illiteracy. The availability of sophisticated weapons and the installations of high security features require technical competence on the part of the criminal. You cannot cheat a stock market until you know the intricacies of commerce and banking. Those who destroyed the WTC towers were highly trained although perverse individuals.

It is interesting that the rhetoric of nation building, that was so prominent in the early years of our independence, has just disappeared. Nation building involved both economic and political development and national integration. While we have made strides on the development front, we have registered only failure in our efforts at national integration. In the name of secularism we have

allowed primordial loyalties to get solidified. Vested interests have developed in not only retaining but also reasserting caste and religious identities, and have been allowed free play in the arena of politics. Not only politicians, but also the men of the media, and certainly some high profile social scientists have contributed to the hardening of these loyalties and identities. People have used different dichotomies to perpetuate such divides. There are scholars who are proposing a concept of nation that can be applicable to various subcultures of this country's composite culture. Such usage can assuage the so-called deprived sections, but can also encourage in them attitudes that may be disruptive for the Indian polity.

In my essay, "Managing Multiplicity", published in EPW in September 2001, I had written about the danger of creating insularities at the subsystem level that are detrimental for the national system. In that article I had argued that insularity is created and identity of a unit gets highlighted when different kinds of membership boundaries begin to overlap with each other. High degree of integration at the subsystem level goes against integration at the systemic level. If *Mohallas* are allowed a high degree of integration by insulating themselves from each other, then the residents will attain solidarity of their own which will afford them an easy identification to the outsiders. But if people invoke these different identities in different interactional contexts, then the boundaries of interaction will be cross-cutting and not overlapping. That would not allow insulations to grow at the *Mohalla* boundaries. Such a situation helps in creating a favourable atmosphere for integration at the level of the local community. Integration does not mean dilution of identities but invocation of different identities in different contexts, and sharing of a common identity at the level of the system as a whole. The identity as an Indian should overwhelm all other identities. If we do not want a region to secede, it is necessary to ensure that the region's interactional boundaries in different spheres go beyond the region and in all directions. Failure to create such cross-cutting boundaries has resulted in the growth of regionalism, linguism and communalism. What happened in Gujarat is a result of insular tendencies. The administration had failed to keep the apertures open. Fighting the present carnage with the vocabulary of communalism can perform the latent function of creating more insulation. For this, a long-term strategy is needed.

It must be admitted that the pursuit of reservations, distribution of favours on the basis of religion or a minority status, recognition of groups as the basis for the determination of poverty, and similar other measures have been counter-productive. In fact, they are an extension of the colonial ethos. The colonial masters pursued the policy of "divide and rule", and also displayed a patronizing attitude towards those who were "less advanced". That policy is still pursued, and those who argue for a review are seen as reactionaries, and non-secular. If well-intentioned policy initiatives have led to unintended and dysfunctional consequences, it is prudent to see what was wrong in the means employed, and also how to avert the unintended consequences. It could be that the perpetrators of Godhra had not intended to have the kind of effect that brought shame to the entire country, but it is this unintended consequence that could have been anticipated and averted. Newton's law was quoted but not acted upon. The radars of the administration seem to have malfunctioned.

Is this not the time for us to rethink our strategies and question the prescriptions hitherto advanced? Should we continue fostering subsystem solidarities with a view to consolidating vote banks, or should we address ourselves to the moot question of preserving our national integrity amidst diversity?

The first necessity is to locate the sources of diversity, and also to find out the factors that continue to foster separateness rather than unity. In this context, the concepts of insider and outsider can be helpful. A multicultural society, by definition, consists of several subcultures. Membership to these cultures divides people into subgroups and creates a distinction between those who are members and those who are not. Those belonging to a particular subgroup identify themselves as insiders to distinguish the non-members as outsiders. In relation to that group, the outsiders are a heterogeneous lot consisting of people belonging to different subgroups. Every other set is considered an outsider vis-à-vis the group under reference. However, all these people may become insiders of a larger entity to which all these subcultures belong. Thus, a region may consist of several subgroups with exclusive memberships, but in the context of a regional grouping all the people will have a single membership. Without elaborating further on these two concepts, let me just say that in a multicultural society, any individual or family enjoys membership to several groups, and at times the boundaries of the two groups may overlap or intersect. As a result, a person becomes an insider in one context and an outsider in the other.

This usage of the outsider concept is somewhat different from the one used by some scholars who employ it only for a migrant individual or group, or for people belonging to a minority group to suggest its location outside the "mainstream" of the majority group.

It is the latter narrow sense that leads people to think that transforming the outsider status into the insider status is the main task of managing diversity. This is, to my way of thinking, a wrong formulation because the consequence of such an effort will be the erasure of diversity, which is different from management of it. The message of the past development experience is that the hope of a homogenized world as a result of the processes of modernization was a false hope. All advances in technology and all efforts to promote development have shown good results but failed in containing heterogeneity of cultures. Even the environmentalists are now propagating bio-diversity, which is disappearing with growing environmental pollution. Like bio-diversity, there is also a need for support for cultural diversity.

Managing diversity, thus, does not mean erasing diversity. The challenge is to locate bonds of unity in an ocean of diversity. Neither is the recipe of absorption of the outsider groups into the mainstream of society a workable proposition, nor is the prescription to install insulations between the communities and to encourage them to secede and close their shells. Both attempts have proved futile and dysfunctional. Fundamentalism has the seeds of its own destruction in it. When communism as an ideology became religious and fundamentalist, it created iron walls all around. But these walls fell through with the passage of time. Communism collapsed under its own weight. Religious fundamentalism, which has now taken the form of international and cross-border terrorism, is universally decried. What happened in the United States on September 11, 2001 was condemned by the entire

world, barring the fanatics. The aftermath was not an attack on any religion, but on the so-called *Jehadis* who wanted to disregard diversity and hoped to impose their ethics over all.

   As we review past developments, we come to the unpleasant conclusion that progress on the path of modernization does not imply the death of tradition. With the growth of literacy and urbanism, and with the advances in technology, religious fundamentalism has grown. Osama Bin Laden—the famous leader of Al Qaeda, who is said to have masterminded the September 11 tragedy and who still remained fugitive despite the all round vigil by the powerful American forces and their hi-fi technological devices—was a trained technologist and defamed terrorist. He effectively used the mass media to counter the US propaganda by sending his video tapes to a media channel in the Middle East. From this it has become clear that the fruits of progress are there for any one to use. They can be used to oust tradition and foster modernity; and they can also be used to reinforce tradition while ushering in modernity. I am reminded of a social scientist who said that good criminological research could be used both by those who wish to prevent crime in society, and those who wish to commit crime. This also applies to the media. With the availability of several sources of information diffusion, and weakening control of the State, media are owned and used by a wide variety of groups. Gangsters and smugglers have found an easy tool in the form of a cell phone to operate in the underworld. Competing media channels can take different stands on social and cultural issues. Media are now used both for maintaining the status quo and for challenging it. It is, therefore, difficult to allege media for all the wrongs in society, or to credit to them for all the good that is happening.

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Part II
Construction of the Other

Chapter 5
Belonging/Unbelonging to the Nation

Shail Mayaram

The tense psychological moment of belonging/unbelonging to the Indian nation for Indian Muslims is highlighted in a narrative from the Meo oral tradition called *Dhamukar*. This is the Meo perspective on the revolt of 1933, a peasant movement that mobilized an estimated 80,000 Meos, as also other castes like the Jats. In the narrative, the Viceroy offers a "chair" (*kursi* or position/status) to the Meos. This is resented by Maharaja Jai Singh, who was then the ruler of the princely state of Alwar. He not only alleges that the Meos belonged to a *sudra* caste but attempted to deny altogether that they were inhabitants of Hindustan. In the Meo narrative, the Alwar ruler designates them as low caste and "alien", denying their claims in the region to status, land and power as *ksatriyas*, a warrior and ruling group. The Meo leader, Yasin Khan, protests at a large meeting of Mewati leaders held in Nuh (contemporary Haryana) saying, "Maharaja Jai Singh has created a storm against our entire *qaum* (caste, group) and has said that the Meos are not inhabitants of Hindustan and it is not known who they are. I have told the Viceroy that we Meos are the real *chatris* (*ksatriyas*) and will present our genealogies to prove this". The entire effort of Yasin, the other Meo chaudharis and their Brahman genealogists were to controvert Jai Singh's claims.

One can see how the question of belonging/not belonging is articulated in the narrative in the traditionalist idiom of caste. It counters the formulation of belonging then being made by Savarkar (1989) as below in terms of *pitrbhumi* and *punyabhumi*, i.e. considering India to be the land of one's ancestors and of transcendence

S. Mayaram (✉)
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, India
e-mail: shail@csds.in

(Savarkar 1989 (1923)).[1] The anxiety apparent in the Meo counter-claim, "*ham hindustan ke bashinde hein*", i.e. "We are inhabitants of Hindustan" and belong here recurs in the tense relationship of nation and community through most of the past century. The narrative posits the contrast between national memory and counter memory. The first identifies itself as the voice of state and declares itself as "history" while the other is "folklore".

This account of a modern Indian theatre of violence narrates aspects of the story of the Meos. It is simultaneously the twentieth-century history of nation-state formation, of competing nationalisms in colonial and postcolonial India and of competing proselytisms (Hinduization as well as Islamization). I skim here the surface of a vast area concerning the nature of Meo community and identity, which I have discussed at length elsewhere.[2] The Meo population is presently concentrated in India and Pakistan and constitutes one of the largest communities of Muslims in South Asia.[3]

The denial of belonging to the Meos occurs vis-a-vis a community whose self-perception is that of being *ksatriya*, whose past is that of a warrior group and whose history is that of an almost continuous resistance to various state formations, be it the Sultanate, the Mughal Empire, the British Empire, the Rajput kingdoms of Jaipur and Alwar, or the Jat kingdom of Bharatpur. A popular Mewati verse celebrates this oppositional stance towards Sultans and Badshahs,

> kahan dhundun vahi hasti jo balban se takrayi
>
> jalaluddin akbar se kabhi mat na khayi
>
> Who were those people
>
> who clashed with Balban?
>
> And were not defeated
>
> even by Jalaluddin Akbar?

The conquering Turks, Afghans (called Pathans) and Mughals are the groups referred to as "*g(h)airmulki*" or "foreign" by the Meo oral tradition.

In Farsi-Turki statist discourses of the Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, the Mewatis (as the Meos were usually called) are the terrible and constant "rebels" and "disrupters" of the order of the state and are denounced and even abused in the strongest terms by historians of the 13th and 14th century such as Minhaj Siraj

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[1]Originally published as *Essentials of Hindutva* in 1923, Savarkar's tract was retitled *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* in its 1928 version. In this work he defines Hindutva, i.e. Hinduness or the quality of being Hindu. In the prefatory verse he defines as Hindu "a person who regards this land of BHARATVARSHA, from the Indus to the Seas as his Father-Land as well as his Holy-Land that is the cradle land of his religion".

[2]See Mayaram (1997, 2003a).

[3]Estimates regarding Meo migration to Pakistan in 1947 range from 400,000 to 1.2 million. In Pakistan current population estimates for Meos range from 1 to 13 million. In India, likewise, where there has been no caste-based census except for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population, estimates go up to 20 million for the Meo population.

Juzjani ([1864](https://doi.org)) and Ziya' al-Din Barani ([1958],(1862)). Minhaj even uses the Arabic metaphor of poisonous snakes (*ifrit marzadah*), stating how the gates of Delhi have to be closed against the Mewatis. This stigmatization continues with 16th–17th century Mughal historians such as `Abd al-Qadir Bada'uni ([1986]), Mohammad Qasim Firishta ([1864–1884]) and Nizam al-Din Ahmad ([1990]). These historians give us a sense of the constant onslaught of the Sultans on the Mewatis beginning with the Mamluk or Slave kings and continuing with the Tughlaqs, Sayyids and Lodis. Both Babar and `Inayat Khan ([1990]) detail Babar's conquest and the decimation of the Mewatis by the Mughal-Rajput army in the mid-seventeenth century (1990).

Persian has an extraordinarily rich vocabulary to describe both the state and its other. The idea that the Meos are "*mufsid*" (rebellious) and "*zortalab*" (insurgent) becomes the commanding image of the medieval Meos in historiographical texts. Their own oral tradition, however, suggests a sensibility of displacement by the Delhi Sultans, Mughal Emperors and Rajput states. Marginality and resistance are closely related.

This foray into the past of the medieval Mewatis, in a sense, has been to indicate how the argument relating to unbelonging negates the entire history of the Mewatis, whose sense of territoriality and identity are closely linked to the region that a substantial portion of the population inhabit.

In terms of the Mewatis/Meos in the context of colonial modernity four moments need to be highlighted. The first relates to the 1920s and 1930s. The Alwar kingdom witnessed the first attempt to craft a Hindu *rashtra* or nation. Maharaja Jai Singh (1887–1937) instituted a modern state that caused a structural change in the Rajput polity, which up to then had been based on the shared power of the *bhaibandh* or patrilineal Rajput brotherhood. He asserted juridical sovereignty, expanded the coercive basis of the state and also its fiscal authority. Alwar became a prototypical Ayodhya and its streets were given names like "Kushmarg" and "Raghumarg", after the sons of Rama; the Prime Minister was called *Sumantra* after Dashratha's exiled minister. Jai Singh viewed himself as an incarnation of Rama, albeit a nationalist one. He challenged paramountcy, scandalously wore gloves while shaking hands, snubbed Churchill, and used that great English symbol of imperial capitalism, the Rolls Royce, to dump garbage. I am challenging here Haynes ([1990]) and Dirks' ([1987]) readings of the passivity of the princely state, the so-called "hollow crown" under colonialism.

Jai Singh articulated a version of ritual sovereignty to address an imagined Hindu community and to exclude the non-Hindu. The kingly body became a performative for nationalism: the hitherto westernized Jai Singh gave up western dress for *khadi*, handspun and woven cloth popularised by Gandhi, refused to wear leather or sit on a leather chair; and the leather *dholaks* (drums), horse saddles and even sofas had to be changed. Even the Viceroy was forced to change the upholstery, for Jai Singh would not come to dinner otherwise. One needs to remember that Jai Singh is popularly regarded as one of the most brilliant and promising princes of his times.

The ritual spectacle that was created sacralized the modern nation in the kingdom. The Maharaja led processions on Holi and Dussehra wearing unstitched saffron robes with "Sita-Rama" printed on them. He carried a vessel of Ganga water on his head when he returned from the Unity Conference held at Allahabad

and the city's merchants came to greet him, spreading bales of red cloth on the street. This vaisnavization overwrote the former Naruka Rajput rulers' *sakta* religious identity, centred on the worship of the goddess. Jai Singh even dismissed the Brahman from the palace temple and took over his role as chief worshipper. The attempt to subsume the roles of king, Brahman and renouncer did not just violate norms of Hindu kingship but led to its structural reformulation. Jai Singh enjoyed enormous popularity as a *deshbhakta* (literally devotee of the nation, i.e., nationalist). The surge of nationalist emotion overwrote the tensions of the democratic movement that were challenging kingly sovereignty and from the growing resources peasant unrest because of monopoly claims to revenue and forest resources, but rumours abounded regarding the ruler's sexual life about which there was a lot of speculation in the English press, in which he was exoticized and eroticized as the "Oriental despot".

Likewise, in Bharatpur kingdom, the Jat king also sought to become an embodiment of nationalism. The area of Mewat that included both the Alwar and Bharatpur kingdoms became a theatre of contestation where social dramas of conversion and reconversion were played out. The Arya Samaj and the Tablighi Jama'at, the agencies of Hindu and Muslim social and religious reform, respectively, were the major players, but there were also other, more or less political (though proclaimed nonpolitical) organizations at work. The Arya Samaj maintained close contact with the Sanatana Dharma Sabha and with other pan-Indian Hindu organizations such as the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal and the Hindu Mahasabha. All these organizations came together to work on the project of *suddhi*, reclaiming Hindus through "purification". The *suddhi* ritual was differentiated by its practitioners from conversion. The process of purification suggested an emphasis on repudiating Islam, manifest in the shaving of facial hair, eating of pork, and taking on of new Hindu names. Oral histories of the time speak of how Muslims would be boycotted until they became Hindu. Muslim ascetics or *faqirs* who were usually given alms by both Hindu and Muslim householders were now told, "*miyaon ki jholi kardo band jarur*" ("don't give alms; close the bag of the Muslim"). Another popular slogan was "*salan ved parhne lage ahle koran hoy jab masjid main sruti gan*" ("when the readers of the Qu'ran study the Vedas, the mosques will resound with chants of Vedic revelation"). Or worse,

swami pahunche chauthe tabak par khuda ki shuddhi rahe hai kar

darhi kata kar choti rakha di khuda dekhe tukar tukar

Swami (Shraddhanand) reached the fourth stage

performing the suddhi of the Lord.

Cutting beards he made them keep braids

while the Lord watched helplessly.

Oral histories of the period bring out the politics of religion as also the play of the politics of language. The interface between state and religious civil society combined with the Hindi movement. Alwar became the first kingdom to change its script to Nagari in 1907 and Bharatpur followed in 1919.

The adoption of the social reform agenda by the Arya Samaj meant that dalit castes like the Chamar leather workers became available targets for anti-Muslim violence in Alwar city in the riot of 1932. What is interesting about the riot from the viewpoint of Meo identity is their sense of distance from the Hindu-Muslim politics in the city. The Meos describe the riot as a "*shahar ke musalmanon ka tufan*" ("storm of the city Muslims") and "*miyon ka jhagra*" ("fight among Muslims"). Issues such as educating Muslims in *madrasahs* and keeping beards hardly concerned the Meos and in this respect I disagree with Siddiqi's reading of the period as denoting the emergence of a "Muslim" consciousness among the Majid Hayat Siddiqi's (1986).

Ironically, even as the Meos were being constructed as the "ethnic other" of nationalism, they were simultaneously becoming involved in more radical politics. This involvement was spearheaded by some of their own leaders who were also members of the Indian National Congress, particularly its left-wing, a section of which would later break to form the Communist Party of India. The institutional form of the peasant front in Mewat was the Kisan Sabha (literally "peasant assembly"). This front included members from among the Jat, Ahir, Gujar and Meo communities, which are major peasant-pastoralists in northern and western India. What is interesting is that these groups, irrespective of religious affiliation have historically shared aspects of myth, belief and practice, including modes of self-governance in de-centred political institutions.

The peasant movement of 1932 led by the Meo leader Yasin Khan mobilized some eighty thousand peasants in the princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur. Meos, Jats and other landowning castes participated in the movement. In Alwar they protested the 30 % rise in revenue rates that crippled the peasantry in the context of the worldwide Economic Depression. The ruling elite of the princely states however, castigated the movement as being "fundamentalist" and inspired by mullahs! The Meos were categorically dubbed "Muslims" in the state and media discourse of the period.

Who were these people who were homogenized into this single category of Muslim? One needs to highlight here the plurality of the Meo identity in religious and political terms. The articulation of Meo identity comes into deep and disturbing conflict with the idea that a community, whether Meo or Muslim or Hindu or any caste can have a singular identity. Indeed, it is unsettling for both the anthropologist who seeks to identify cultural coherence, and for the historian.

Nineteenth century ethnographers record that the Meos had no knowledge of the *kalima* (the profession of faith in the unity of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad), they did not perform the canonical *namaz* prayer and so were quite deficient with respect to the five pillars of Islam (comprising *salat* or praying five times daily, *saum* or fasting, *zakat*, *jihad* and *hajj*). Burial, circumcision and *nikah* were the major Muslim customs most Meos observed. Apart from these they worshipped the same gods and goddesses whether of the village, of water or of disease and celebrated the same festivals as other local peasant castes. Ethnographers and Muslim theologians referred to the Meos disparagingly as nominal Muslims, half-Hindus, etc. But there was little realization of the creativity

of Meo cosmologies: some clans visualized themselves as descendants of Krishna and many others patronized a *sakta* version of the *Mahabharata* that interestingly begins with *bismillah* to the goddess. For the Meos, the epic was no mere story symbolizing a glorious "Hindu" past, but a matter of their flesh and blood. In this poetically narrated version of the Mahabharata, the Meos claim through metaphorical descriptions of lineage and descent. At a presentation, I was once asked if I was suggesting that they were more Hindu than Muslim. The problem is this very attempt to quantify identity into proportions. The categories that we use to talk about the peoples of India need to be problematized and contextualized, the fact being that is possible to be Hindu and Muslim simultaneously or for that matter Hindu and Christian, or any other combination of being Vaisnava, Sufi, Chishtiyya, Buddhist, and so on.

For all their strong sense of communal identity over some seven centuries, particularly because of their constant struggle with the state, the Meos did not have a homogeneous religious culture. James Skinner's ethnography of 1824 called *Tashr ih ul-Aquam* states that the Meos included persons who were Hindu, Muslim and one section with "no religion" that encompassed a range of ascetics including *darweshes*, *jogis*, *jangam*, *sevra*, *sanyasis* and *paramhans*. Interestingly the category "no religion" included a phenomenal diversity of sects. We know that in the later part of the eighteenth century there was some Meo affiliation in the vicinity of Alwar with a group called the Rasul Shahis. Their members were similar to the Qalandars—wandering *darweshes* who considered the settled life of the *khanaqah* (centre of Sufi residence and practice) sinful and came into conflict with persons belonging to the Chishtiyya and Suhrawardiyya Sufi lineages. Like the wandering ascetics they were renouncers who rejected bodily comfort, were disdainful of social norms, shaved off body hair and wore only a loin cloth. They also practiced mystic intoxication, defying Trimingham and others who claim that states of mystic intoxication were matters of the past, the so-called golden age of Sufism that ended with the eleventh century (Trimingham 1998; Voll 1999).

Among the Meos, as elsewhere in South Asia, there existed followers of a range of Islamic ideologies. Some professed faith in Salar Masud or "Ghazi Mian" (the virgin saint), as he is called, and a large number (including a Meo saint called Musa) were linked to the Chishtiyya Sufi order. There were some Naqshbandiyyas who combined theological and mystical knowledge (*shar`ia* and *tariqa*) and others affiliated to the Madariyya Tariqa, which was regarded by orthodoxy as being bishar or without law. The Madaris, being followers of Shah Madar or Shaikh Badi-ud-Din (d. 1435), like Hindu mendicants wore no clothes, covered themselves with ashes and consumed hemp leaves. The Qadiriyya became a powerful *silsilah* in the seventeenth century.

Gurgaon had about thirty-two Sufi orders ranging from the Hussainis who had more female than male followers, to the followers of Banda Nawaz whose somewhat acrobatic ritual practices were said to involve leaping up in the air repeating *la-ilah-illallah* and working up a frenzy. The Sarwardiyya were followers of Hasan Basri of Basra, Iraq and it was said that they chanted *Allaha* with a suppression of breath culminating in a faint.

To further confuse categorical imputations, the Meos also had their own *pirs* and *sants* such as Lal Das, Chudh Sidh and Yasin Khan, who reinterpreted traditions of *bhakti* as also Islamic traditions. Miraculous and healing powers were attributed to many *pirs*, *faqirs* and *darweshes*. There were significant points of intersections with the Nath traditions, so much so that the eleventh century personage Shah Alakh was simultaneously a *pir* and a *yogi*. With more individualist *faqir* mendicants and their varied lifestyles, one can imagine the extraordinary variety in South Asian Islam.

The second moment relates to the 1940s. This was a period when a large number of Meos continued to be participants in the peasant movement led by the acclaimed historian-activist and Congress (and later Communist Party) leader, Kunvar Mohammad Ashraf. In the 1930s, as the General Secretary of the Congress (with Nehru as President) Ashraf was responsible for spearheading the party's Muslim Mass Contact Campaign. Ashaf. as a Malkana Rajput was deeply sympathetic to the Meo predicament, a community that was subject to similar pressures of identity politics as the Meos. He called for a revival of Meo modes of self-governance, highlighting the vision of the Meo polity governed by the Pal panchayat. As an institution this was unlike the *jati panchayat* in so far as it was inter-communal and involved all the regional castes (of whatever sectarian denomination); Ashraf pointed out how it could act as a bulwark against ethnic divisions and communal conflict. But in the vitiated pre-partition context, the democratizing move for regional autonomy was deliberately distorted as a call for a "Meoistan"; it was described as another Pakistan! One does not have to guess the parties that were involved in this (mis)representation that extended to state and media discourses. They had the most to lose from a truly de-centred Indian federation.

There were some Meos who were affiliated to the Muslim League, although my fieldwork brought home the realization that a far larger number had not even heard of Jinnah or the Muslim League. Indeed, the majority of politically active Meo were, as Abdul Haye points out, with the Kisan Sabha, the Congress and its equivalent Praja Parishads and Mandals in the princely states. Haye (1969) describes how Yasin Khan was particularly suspicious of the Muslim leaders of Delhi and Punjab (1969).

What characterized the 1940s was the growing role of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSSS, as the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Samiti was then called. The list of names of persons involved would be like a *Who's Who* of Hindu nationalism (Bhatt 2001, ch 5 and 7). Khare, who was then Prime Minister of Alwar, and many members of the Cabinet were affiliated to the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jat Raja of Bharatpur was himself was a member of the RSSS. Not only did Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the third *sarsanghchalak* of the RSSS (1940–73), give fiery speeches in Bharatpur, but the manufacture of arms and ammunition and military training of persons at bases had also started, following which the volunteers were then sent to other theatres of violence like Delhi, Punjab, etc[2]. Lal Krishna Advani began his career as a *pracharak* (activist) of the RSS in Bharatpur. Acharya Girraj Kishore, presently part of the national executive of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and his father were active in regional politics and the cow protection movement.

Acharya Dharmendra, currently a member of Dharma Sansad, founder of the Bajrang Dal, the youth wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and one of the major figures who orchestrated the Babri Mosque demolition, was also active in regional and national politics.

This politics culminated in the attempted genocide of the Meos; a bloodbath in the princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur. Genocide is defined as the annihilation, extermination or systematic killing of a racial or cultural group. The campaign to rid the area of the Meos was one of the first instances, internationally, of ethnic cleansing and was appropriately, called *safaya,* a word that comes from the Hindi verb which means "to clean". Partition was a grand opportunity to redistribute material resources like land, cattle, wealth and other goods. It had taken less than three decades for identity politics to take its toll. Thirty thousand Meos were killed in Bharatpur alone—and this is an official figure. No figures are available for the numbers killed and displaced in Alwar. The total Meo population in the two princely states was nearly two hundred thousand. Overnight they were slaughtered or evicted by multi-caste mobs referred to as *dhars*, their villages razed to the ground. Only those who agreed to undergo *suddhi* (so-called purification, but in fact a euphemism for a conversion rite) were allowed to stay.

A published document in the National Archives of India that I found later, lists the names and addresses of the women who were abducted on both sides of the border. Meo women form a large proportion of those abducted this side of the border. These women's silenced screams and pasts continue to remain part of the nation-state's suppressed (and even disowned) history and memory. It is only the new writing on partition that has begun to explore the people's perspective on partition (for a review see Pandey 2001).

The *dhar* or mob's internalization of the representation of the Meo as Muslim legitimated the genocide. The violence was hardly spontaneous. It was organized by the princely states and orchestrated by the organizations, which are today referred to as the "Hindu Right". Certain national level leaders belonging to the Congress were also among its supporters/participants. Hindu fanatical organizations had obtained a major foothold in the princely states adjacent to Delhi through the 1930s and 1940s (since in British India they faced far more stringent restrictions). These organizations were not only involved in "re-conversion" as it was called, but also in regional mobilization, particularly of young men, and in the production, circulation and distribution of arms. Their network extended to the areas that witnessed maximal violence in 1947. Their ideological impact was even more far reaching: through pamphlets, press and speech they were able to propagate a convincing psychology of Hindu victimhood (not so different from the "pampered Muslim" of our times).

Few Meos were interested in Pakistan, in Urdu or in the Muslim League. But their choices were few; to die, convert or cross the border; hence the exodus to Pakistan of over half the Meo population. This number would have been even greater had it not been for the personal intervention of Gandhi and Yasin Khan, the Meo leader. They pleaded the secular character of the Indian State and the equality and dignity Meos would have therein. Though many Meos returned as late as

the 1950s and the 1960s, the movement to their *bhumi*, the land of their ancestors, started as soon as the border was reopened. For some Meos, Pakistan became the land of their exile as the mythic. It was the mythic re-enactment of the Pandava heroes' exile from their kingdom.

The third moment lies in the aftermath of partition. Genocide produced a major shift in Meo identity. The Tablighi Jama'at had been set up in the 1920s with a design for Islamization. Maulana Ilyas' first experiment was among the Meos. His letters are testimony to his sense of dismay at the intractable Meos. They refused to keep a beard or read the *namaz*. For him they embodied *jahilliyat* or primitivism in their un-Islamic polytheistic worship.

After partition the Meos flocked to the Tablighi Jama'at for relief, security and anchorage. As one Meo said to me in a particularly poignant statement, "we saw the futility of riding on two horses". Henceforth, they would join the mainstream of singular identities.

Following independence M Yusuf, M Ilyas' son, continued his father's work and internationalized the Tablighi Jama'at. Today the Mewatis are the mainstay of the Tablighi Jama'at. They expressly and consciously embody Islamic referents of identity. The Mewati experiment has now been globalized and the Tablighis are in operation in some 135 countries all over the world.

The fourth moment is signaled by the Ramajanambhumi Movement and the politics of the 1990s up to the present. Lessons are hardly ever learnt from history. Ideologies of victimhood and otherness are still reproduced and diffused through the state, the academy, the media, pamphlets, speeches and written documents. We need to ask ourselves difficult questions; Is the politics of partition and genocide over and done with? Is it exclusively a matter of the past and not of the lived present?

Indeed, the politics of genocide is being replayed time and again, before our very eyes. Each time tension is created in the Mewat area, the tremor of terror among the Meos is palpable. Mass murders and displacement are not just a matter of history for their victims; the ghosts of partition continue to haunt them. As psychologists of violence suggest, terror is recreated in dreams, in responses to the most routine, quotidian situations. Allan Feldman and Robert Lifton are two writers who have, among others, documented this in our times with respect to the Irish struggle and the Holocaust (Lifton 1986).

The Meos have repeatedly been accused of cow slaughter. A series of news articles in the regional, Hindi and national English press have reported the spreading "net" of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), the infamous intelligence agency of the Pakistani State in the area. The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) (2000) has brought out a report called, *Mevat ksetra main hinduon ke utpidan tatha pak guptachar agency ISI evam rashtra virodhi tatvon ki gatividhiyon ke sambadh main prativedan* 2000. The text purports to provide an investigatory committee's report documenting atrocities on Hindus. Meo leaders from Alwar told me how the RJB movement had made them *pucca musalman*, such as they had never been.

The participants of a Dialogue on Representations in the Media held at the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur that I had convened on 21 September

2001 reflected on how the print media tends to reproduce caste and community prejudices time and again and is directly complicit in creating lines of fissure and divide. Leaders of the Meo Panchayat described how they were themselves concerned about "cow killing" and had imposed stringent sanctions against anyone involved in this activity. They felt that while the press was quick to pick up on tension and conflict, there was no reporting of instances of community collaboration. Meo participants brought out the fact that the trade in dead cows and hide involves members of both Hindu and Muslim communities. It is indexical of the changing agrarian economy where the buffalo has displaced the cow, which is increasingly being abandoned by peasants and pastoralists.[4]

The Meo oral tradition bears the memory of a politics that challenges a singular definition of nationalism, suggesting that there was also an incorporative conception of India, in which communities such as the Meo peasants, saw themselves as citizens, in colloquial speech, as *bashinde*. It indicates alternative understandings of subaltern nationalism as inter-ethnic peasant struggles and intimations of living together in friendship. For instance, the close relationship between a Gujar elder and a Meo elder is described in terms of a metaphor that indicates the sharing of bread, "*dant kati roti*". These are visions of a politics of hope and possibilities of democratic and redistributive politics deriving from both pre-modern and modern institutional arrangements, the creolizing creativity of popular religion as also from coalitions within civil society. After all, it was an inter-community mobilization of Meos, Gujars and Jats that stood to challenge the alliance between upper castes and the ruling elites of the Jat and Rajput kingdoms of Alwar and Bharatpur.

The implications of such a theatre of violence for the "idea of India" are still in the process of being worked out. In some ways the modern history of the Meos is the underside of the nation-state as it disenfranchises and de-territorializes the subaltern. This drama of the denial of being and belonging has played itself out in other theatres as well. The tragedy of the genocide in Gujarat in 2002 lay not only in the carnage but also in this most grotesque expression of the Hindu psyche. Violence, as in Gujarat, not only has a deep impact on the other, but there are indications of the ways in which it profoundly affects the victimizer's own sense of self. Lifton (1986) asks a similar question regarding Nazi doctors. One man known to have raped a woman later attacked his own mother, setting her on fire (personal communication, Dilip Simeon, 26 November 2002).

What consequences does such violence have for Hindus, and Hinduism as it is practiced in the subcontinent over the centuries? What is the emergent effect on Muslims and the world of lived Islam in India?

Not only rape, but the insertion of a *trishul* in a woman's vagina, the mutilation of male and female bodies suggests depths of depravity (see Feldman 1991 for a discussion of the body). This violence is not only an attack on the other, identified as Muslim or Christian, but an onslaught against the Hindu as well. The most

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[4]For a more recent statement see http://www.hindujagruti.org/news/17998_save-mewat-from-becoming-pakistan.html, accessed 23 December 2013.

powerful symbols of Hinduism have been distorted by Hindutva, including saffron, the beautiful colour associated with the idea of renunciation, the idea of pilgrimage (*yatra*) and the trident (*trishul*). The *trishul* is identified with Siva, the god of people who exist on the margins—the Siva who rescued Meo bandits in their Robin Hood type struggle against regimes of wealth and power and their defiance of colonial and princely states in the nineteenth century.

The point that India has been a crucible of diversity has been made time and again. This diversity is not just an outcome emerging from the many different religious cultures that we have come to call Hinduism. Indeed, the presence of Islam and Christianity in this country has been crucial for the making of this diversity. The human rights activist John Dayal points out, Indian Christianity reflects every brand of European Christianity. It also, I would like to add, has its own indigenous strands. Most of us know little of *adivasi* theology, about new directions in Christian Liberation Theology and the debates that are taking place with implications for the de-Europeanization of Christianity. The heterogeneity and variety within Indic Islam is mind-boggling to say the least. There are not only various shades of Islamic theology and practice in existence throughout South Asia but the chemistry between local and regional cultures, for instance Hinduism and Islam, brought new identities and theologies into existence.

Dumont has argued that Hinduism should be understood not in terms of its diversity but in terms of relational categories. Hinduism, according to him, emerges through the dialogue between the householder and the renouncer. Das (1977) and Heesterman (1985) point out that the Brahman embodies the tension between these two categories. But the point about empirical diversity is important. The proliferation of regional identities, of languages, literary cultures and the interface with religious traditions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam is not accommodated in the Dumontian perspective.

The attacks on pluralism have been relentless. What was initially described as genocide in Gujarat in 2002 has since been called a pogrom. But it was certainly a genocidal attack on the "idea of Gujarat". Gujarat is today an Indian state with one of the largest number of Muslim communities, including groups that combined the idea of the worship of the ten avatars with Quranic cosmology. As Hindu and Muslim ideologies launched their competition over numbers early in the twentieth century, they sought to "convert" and reclaim (whatever that means) a large number of these "deviant" Hindu and Muslim sects. Trade and the Indian diaspora had sustained deep connections with West Asia and East Africa. This economic and cultural context created an extremely fortuitous conjuncture that produced one of the greatest men ever. In Gandhi's deeply Vaisnava and Hindu identity, was present also a celebration of the love and compassion articulated by Christ, Muhammad and the Buddha. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi could, arguably, only have been born in Gujarat. I have argued elsewhere that we have that we have today created such conditions that Ram and Krishna will not return to Ayodhya and Dwarka and Gandhi cannot be born again in Gujarat (Mayaram 2003b).

Ten years after Gujarat a land dispute between Gujars and Meos in a small area brought alive the polarized politics of the 1920s and 1940s. The one-sided police

firing in Gopalgarh in Bharatpur district (Rajasthan) on 24 June 2012 made salient once again the issue of (un)belonging having killed 10 Meos and injured 30.[5] The Chief Minister of Rajasthan himself admitted 2 days after the firing that the police fired 219 rounds, while claiming that it was done to contain a direct clash between Meos and Gujars. It was later revealed that all the bullets were aimed at the mosque, which suffered extensive damage. Some Meos were alleged to be inciting people to commit jihad.

Despite the obvious failure of the district officials they were initially suspended but subsequently reinstated. The state's inaction has added to the sense of injustice.[6] Mewati unbelonging is to the extent that Mewat is now referred to as mini-Pakistan.

I was part of a PUCL team that visited Gopalgarh immediately after the firing. As we drank tea at a tea-shop on the return journey from Gopalgarh we got into conversation with a group of Meos. An old man who had been witness to the violence of 1947 in Mewat asked me, Why this injustice? Are we not citizens of this country? A near century had passed since the buildup to the Dhamukar revolt. They had been exiled once again from the nation.

We have arrived at a momentous conjuncture of our political present. A conjuncture that represents a crisis of Hinduism, of Indian Islam and of the self, a crisis to which we must respond if we are to salvage and sustain the idea of an India as a crucible of diversity and as home to the fostering of creativity through the chemistry of cultures and religions.

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[5] http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Police/2011/gopalgarh.html, accessed 23 December 2013.

[6] http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3563494.ece, accessed 23 December 2013.

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Chapter 6
Violence and the Other in Hinduism and Islam: 1809 Lat Bhairon Riots of Banaras

Sunthar Visuvalingam and Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam

6.1 Divide, Rule and Unify: Self–Other Dialectics of Violence

Violence has been and remains the fundamental problem of all organized societies for it is rooted in the animal's survival instinct, the vital competition for food, living space and reproductive mates.[1] With the cerebral crossing of the human threshold, blind instinct becomes floating mimetic desire such that the now uncertain choice of object is increasingly determined by significant others, who risk

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Dedicated to all who have undergone, willingly or unwillingly, in Banaras or elsewhere, the salvific punishment of Bhairava.

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[1]"Aggression and human violence have marked the progress of the human race and appear, indeed, to have grown so during its course that they have become a central problem of the present. Analyses that attempt to locate the roots of the evil often set out with short-sighted assumptions, as though the failure of our upbringing or the faulty development of a particular national tradition or economic system were to blame. More can be said for the thesis that all orders and forms of authority in human society are founded on institutionalized violence. This at least corresponds to the fundamental role played in biology by intraspecific aggression, as described by Konrad Lorenz. Those, however, who turn to religion for salvation from this 'so-called evil' are confronted with murder at the very core of Christianity—the death of God's innocent son; still earlier, the Old Testament covenant could come about only after Abraham had decided to sacrifice his child. Thus, blood and violence lurk fascinatingly at the very heart of religion" (Burkert

S. Visuvalingam (✉) · E. Chalier-Visuvalingam
Chicago, USA
e-mail: suntharv@yahoo.com

becoming competitors for its possession.[2] Exacerbated through such mediation, the "will to injure" (*himsa*) of "killing man" (*homo necans*) is directed against both rival individuals within the same collectivity, and by the latter against other groups defined by conflicting ethnicity, gender, class, nation, caste, ideology, gang membership and so on.[3] Violence in its primordiality, however, is not simply directed against (pre-constituted) others but is (also) constitutive of the Other.[4] Human desire, because of its indirection through a privileged other, readily metamorphoses from emulation into envy, spite, competition and even the vengeful destruction of its original object of love or worship. [5] The dualistic "tribal" organi-

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Footnote 1 (continued)

1986). *Homo Necans*, which begins with a dramatic description of sacrificial killing and consumption in the Greek polis, appeared in English the same year as René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred* (1986). For Burkert, the constant menace of intraspecific violence among early humans was projected outwards onto the productive hunt for food resulting in the equation of the animal quarry to its pursuing killer. The prolonged survival of the associated guilt into subsequent agricultural and urban societies was expressed through collective sacrificial murder. In Hindu mythology, the ritualized hunt was seen through the optic of the initiatic death of the sacrificer expressed through his fatally wounded prey. An epic example would be the *diksha* scenario of the golden deer (Maricha) in its final throes mimicking the pleading voice of its royal hunter Rama. Conversely, the exposed foot of the meditating Krishna is pierced by a fatal arrow discharged by an unwitting hunter, who had mistaken it for a camouflaged deer. Indeed, this would have been karmic retribution for having unjustly slain from behind, in his previous Rama incarnation, the monkey chieftain Valin during the latter's fratricidal confrontation with Sugriva, a 'dualistic' duel charged with sacrificial notations.

[2]Mimetic rivalry has been intuitively exploited in the cinematic theme of the identical but "evil" twin—unable to achieve a meaningful existence except through identification with the alter ego—who returns to compete, often deceitfully under a protective stance, for the envied object of desire. Whereas such mechanisms are normally and unrecognizably projected onto the world at large, they become obsessively apparent within the dysfunctional family. I know firsthand of a case, who kept falling for the successive object choices of his brother, a compulsive pattern that makes sense only in terms of infantile rivalry for the (unrequited) love of the mother.

[3]Just as the development of the cerebral function and the relative autonomy of the emotions has also resulted among humans in sexual preferences and even perversions no longer being determined entirely by the imperative of species reproduction, so too violence has taken on an "aesthetic" life of its own as sadism, masochism, and suicidal killing sprees that are becoming increasingly frequent and no longer serve the needs of self-survival.

[4]This is the ultimate significance of the interminable warfare between Big and Little Endians over at which end to crack hardboiled eggs in Jonathan Swift's satire, *Gulliver's Travels*. Perhaps if we learned to recognize that all conflicts—even and especially those over "life-and-death" issues—were being fought, in the final analysis, between such arbitrarily opposed factions, the focus would shift instead to our inner propensity to violence.

[5]René Girard has shown, through "anthropological" analysis of world literary masterpieces, the underlying mimetism of desire: objects become desirable because they are prized by admired others and we are willing to harm the latter for their possession. The scheming villain of the *Mricchakatika* (Visuvalingam 2014) desires the heroine less for her own beauty than her reciprocated love for her unwitting rival, the hero, and succeeds in (almost) destroying both when thwarted. Not only does the semiotics of the play identify villain and hero within a sacrificial logic, it suggests that this murderous rivalry began in the libidinous (temple-) womb of the Mother.

zation that arbitrarily pitted its two halves (moieties) against each other in festive (potlatch) cycles of obligatory clashes was a ritual mechanism to contain a contagious "aggressivity" otherwise liable to crystallize along other more permanent lines of social fracture and hence capable of dissolving the whole.[6]

The rising and felling of Bhairava's *linga*-pole during the Bisket festival is accompanied by a ritual battle between the upper and lower halves of the city of Bhaktapur in Nepal. Cheered on by the riotous population, the hair-raising tug-of-war to drag the chariot of Bhairava from the centre into their respective halves of the city becomes violent at the least pretext. On the night of April 1985, the Nepali army was stationed in a state of preparedness around the Taumadhi square and—as we watched from the loft of the Nyatapole inn facing the Akash Bhairab temple—the festival degenerated into a veritable riot with stone-throwing and casualties on both sides while the Gorkha soldiers looked on impassively. A similar north–south conflict during the festival of Siti Nakha in Katmandu involved deaths on both sides and the regular sacrifice of captured prisoners to the goddess Kali. It was the model for similar battles in villages elsewhere in the Newar kingdom, which must have corresponded to an earlier dualistic tribal organization. The founding legend makes no bones about the Malla king Gunakamadeva, the reputed founder and culture hero of Katmandu, having instituted this custom at the behest of Skanda, the god of war, in order to destroy his enemies and to prevent his subjects from revolting (Chalier-Visuvalingam and Visuvalingam 2004:124–126). The dangerous game was abolished only around 1870 by Jung Bahadur Rana, at least in the capital, when a non-participating onlooker, British Resident Colvin, was struck by a flying stone. Similarly, the regular clashes between rival Hindu sects like the Shaiva Nagas and the Vaishnava Bairagis over the least pretext, such as precedence in taking their sacred bath in the Ganga during festivals like the Kumbha Mela, reflect an underlying ritual paradigm that valorizes death as liberation (see note 6).

Iranian cities and villages, including the successive Safavid capitals, had likewise been divided into opposing sets of quarters dominated by rival sects (for example, the Hanafites and the Shafi'ites, both of Sunni persuasion), which regularly engaged in violent conflict with the connivance and even encouragement of the rulers, both foreign (for example, the Mongols) and indigenous (particularly Shah Abbas). The opposing ascetic orders of the Sunni Ni'mati and the Shia Haydari, who were doctrinally close to the transgressive Mala'amatiya (Way of Blame), were founded in the late fourteenth century in eastern (Kerman) and

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[6]The potlatch celebrated by opposing moieties of North American tribes, especially along the northwest coast (Haida, Tlingit, etc.), consisted of agonistic self-destruction of wealth to humiliate the rival other. Solidarity was maintained above all through obligatory exchange of women as conjugal partners between the moieties. The fratricidal Mahabharata war, a gigantic self-consuming "potlatch" between cousins, corresponds to the founding dualism of the mythical "Churning of the Ocean" (*samudra-manthana*). This cooperative tug-of-war rivalry between gods and demons, which delivers the goods of life including the nectar of immortality, is also the model and justification for the Kumbha Mela, the world's largest festival, which was likewise the scene of bloody clashes.

western (Tabriz) ends, respectively, of Iran. Even after the advent of the Safavid dynasty in 1502 when the Ni'mati gradually converted to Shiism, they continued to fight the Haydari. All social antagonisms—right through the Qajar period and down to our own times—would inevitably polarize, even if only in symbolic form, under their opposing "sectarian" banners and reach a violent climax during the (tenth of) Muharram. However, the tomb of Sultan Mir Haydar at Tabriz was venerated not only by Shias and Sufis from as far as Ottoman Turkey but even by the Sunni Muslims; and it was Shah Abbas, the (Shia) Safavid ruler (1587–1629), who had the "heretical" shrine demolished no doubt out of fears for his own political security in the face of popular dissent. His active divide-and-rule policy against his own subjects resulted in the spread of the Ni'mati-Haydari polarization from the urban proletariat to the court and the countryside, so much so that Safavid Iran was hopelessly disunited in the face of the Afghan invaders. Thus even the Sunni-Shia divide, notwithstanding the doctrinal differences of their respective theologians, has a marked ritualized character that feeds on and further inflames communal grievances stoked by other social factors (cf. Mirjafari 1979). Under normal conditions in Banaras the celebration of Muharram and Barawafat, which have been consistently growing over the recent decades, is characterized rather by intense but sportive competition organized by the various clubs (*anjuman*) between the neighbouring Muslim wards (*muhallas*) themselves (Kumar 1989, pp. 158–163).

This binary pattern within (Persian) Islam, which corresponds in many details to (Hindu) Nepal, may well derive from archaic (pre-) Aryan institutions, but it conforms all the same to the immanent logic of human violence. The centrality of (Pachali) Bhairava's symbolic role as royal scapegoat (in Katmandu) suggests that succeeding rulers had (merely) exploited (generally within certain self-imposed limits) a pre-existing socio-ritual mechanism meant rather to regulate and provide a safety valve for the constant and pervasive menace of self-consuming violence otherwise capable of undoing the entire (Hindu-Buddhist) community (Girard 1977). This dualistic structure was easily extended and adapted to accommodate the more basic religious opposition between Hindus and Muslims. Due to the coincidence of the festivals of Dashahara and Muharram occurring on the same day in 1821, for example, many were killed at Cuddapah in the Deccan when neither party was willing to give way. Nevertheless, many Hindus participated fully in Muharram, consumed only meat that had been sacrificed according to Islamic rites, and even disguised themselves as Muslim ascetics. If any fighting and bloodshed took place between the two communities, the Hindus who had temporarily become *fakirs* took the part of the Muslims and fought against their own co-religionists (Shurreef 1863, p. 122; cf. Pandey 1990, p. 131, fn. 34). Even today in the Balinese village of Lingsar, the entire Hindu and Muslim communities—including women and children—congregate en masse to attack each other with blessed rice cakes at a unique sacred complex that juxtaposes temple and mosque and is recognized by the Indonesian government as a cultural heritage site. The participants attribute the peace, harmony and unity that have prevailed across successive generations to their celebration of these mock battles in "good faith" (Nugraha 2013).

The stubborn persistence of the dualistic mechanism into our own times—whether contained within integrative (royal) festivals, manipulated to further partisan political agendas, distorted by systematic economic exploitation, exacerbated by modern racism often internalized by its victims, generalized in our age of enlightenment into intense individual competition for climbing the ladder of "success" or perverted into fissiparous outbursts of crime pure and simple—only proves that the ideology of pacifism urgently needs to be supplemented by adequate techniques for recognizing, confronting, neutralizing and transmuting the innate violence that nourishes even the most-refined disguises assumed by the acquisitive urges of the self-conflicted soul.[7]

6.2 Mimesis and War by Terror: Deconstructing the Scapegoat

The channelling of volatile conflict through an arbitrary dualism stops short of actually revealing the hidden psychological dynamics behind such othering of the opposed party. The universal mechanism of the scapegoat, whether institutionalized by tradition or occurring spontaneously within a contingent gathering, focuses the repressed violence upon which society is founded onto a convenient individual, who is sacrificed, expelled or simply made the butt of aggressive jokes that bond through shared laughter. The ritual prescriptions and symbolic notations surrounding the scapegoat define, through careful often step-by-step re-enactment, the processes of identification and exclusion that split the embodied consciousness into a subjective self and externalized other. By simultaneously identifying with both executioner and victim, even "mere" spectators are obliged to participate in and thereby confront this innate mechanism of violent othering. This is especially obvious when the victim is believed and even explicitly declared to take on the accumulated sins of the entire community. During the prototypical Jewish "Day of Atonement" (Yom Kippur), this equation was demonstrated by doubling the otherwise single goat: the victim was chosen arbitrarily by lot, whereas the spared other was decked with the insignia of the high priest, who thus conducted what amounts to a murderous self-sacrifice.

The royal consecration (*diksha*) of the imperial horse sacrifice (*ashvamedha*) concluded with the Vedic king shedding his sins (i.e. war crimes) onto a deformed brahmin standing mouth-deep in a pool. The entire community followed suit

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[7]The extreme "senseless" cases of the depressive running amok, compulsive serial killer, shooting sprees in crowded places that seem completely "out-of-character" to those closest to the perpetrator, etc., confirm that the propensity to violence preexists the contingent conflicts that serve to channelize and rationalize its outward expression, the counterproof being concerted nonviolent resistance to oppression even under extreme provocation. Freud likewise relied on the abnormal to psychoanalyse the hidden dynamics of "normal" sexuality.

bathing in that purifying water, before the human scapegoat was expelled or perhaps drowned. The corresponding deformity prescribed for the "great brahmin" (*maha-brahmana*) clown (*vidushaka*) ensured the conservation of this now disguised ritual role even within the secularized aesthetic context of the classical Indian theatre. But whereas the bisociated cognition that underlies our incessant laughter relies on at least partially othering the bungling clown, we completely identify with his *alter ego*, the poor brahmin hero, when the latter is explicitly compared to the sacrificial goat being led in procession, mourned by the entire heartbroken city, to be executed at the stake for the (ontological) crime (that he did not commit). Conversely, the "evil" dictatorial king eventually slain in his stead is not only named "Protector" (Palaka), he is struck down in the midst of the sacrifice just as he is about to immolate the (brahmin) goat. The *Mricchakatika* thus played the same unifying cathartic role for the segmented Indian caste society as *Oedipus Rex* did for the democratic polis, for both Greek tragedy and comedy are derived, through their very names, from the pre-existing ritual of the scapegoat. Having for its chief connoisseur the high priest of Dionysus, theatre underpinned the great Athenian experiment in democracy, which included the regular ostracizing and even exiling—through collective voting on anonymous potsherds (*ostrakon*)—of statesmen deemed too powerful, even if like Pericles they had sacrificed their all for the mother city.

The crucified "Lamb of God" that took on the original sin of all mankind—or at least of those capable of believing in and thereby identifying with the Saviour—was intended, instead, to found a new universal community that would transcend the opposition between Jew and Gentile. While abolishing the actual practice of animal sacrifice, Christ's passion elevated the aborted immolation of Isaac or Ishmael to centre stage of the Abrahamic eschatology not only inviting identification with the (innocent) victim but hopefully deconstructing the scapegoat mechanisms beneath the obligatory sacrifice (Girard 1987).[8] The Son of Man was inevitably recycled into the inescapable dynamics of the self–other dualism, which now pitted Christians against both Jews and Pagans, and eventually among themselves in prolonged bloody warfare between Catholics and Protestants. Was the victimized Jesus resurrected as the triumphant Christ to convert the world through the force of arms, with the Cross blazing upon the European shield, or is the

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[8]For Girard there are two opposed understandings of the Crucifixion: the preceding sacrificial one that still holds sway in other traditions and, vehicled by this misreading while gradually subverting it, the denunciation of the foundational scapegoat mechanism through its now deconstructive re-enactment: "get thee behind me, Satan!" That the orthodox brahmins, who scrupulously conserved their sacrificial practices, otherwise abhorred the shedding of blood shows that they clearly recognized its criminal if yet necessary character. Conversely pacific Buddhism began by denouncing the brahmanical sacrifice only to end up formulating esoteric rituals whereby the Tibetan tantric adept identifies himself with a Bhairava-like divinity to achieve individual enlightenment through such (visualizations of) (Chalier-Visuvalingam and Visuvalingam 2004, p. 155). Each religious tradition has approached dreaded yet foundational violence in its own unique manner. This essay is dedicated to our longtime benefactors Félix and Aurora Ilarraz, who embody the ideal marriage of the Hindu-Christian ethos.

Gospel narrative intended to deconstruct the indeed universal mechanism of the archaic scapegoat that has returned, to run amok, with an unimaginably devilish vengeance?[9]

In providing the transcendental foundation and organizing principles for perpetuating a specific collectivity, each religious tradition has been obliged to repress, regulate and channel this primordial violence in a manner that conforms to its own original project.[10] Its overall experience and expression varies, for the process of othering reflects and reinforces the self-image unique to that tradition. Because the universal peace promised by Islam was predicated upon the entire world submitting to the egalitarian reign of its religious law (*sharia*), collective violence (*jihad*) was legitimately projected against unbelievers (*kafir*). The once expanding boundary that separated the triumphant Muslim fraternity (*umma*) from unredeemed territories now readily translates, especially in India, into eruptions of hostility against infidel Hindu neighbours. Whereas the unique Caliph harnessed state violence in principle for the promotion of the universalizing faith, self-aggrandizing Hindu kings were deliberately pitted against each other as rival champions of a shared hierarchical religious order (*dharma*) in much the same way that Vedic chieftains had performed competing sacrifices (*yajna*) to win the favour of Indra. For the brahmanical economy of violence excludes its recourse from the civic interreligious domain and relegates it instead to the pursuit (*purushartha*) of wealth–security–power (*artha*) that Indian aesthetic theory equates to the underlying emotional disposition of aggression (*krodha*). Committed to non-injury (*ahimsa*) in deed, word, and thought, the otherwise vegetarian orthodox brahmin had to partake in obligatory killing and consume meat only within the carefully circumscribed performance of *yajna*.

The complex interplay of the above dynamics is revealed within the microcosm of the 1809 "Lat Bhairo riots" of Banaras, which have become crucial to understanding and interpreting the communal violence that has not yet abated in contemporary India. This historiography is all the more compelling for the conflict erupted modestly within an otherwise syncretic Hindu-Muslim cult around an ancient pillar sacred to the (Hindu) "God of Terror" (Bhairava) and quickly engulfed the entire holy city. Beginning with the lowest castes on the periphery, the ensuing conflagration soon took over the upper classes and—dividing the

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[9]The Devil in the Western imaginary has been typically depicted with the head and hoofs of a goat, perhaps the most prevalent—affordable yet substantive—sacrificial beast that now appropriately demands those very human victims, for whom the helpless animal had originally served as the domesticated substitute. The annual pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca comprises an obligatory ritual where the Devil himself is stoned as a scapegoat, pelted at least 49 times over the course of three days. Because he attempted to dissuade patriarch Abraham and wife Hagar from sacrificing their beloved son Ishmael and the latter from acquiescing voluntarily to Allah's command. Hundreds of unwary pilgrims have died over the years during uncontrollable stampedes at this ritual, most recently in September 2015.

[10]For Abhinavagupta (10–11th C.), religious tradition (*agama*) is constituted at its transcendental core of a seminal idea—embodied by the founder (e.g. impermanence by the Buddha) and conditioned by when, where, why, how, and other contingent factors—that takes on a perennial life of its own. This would translate for us, now able to retrospect on its millennial evolution through diverse adaptations, into a tentacular collective project.

ineffective police force along sectarian lines—set aflame even the Aurangzeb mosque at the centre. As the self-consuming violence was abating over the course of the year, it metamorphosed into a shooting feud between police and military, where Hindus and Muslims were ranged together indiscriminately on either side. With this bracketing aside of the original religious underpinnings, shared grievances channelled the collective agitation into a nonviolent city-wide protest (*dharna*) against the recently imposed colonial British administration, even without the charismatic leadership of a long-suffering Mahatma. By inscribing the Muslim toppling of the "world-pillar" into a pre-existing Vedic cosmogony exemplified by the raising and felling of the Indra pole, the Hindu memorial reflects a sacrificial understanding of otherwise disruptive and contagious communal violence. The Brahmanas define man as the animal that, unlike other victims, is also capable of performing the sacrifice.

While projecting and cultivating the reign of Reason that sets us above our evolutionary ancestors, post-Enlightenment Man has become all the more adept at devising and rationalizing modes of self-aggrandizement and gratuitous cruelty far beyond the capacity of the most hungry predator.[11] Scientific research into the deep durable effects of the calculated infliction of pain and the identity-tinkering possibilities of torture and brainwashing that was pioneered by the Nazis is being applied in extraterritorial concentration camps on behalf of the "Land of the Free" with the active institutional collusion of medical doctors, psychologists and anthropologists.[12] Shortly after World War II, Anglo-American intelligence implemented Operation Gladio to deploy a "strategy of tension" across "Free Europe" that employed law enforcement, far right, and criminal elements to carry out false flag terror attacks that were deliberately blamed on (Soviet-instigated) "communists" leaving the frightened populations little recourse but to turn to the State for

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[11]The *Life of Pi* allegorizes the confrontation with our innate constitutive violence by leaving us, especially "enlightened" (Pi) Indian viewers, stranded in mid-ocean with a ferocious Bengal tiger aptly named Richard Parker after a European hunter. The book highlights in turn the unique virtues of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The narrative is also a prolonged meditation on the food chain that reduces even idyllic vegetarianism to disguised (Eucharistic?) cannibalism. For author Yann Martel, who graphically depicts imaginative tortures that otherwise "decent" human visitors inflict as amusing pastimes on the caged animals, "freedom" from the well-managed zoo of Indian (caste-) society readily translates into the predator's license to prey unrestrained on lesser creatures. The cornered tiger jumps out of the 3D-screen at us, and it is symbolically significant that "Nirbhaya" was brutally raped to death by three men stalking the streets of Delhi while returning home after enjoying it at the cinema.

[12]Abdel Hakim Belhaj "the Libyan" was kidnapped from Malaysia in March 2004 by MI6 and delivered to Colonel Gadhafi's torturers. Even while pursuing reparations from Britain, this warlord who helped topple the regime has been at the forefront in delivering jihadist "freedom-fighters" to swell the rebel ranks in the Syrian "civil war" that is mostly foreign funded and equipped, with large contingents from marginalized European Sunnis. Now accused of (massive) "human rights violations," Bashar al-Assad was likewise entrusted with illegally kidnapped Canadian dual citizen Maher Arar. Why else are such innocent Muslims still detained at Guantánamo?

protection.[13] The spectacular violence and abiding trauma orchestrated on 9/11, the media-hyped image of the falling twin towers upon which the previous world order rested, has been seared so deeply into the collective consciousness as to obscure the pre-existing agenda of global domination it served to justify. Supposedly reclaiming the human dignity and individual liberties of the civilizing West from oppressive traditions, for the moment incarnated by the menace of *jihad*-imposed *sharia*, the "War on Terror" is being waged against a conveniently protean Other.[14] "Humanitarian" interventions, legitimized and facilitated by ethnic cleansings, delegate these very self-sacrificing jihadist auxiliaries to the frontlines across resource-rich regions as the most efficient and cost-effective proxies for bringing down non-compliant regimes. Autocratic dispensations that had nevertheless managed to hold together pluralist societies based on precarious civic equilibriums have thereby disintegrated beneath the interethnic and inter-confessional violence, by unleashing a proliferation of "liberated" others. By pitting and arming Sunnis and Shias against each other, the long simmering inner conflict of Islam has been exploited to devastating, increasingly self-propelled, divide-and-rule effect to further imperial geostrategies.[15] 9/11 has also served to justify a

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[13]Among the many atrocities committed were the 1978 kidnapping and murder of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro and the 1980 Bologna railway station massacre, all typically blamed on the Red Brigades or other radical left factions. They were often timed when electoral politics and/or foreign policy in the nation were shifting significantly towards socialism. Despite various inquiries and condemnations at national levels and by the European Parliament there is no conclusive evidence that these clandestine structures were ever completely dismantled. All indications are that the lethal use of sarin gas recently in Syria that was to serve as the humanitarian pretext for a "shock and awe" US attack was actually perpetrated by the rebels provisioned by Saudi and Turkish proxies.

[14]Whereas the perpetrators of 9/11 were allegedly Saudi nationals motivated by religious fanaticism, blame was quickly laid—with all the fanfare provided by the unrepentant corporate media—on the secular Iraqi state accused of stockpiling weapons of mass destruction. Though long since shown to have been fabricated, similar charges have been pressed against the Syrian regime, drawing the ire of both Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches against the West. So fundamental is scapegoating to mass psychology that similar tactics have been effectively employed against a recalcitrant Iran that has been reprieved, for now, to focus instead on the Yellow Peril that threatens American dominance in the Far East. For Girard, the scapegoat (e.g. Oedipus) is typically branded as a (e.g. parricide and incestuous) transgressor to legitimize the recourse to violence. Though the converse is equally if not more true—the brahmanicide Bhairava and the *vidushaka* as laughing stock are primarily figures of transgression—the geopolitical applications of the preceding insight have been amply demonstrated, as by the international media campaign demonizing President Vladimir Putin as the resurrected Russian Bear.

[15]By installing and propping up an otherwise marginal Wahhabi dispensation in dynastic Saudi Arabia, the United States has created a reservoir of mercenaries to serve its "secular" geostrategic aims, starting with bringing down the Soviet Union using the Afghan mujahideen as eager proxies. If 9/11 was mere blowback from this global "database" (*al-qaeda*) of (potential) conscripts, why have these unseemly bedfellows been used to topple the Libyan and now the Syrian regimes? Just how bogus Western Enlightenment's "War by Terror" has become—and has been from the very beginning—is amply demonstrated by its cynical cooption of the most bloodthirsty (liver-eating) jihadists in pursuance of its (now largely de-Christianized) "human rights" project of global emancipation.

global surveillance apparatus that supersedes national sovereignties to spy on the entire globe through social networking infrastructure and with the collusion of telecom multinationals and Internet service and search engine providers. More dangerous than the loss of privacy are the unlimited creative possibilities, already attested, for targeted blackmail and hence control of public leaders by permanently recording and mining their all too human frailties. Whereas the raison d'être of the archaic sacrifice, also through its theatrical disguises, was to confront the undiminished violence of our animal nature, targeted drone killings presided over at congenial weekly rituals by a Nobel Peace laureate serve instead to reduce self-exposure and sanitize the slaughter into the "collateral damage" of a video game.[16] Who is ultimately inflicting this metastasizing violence against which others? Have we all become scapegoats?

6.3 Marriage of Lat Bhairon and Ghazi Miyan: Sacrificial Syncretism

If a religious tradition, its self-image and economy of violence is best defined by its rejected Other, then the privileged key to unravelling—through the backdoor—this sprawling multistoried edifice known to us as "Hinduism" has been vouchsafed to its "god of terror" Bhairava.[17] Not only has this impetuous Indian Dionysus been the symbolic crucible for the assimilation and fusion of countless bloodthirsty deities of tribal origin across the subcontinent, the central defining deed of this impure Outsider is brahmanicide, the most heinous crime imaginable in the brahmanical law books. His origin myth, found in the authoritative Puranas,

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[16]Whereas President Obama, hailed still in living memory as the "Black" American Messiah, has been overheard bragging to administration aides that "I'm really good at killing people," several drone operators at the "(killing) field" level have nevertheless quit, confessing to the media their growing unease at playing executioners.

[17]This article is indebted to my wife and lifelong collaborator Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam's field work on Bhairava in Benares and Kathmandu between 1984 and 1989, and related (often joint-) publications. It was originally presented as a talk to the interdisciplinary forum "Issues and Ideas" of the Indiana State University at Terre Haute (26th March 1991) and to the Dept. of South Asian Languages and Civilization/ Committee on South Asia of the University of Chicago (2nd April 1991). Maria Green, Patrice Brodeur, Father Gregory Schissel, Profs. Houchang E. Chehabi, Ali Asani, and William A. Graham of Harvard University, Prof. C.M. Naim of the University of Chicago, Prof. Gyanendra Pandey of Delhi University, and Prof. Sir Christopher Bailey of Cambridge University contributed comments and/or indicated valuable source materials on the Islamic side of the equation. The original version of this paper, submitted under the title "Sex and Death in Hinduism and Islam," was published in *Islam and the Modern Age* instead as "Between Mecca and Banaras: Towards an Acculturation Model of Hindu-Muslim Relations" (1993). Subsequent spinoff publications elaborating other aspects simply summarized here are referenced at the appropriate text locations.

attests to the intimate and indissoluble link between the holy city of Varanasi (Banaras) and such transgressive sacrality.[18] After having emerged from the pillar of fiery light (*jyotir-linga*) to violently cut off the head of Brahma, the "skull-bearing" (Kapalika) Bhairava had to wander about for twelve years in order to expiate. Finally, he reached Varanasi where the skull of Brahma, and with it the sin of brahmanicide, fell into a tank appropriately named the "liberation of the skull" (*kapalamochana*). Yet even after his absolution, the "Black" (Kala) Bhairava remained at Kapalamochana as "sin-eater" (*papa-bhakshana*) to devour the impurities of pilgrims to this city of final liberation (*moksha*). Paradoxically, Bhairava, the (ex-) criminal, reigns as policing magistrate (*Kotwal*) in Banaras, entrusted with the duty of preserving its sanctity not only by barring its access to the wicked but also by punishing those who indulge in sins even within the confines of the holy city. Inflicted on everyone at the moment of death, the "punishment of Bhairava" (*bhairavi-yatana*) burns their accumulated sins in this "great cremation-ground" (*mahashmashana*). This momentary but excruciating torture was administered at an ancient pillar (*lat* = Sanskrit *stambha*) the stump of which, now called "Lat Bhairon," still stands beside the present Kapalamochana tank where it is worshipped as the phallic representation (*linga*) of Shiva-Bhairava (Chalier-Visuvalingam 1986, 1989, pp. 183–191).[19] Here the impure god of transgression remains as (sacrificial) executioner, (scapegoat-) victim and pillar of the world, also known as Kula-Stambha.[20] For radical underground currents of Shaiva tantricism, exemplified by the Kaula (derived from *kula*) traditions, this Untouchable represents the supreme non-dual metaphysical principle, and was (secretly) worshipped as such by many among the mainstream Brahmin elites. Abhinavagupta, Hinduism's greatest philosopher-mystic and its ultimate authority on aesthetics, defies fearsome Death by affirming his identity as the terrifying

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[18]This origin myth is systematically analysed and reinterpreted in Chalier-Visuvalingam (1989), p. 160ff; the "punishment of Bhairava" in Chalier-Visuvalingam (1986); and the marriage of Lat Bhairon in Chalier-Visuvalingam (2006); all from the Hindu perspective of transgressive sacrality first formulated by Visuvalingam (1985).

[19]Since Bhairava functioned as sin-eater at both the *Mahashmashana-Stambha* where, as *Kotwal*, he executed the ultimate punishment, and also at *Kapalamochana* where, as *Kapalin*, he was freed of the ultimate crime of brahmanicide, it is perfectly logical that, in the wake of the Muslim occupation of Omkareshvar, the heart of Hindu Kashi, Kapalamochana had come to be (re-) identified with Lat Bhairo. These representations are components of the symbolic web (Ganga, cremation, Vishwanath temple, etc.) central to the meaning and status of Varanasi as the sacred centre of Hinduism. Pilgrimage, death, and cremation in this "City of Light" are modelled on and transpose the (principles underlying the) Vedic sacrifice.

[20]See John Irwin (1983). The cosmogonic significance of the cult of pillars and poles in South Asia and elsewhere first came to our attention with Irwin's visit to Banaras in 1979 to complete his research on the Lat. We are grateful for his constant encouragement of our work and for his comments on the present paper. A clear résumé [partly by the editor] of the contents of his various papers may be found in Irwin (1990). Limitations of space have prevented the detailed treatment of not only the successive post-Islamic relocations of Hindu sites in the sacred geography of Banaras but also the properly Buddhist aspects of the pillar.

power of Bhairava. What distinguishes Hinduism above all is this deliberate, even if often publicly disguised, elevation of the other from (beyond) the periphery to the core of its self-representation, including through the spatial visualizations of sacred geography. For Bhairava is also the internal "a priori" other, the individual and collective subconscious, through the deliberate exploitation of which one's limited psychosocial identity is transcended to realize the true Self. Upon undergoing his ritual consecration (*diksha*), the pre-classical Vedic sacrificer inwardly regressed to a prenatal state laden with impurity, evil, death and especially violence, both inflicted and undergone through a substitute animal (*pashu*) victim bound to a wooden stake (*yupa*). The phallic *yupa*, from which is derived the Shiva *linga*, stands on the edge of the vaginal altar (*vedi*), such that the embryonic regression is assimilated to a procreative sexual union, from which the "dead" initiate (*dikshita*) is "reborn" to a renewed lease of life, rejuvenated. The cosmogonic marriage of Lat Bhairon to the adjacent maternal well (*bharat kup janani*)[21] is celebrated annually by bringing the "head" (in the form of the silver mask) of Kala Bhairava from his more centrally located temple to "crown" the top of the pillar, in what is clearly a dramatization of the death-and-rebirth scenario of the Hindu king identified with the "Lord of the Universe" (Kashi Vishvanatha) himself.

After its early classical reform, under the growing pressure of the civilizational ideal of nonviolence (*ahimsa*)—popularized by spiritual currents advocating self-restraint and respect for all life such as Jainism and Buddhism—the Vedic sacrifice, which continued to serve as model for all subsequent domains of Hindu life (temple worship, public festivals, pilgrimage circuits, theatre, life cycle rituals, etc.) was purified of its (overt) sexual and violent components (that were retained, if at all, only as symbolic vestiges). Whereas the substituted animal was earlier decapitated at the *yupa*, which the Rig Veda alludes to as stained with blood, it was now (euphemistically) "pacified" (*shanta*) by being discreetly strangled in an isolated shed. Like the world renouncer (*sannyasin*), the inviolable public image of the orthodox brahmin was reduced to non-injury in deed, word and thought. The cultivation of disgust (*jugupsa*) for one's own body, more specifically the (biological needs of the) "lower body stratum" (Bakhtin), was held conducive to spiritual detachment such that, the orthodox schema correlated the goal of *moksha* to its corresponding aesthetic sentiment (*bibhatsa*). Two categories of disgust were distinguished based on the psychological effect of the impurity: whereas faeces and putrefaction exemplify revulsion (*udvega*), spilt blood causes anxious agitation (*kshoba*), which seems intimately linked to the dread of contagion, i.e. the

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[21]This alternative name of "Bharata's well" (*bharat kup*) is in accordance with the phenomenon of local sites becoming known for the particular function for which they are used in the local *Ramlila*. The waters consecrating the Hindu king—whether the epic Bharata or the royal Bhairava—are always drawn by regressing to the womb.

spilling of even more blood.[22] As the embodiment of *ahimsa*, the brahmin became the ideal for the rest of society to respect, cherish and emulate.[23] The minutest applications of the pure/impure opposition were codified by the brahmanical law books that assimilated (even involuntary) infractions to (symbolic) "brahmani-cide" such as to become inscribed into the attitudes, behaviours and very body of the (caste-) society. [24] This is how Hindu civilization had come to be viewed, both within and without, as "innately" nonviolent, the natural home of Mahatma Gandhi.

The now obscured yet core experience of violence was conserved instead by projecting and semiotically reworking its ritual mechanisms onto external others, whether "heretical" ascetics (Kapalikas), savage "non-Aryan" deities, or even the foreign invader whose propensity to kill readily assimilated him to the Vedic butcher. Ghazi Miyan was born into "history" as Salar Masud, the nephew of Mahmud of Ghazni, at Ajmer in 1014. As his desire for martyrdom was as intense as his proselytizing zeal, he headed the Muslim warriors in their numerous incursions into the Gangetic plain, until he was felled in battle in 1033 at the tender age of 19 by the Hindus at Bahraich. When Muslim domination over North India was permanently established towards the end of the twelfth century, his tomb was rediscovered. It became such an important pilgrimage site that, already by the thirteenth century, the poet Amir Khusru could speak of the whole of Hindustan being embalmed by the fragrance from the perfumed tomb. The ballads (*sohila*), which are sung by low-caste Muslim musicians (*dafali*) belonging to a fraternity devoted to his cult, make Bahraich itself his birthplace. Most significant of all is the repeated identification by the *sohila* of the city of Ghazi Miyan's tomb with Mecca and Medina (Gaboriau 1975, pp. 300, 306). Such were the material difficulties that in Akbar's reign, the doctors of religion (*ulema*) even declared that the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca was no longer obligatory for Indian Muslims. Ghazi Miyan

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[22]Adopting a radically "Marxist" and materialist approach, Laura Makarius, in her seminal work on *The Sacred and the Violation of Interdictions* (1974), reduces all primitive prohibitions to (ramifications of) the blood taboo, because archaic societies were ever susceptible to and in constant dread of contagious violence. Though ignorant of Indian parallels (brahmin, *vidushaka*, etc.), she also examines the indispensable role of inviolable figures, in whose presence blood must not be spilt, as institutionalized mediators in resolving violent disputes.

[23]As Girard now acknowledges, mimesis operates just as well in a deliberate, increasingly self-conscious, manner that distances us from the automatism of the survival instinct. Desires are not mimetic to the same degree, and cultivating their renunciation ensures that what remains is relatively authentic and self-willed. In India, such emulation has been aptly described as the (benevolent) "tyranny of the sages" (Vivekananda). The caste dispensation that had preserved India's live-and-let-live diversity has long since become counterproductive.

[24]Contrary to prevalent propaganda by his Dalit followers against immemorial "brahmanical oppression," Dr. Ambedkar astutely attributed the consolidation of the caste hierarchy to such emulation by other groups. The exclusion of "untouchables" was the logical corollary to the brahmin's repression of his own natural urges and disgust towards his (lower) bodily functions. For Girard, a hierarchical dispensation embracing diverse values and orientations is less prone to violence than an egalitarian society where everyone competes for the same goods.

became the emblem for the Islamic conquest, both physical and spiritual, of pagan India. But what is so striking is that his otherwise Muslim cult is so impregnated with sacrificial symbolism that Hindus could readily identify with and mourn his martyrdom, and typically constituted the majority of the participants at his festivals across North India. The festive mobile poles bearing his decapitated head are clearly phallic symbols that, by uniting heaven and earth, invoke plentiful rain and bountiful harvests. The "Untouchable" Doms, in charge of the Hindu cremation rituals beside the Ganga at Manikarnika Ghat in Banaras, remain fervent devotees of Ghazi Miyan and regularly make the pilgrimage to Bahraich, earlier the epicentre of the popular pre-Islamic solar worship of Lat Bhairon (Briggs 1953).[25]

Ghazi Miyan was cursed even before his birth to be martyred on his wedding day. He annihilates the aggressors and it is only while returning that he is killed by the arrow of a survivor. He had to exchange his red nuptial garments for armour, or is even still wearing them. The festive music turned martial as he rode out to battle to consummate his marriage in death. Conversely in the pre-Islamic *Mricchakatika*, the brahmin hero's procession to the execution stake culminates in an "unexpected" reunion with his lost beloved. In both cases, the funerary drums are equated to those of a wedding. Similarly today, the "Muslim" observances that prepare Lashkar-i-Taiba candidates for martyrdom, recruited primarily among the Urdu-speaking Muhajir community that emigrated during the Partition from India, find little sanction in Islam as practiced across its Arabian heartland and resemble the practices of the very Hindus targeted by the suicide attacks of these terrorists. The martyr's death is systematically assimilated to a sacred marriage where the revered mother and her consent to the self-sacrifice play a central symbolic role.

While heading for Bahraich in 1034–35, Salar Masud had dispatched a portion of his army and its retinue under Malik Afzal Alavi towards Varanasi (Sukul 1974, pp. 152–155; 1977, pp. 24–26). The invading contingent was thoroughly defeated on the northern outskirts beyond the boundary wall of the city at the site where the Masjid Ganj-i-Shahidan ("treasure of martyrs" mosque) now stands near the Kashi Railway station. The Muslim civilians, with their women and children, were permitted to settle down in that area as townsmen and over the following century peacefully served the Hindu kings even as soldiers. After Qutb-ud-din Aibak had devastated the city in 1194, destroying nearly one thousand temples, the Muslim locality was renamed "Salarpur" or "Alavipur/Alaipura" (which today includes the two wards of Adampura and Jaitpura). During the reign of Feroz Shah Tughluq, the famous Arahi-Kangra mosque, the Chaukhamba and Gola Ghat mosques, many others in Alavipur, and almost the entire building scheme around the Bakaria Kund were constructed, generally on the site of and with the

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[25]Lat Bhairon was originally crowned by a discus (*chakra*) probably representing the sun, as attested in "world pillars" (*axis mundi*), uniting heaven and earth, still standing elsewhere across the Indian subcontinent.

materials obtained from demolished Hindu temples. The Tughluq dynasty patronized the by now already famous cult of Ghazi Miyan and Feroz Shah made the pilgrimage to Bahraich where he had his hair cut. When the Muslim occupation of Varanasi eventually destroyed the architectural complex at Kapalamochana and transformed it into a magnificent mosque, it left the aniconic pillar intact in the middle of a prayer ground (*idgah*) to stand between the kneeling worshipper towards the back and the niche (*qibla*) on the wall in front pointing in the direction of Mecca. Thereby, the continuing worship of the now non-anthropomorphic pillar by Hindus and recent converts to the iconoclastic faith was (re-) inscribed into the much wider topography of Islam. So complete has been the transfer of symbolic notations from the largely denuded Lat Bhairon that, when questioned about the rationale behind the pillar's annual marriage with the adjoining well, the Hindu devotees invariably "digress" into describing Ghazi Miyan's wedding celebrated by their Muslim neighbours.

The variants on his legend retold by the Muslims around the area of the Lat (Searle-Chatterjee 1993) seem to have grafted onto the martyred warrior many significant fragments of this archaic Hindu mythico-ritual universe of sacrificial death. A bridegroom discovered that he had been chosen to be the next victim, on the very day his marriage was to be celebrated, at the problematic temple of Somnath near the confluence of the Varana with the Ganga at Rajghat, where human sacrifices were once regularly offered to the divinity. Responding to the hysterical condition of the victim's mother, Ghazi Miyan bathed in the Ganga and took his place, but the image started sinking as soon as he placed one foot across the threshold. The Muslim hero nevertheless managed to seize the head by its tuft and kick it, before dispersing the hair which grew as a type of grass wherever it fell. In a common variant, Ghazi Miyan removed his own head to avoid seeing and being seduced by the hundreds of naked women sent by the king's astrologer in order to destroy the power of his purity and thereby render him an easy sacrificial victim. Nowadays, it is the Lat which is popularly held to be sinking into the ground, and Kala Bhairava was decapitated at the Bhaktapur cosmogony when he had almost completely disappeared into the earth on his underground escape route back to Benares. Through that resilience and adaptability so characteristic of Hindu genius, Kala Bhairava still makes his annual "pilgrimage" as the royal bridegroom from his present-day temple to re-enact, in the middle of the Muslim prayer ground (*idgah*), his fateful marriage by "crowning" the Lat with his own head. The popular wisdom of colloquial (Hindi) language still refers to the cremation (-ground) as the "place of the bride" (*dulhan ka sthan*) and as the "last marriage" (*akhiri shadi*). If the Newars can be so confident that the head of Kala Bhairava at Kashi is not his "real" head, this is probably because he had already been regularly surrendering it to the Mahashmashana-Stambha even before offering it to Bhadrakali at Bhaktapur. Though the initial hostility towards the infidel other is now legitimized as a concerted effort to extirpate human sacrifice, Ghazi Miyan, whether cast as executioner or as victim, has served to (re-) inscribe his

Muslim devotees, the majority of whom were indigenous converts, into what remains a syncretic version of the pre-existing Hindu cult: hence the joint celebration of Lat Bhairon's wedding.[26]

6.4 Ghazi Miyan and Muharram: Sunni-Shia Reconciliation in India

Notwithstanding the foundational attempt of the *umma* to project violence outwards onto the non-believers (*kafir*), Islam has been polarized from the beginning by an unresolved feud over historical succession that has acquired eschatological implications. The millenarian promise of the "kingdom of heaven upon earth" that led to the Abrahamic split between the still awaited political triumph of the Jewish Messiah ben David and his alter ego, the spiritualized Christian (Jesus) ben Joseph, was thereby replicated within the immediately victorious Islam around the martyrdom of Husain (and the Prophet's immediate family) in 680 CE at Karbala (Iraq) at the imperial hands of the Umayyad dynasty. This "inner conflict" of Islam—which reflects the inevitable tension between its revolutionary "mystical" thrust from below and the "secularized" power structure of its status quo consolidated into the Caliphate—has been kept alive through the Shia commemoration of the martyrdom during Muharram. Though the cult of Husain, who by virtue of his death became "the bond of reconciliation with God on the Day of Judgment," subsequently spread to the Sunnites, the Muharram processions outside of India are generally observed only by the Shiites. The celebration in Shia Iran takes the form of passion plays:

> Not infrequently fights with Sunnites or other adversaries will develop, resulting in casualties and even deaths…. National animosity against the Arabs expresses itself on occasion, but the true villains are Caliph Yazid, who gives the order to kill Husain, and Shammar, or Shimr, who is believed to have struck the fatal blow. The excitement of the audience reaches such a pitch that the spectators not infrequently try to lynch the actors representing the murderers of Husain. Anti-Sunnite feeling is said to be such that no Sunni would be knowingly tolerated among the spectators. The final scenes usually depict the progress of the martyr's severed head to the Court of the Caliph. (Grunebaum 1951, pp. 87, 90)

In India, the Shiite community allowed Christians and even Hindus to enter the ceremonial booths (*tabut khanas*) and participate in the Muharram festivities; only the Sunni Muslims were denied and, under the English rule, prevented

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[26]For Sandria Freitag (1989b), such syncretism and reciprocal "civic" participation in city-wide festivities (like the Ramlila) demonstrates that the Hindu-Muslim distinction did not exist in the early 19th century and that the Lat Bhairo riots could not therefore have been caused by religious differences. The original version of this paper, focused exclusively on the 1809 riots, was rejected from inclusion in *Living Banaras* (Hertel and Humes 1993) because of her scathing peer review regarding its "inflammatory" content. Our rebuttal (already in Visuvalingam and Chalier-Visuvalingam 2006, to which Freitag also contributed) is that such revisionist history betrays a woefully inadequate understanding of the dynamics of religious identity.

admission. When the *tabuts* are finally carried to the Muslim cemeteries, "and Sunnis and Shias meet face to face before the open graves of Hasan and Husain, the feuds between them, which have been pent up all the year, are often fought out to a bloody end" (Pelly, 1879, pp. xxii–iv). There were frequent clashes especially in Uttar Pradesh, generally occasioned by public Shia cursing versus Sunni praise of the first three Caliphs, leading to the ban on pubic processions in 1909, which however did not prevent inter-communal violence from resurfacing in 1935–36 and in 1939. Among the still sensitive spots in Banaras (Jaitpura) are the Doshipura *mohalla*, especially during the festival of Barawafat celebrated by the Shias, who are the majority in this locality, and the Kazi-Sadullapura *mohalla* during the Muharram (Kumar 1988, p. 69). Indeed, the opposing attitudes to Muharram seem to have been read back onto the Prophet himself, for Sunnis rejoice while Shias grieve during the innovative Barawafat, which paradoxically marks both the birth and the death of Muhammad (Kumar 1989, 159–163). The Sunni-Shia divide has remained so strong that "when the issue of separation of India and Pakistan came to the fore in the 1940s the Shia were at first reluctant to entrust themselves to a Sunni dominated state of Pakistan and so, in the main, opposed separation and supported the National Congress Party politically" (Momen 1985, 276–277). Nevertheless,

> … the total number of Shi'a in India and Pakistan is difficult to estimate since they do not exist as a separate identifiable community as in most parts of the Middle East but are intermingled with Sunnis and many practise *taqiyya* [dissimulation or religious "hypocrisy"] of their beliefs in the presence of the Sunni majority. There are moreover some difficulties of definition in that there appear to be large numbers who participate in the Muharram ceremonies, for example, and who venerate Imam Husayn, but who are otherwise not identifiable as Shi'is. British censuses that attempted to differentiate Shi'is from Sunnis in the early 20th century are thought to have grossly underestimated the number of Shi'a on account of the practice of *taqiyya*. (Momen 1985, p. 277)

There are separate Sunni and Shia shrines for the Prophet's family in the vicinity of the Lat and the self-depiction of the vast majority of the Banarasi Muslims, particularly the entire weaver community, as "Sunni" (Kumar 1989, pp. 147, 163) should be replaced in this context of dissimulation and a certain fluidity, even vacillation, of religious identity (cf. Freitag 1989b, pp. 252–253). In India, both Sunnis and Shi'as observe the festival, not in the form of theatre but as processions called *marsiyah* after the elegies composed and recited specifically in honour of Hasan and Husain. Jaffur Shurreef concludes his narration of Karbala and prefaces his detailed description of Muharram as celebrated around Hyderabad in South India with the quasi-Shi'a observation that since Husain's martyrdom "the rejoicings at the *eed* (or festival), have been abolished, and mournings and lamentations established in lieu thereof" (1863, p. 112). Though he does indicate, for example (p. 114), that the Sunnis consider unlawful the practice of violently beating the breast in grief which is regularly practiced by Shi'a women, and though he approvingly mentions certain groups of *fakirs* praising the "four virtuous friends"—the Caliphs Abu Bakar, Omar, Othman and Ali—this Sunni compiler studiously avoids mentioning any Sunni-Shi'a conflicts. While the Shias have

extra processions like the wedding and maintain a certain distance, all the Sunnis of Banaras except the Wahhabis celebrate Muharram (Kumar 1988, pp. 212–222).

The dynamics of reintegration under the banner of Islam is reflected in the syncretic version of the Ghazi Miyan ballad which attributes the slaying of Hasan and Husain to the idolatrous Hindus. This is a perfectly logical development because the Iranian "hagiography" already presupposes that the Sunni victors, particularly Shimr, must necessarily be "infidels" in order to slay the near family of the Prophet (Grunebaum 1951, p. 91). The ambivalent complicity of Hindu orthodoxy in propagating this Muslim cult throughout the subcontinent may be judged by its treatment in the *Parashurama-carita*, a history of the brahmin Peshawar dynasty composed in 1771 by a brahmin chronicler: Hasan and Husain, the demoniac sons of Muhammad himself, are slain on the 7th and 10th of Muharram, respectively, by the Hindus only to receive worship ultimately from the idolaters even as far south as the Karnataka and Dravidian lands. In the *Mahikavatici Bakhar*, an early seventeenth century historical biography, they even become the slain sons of Alauddin Khilji, who in revenge killed the king of the Yadavas of Devagiri, Ramdevrav, and thus heralded in 1296 the fall of Maharashtra to Muslim domination. The rise of the (Moghul) "barbarians" (*mleccha*) to political supremacy in India is attributed precisely to the ubiquitous Hindu celebration of the *urs* (Wagle 1989, pp. 51–54, 64). Though the festival (*urs*) continued to be the occasion of Shia-Sunni conflict in India, the transposition of their martyrdom onto the Ghazi Miyan cycle served, in part, to facilitate and legitimize a common front against the infidel Hindu majority (Schwerin 1981, pp. 157–160). The Indianized martyr also provides the mythicized model for the tradition of warrior Sufis who, as religious auxiliaries legitimizing the Muslim imperial expansion into the western Deccan, constituted the first wave of Islamization that resulted in the mediaeval Sultanate of Bijapur (Eaton 1978, pp. 19–44). The popularity of Muharram among both Shias and Sunnis has indeed been expanding throughout the last century in Banaras, but since the 1931 Hindu-Muslim riots the Hindus of the sacred city have stopped participating in it (Kumar 1988, pp. 215–216).

In the vicinity of Lat Bhairon are now separate Shia and Sunni complexes comprising the "tombs" (*rauza*) of the Imams Hasan and Husain along with that of their mother Fatima. One syncretic version of the Ghazi Miyan ballad serves instead as an Indianized founding legend for this ten day festival of Muharram: it is Hasan and Husain, the grandsons of the Prophet, who are themselves born at Bahraich of their mother Fatima al-Zahra, only to be killed there on the day of their marriage with Johara Bibi. The wedding theme was already intrinsic and central to the Iranian Muharram and not simply borrowed from Lat Bhairon via Ghazi Miyan. Like Banaras for the Hindus,

> … the rebuilt grave [at Karbala] has remained to this day the devotional center for pilgrims from all over the Shi'a world. Those that are buried by the sanctuary will surely enter Paradise. Many aged Shi'i settle in Karbala or ask in their will to have their bodies transported to the holy city. For centuries endless caravans of the dead have been coming to Karbala from Persia and India, transforming the town into one vast burial-ground. (Grunebaum 1951, pp. 87, 90)

In our Indian version, Husain's death on the 10th of Muharram is no longer due to the Sunni butchery at Karbala in 680, but rather to the attack on Bahraich by Sahal Deo Bhar, the infidel Hindu king. It is most significant that Johara (Zohra or even Zahra), the Indian name of the common wife of Hasan and Husain—whom they thus share with Ghazi Miyan—is just a variant of the epithet "the Radiant or the Resplendent" that permanently characterizes their mother Fatima (al-Zahra), the daughter of the Prophet himself. Ghazi Miyan provided a role model for the Indian Muslim, even quite independently of the politico-religious notations that pit him against the infidels. This is confirmed by the all-night narration of his legend—against the backdrop of painted representations of his battles and martyrdom—during a normal marriage ceremony (Shurreef 1863, p. 66). Whether Shia or Sunni, the bridegroom is assimilated to the fallen warrior, even as Ghazi's martyrdom has been transformed into his wedding day.[27] In their 1809 attempt to demolish the Vishweshvar temple, the ragged "army" of Sunni weavers—who attribute the conversion of their ancestors to Ghazi Miyan—could thus invoke the names of Hasan and Husain in their Muharram-like procession to the nerve centre of the sacred city.

The warlike Muslim martyr embodies not so much an uncompromising opposition to Hindu piety but Islam's implantation of its globalizing egalitarian project into the very heart of the hierarchical *dharma* of Brahmanism. Conversely, the Hindus were able to embrace both festivals as their very own, especially at the popular level, by carnivalizing them on the riotous Holi paradigm. For the Shia, "Ashura is a day of darkness and disorder in the universe. On it, darkness, the symbol of evil and chaos, was created" (Ayoub 1978, pp. 151–152). Before its gradual reform, the Muharram used to be celebrated as a great saturnalia where socio-religious norms were parodied amidst shared laughter even by the Sunnis themselves (Shurreef 1863, pp. 123–141). The solemn ritual of the Hajj would be caricatured while sermons were proffered on the virtues of drunkenness, gambling, adultery and usury. In a typical Konkani village, Hindus and Sunnis would join each other in celebrating with alcohol generously supplied by the women (Saiyid 1981, pp. 124–125). The village idiot was dressed up as a long-tailed monkey to take the prime initiative in violating norms of sexual segregation and creating an atmosphere of general promiscuity (Saiyid 1981, pp. 132, 137). The Drunkard, who was even depicted wearing a brahmanical sacred thread made of leather, recalls the "great brahmin" clown of the Sanskrit drama, who reveals a fondness for wine and is constantly assimilated to a wanton monkey. The marriage of Ghazi Miyan was likewise characterized by the suspension of not only caste barriers, between brahmin and untouchable, but also the religious barrier between Muslims and Hindus, who constituted the majority of participants. The (inverted)

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[27]See Visuvalingam and Chalier-Visuvalingam (1993:41–44), where a greater wealth of ethnographic detail is analysed to demonstrate how the syncretic Indo-Muslim Ghazi Miyan is a meaningful fusion of the cults of (Lat) Bhairon and Muharram that already shared common themes deriving from an esoteric equation of sex and death (Chalier-Visuvalingam 1994).

values invested in the secret Kaula worship of Bhairava—the god par excellence of transgressive sacrality, who still lurks behind the Islamic proselytizer—have been exteriorized and generalized onto popular religion well beyond Hinduism. The receptive Indian soil had carnivalized, here and now, the eschatological promise of Muharram and of the Abrahamic tradition as a whole.

Deep-rooted sectarian conflict was not eliminated but aestheticized into mock combat, circumscribed within space and time, thereby minimizing the ever-present risk of reverting to type, of historical grievances spilling over into ordinary civic life: "theater without footlights" (Bakhtin) but where the actors are also part spectators mirroring their counterparts.[28] Where there are no Shias in the locality with whom to re-enact the battle at Karbala, Sunnis in India even celebrated Muharram by fighting among themselves. In the predominantly Hindu rural town of Bishnupur in West Bengal, for example, the entirely Sunni Muslim minority is divided into thirteen neighbourhoods that jointly celebrated Muharram as an occasion of both gaiety and mourning. This reaffirmation of religious unity was nevertheless characterized by inter-locality competition for the Hindu Maharaja's prize for the best *tazia*: not so much divide-and-rule as uniting the already divided. These exclusively Sunni actors re-enacted Karbala with real swords and sticks resulting in injury and bleeding. A newspaper report of July 1895 could observe that "Muharram passed off without a disturbance. Firstly, there was never any fear of fighting and disturbance in Banaras; secondly, when it is Hindus who mostly celebrate this festival, what fear can there be?" (cited in Kumar 1988, p. 216). Hence, beneath the triangular politics of shifting alliances between Hindus, Sunnis and Shias in India are recognizable the tensions and interplay of the respective principles of hierarchy, egalitarianism and transgression, which continue to operate even beyond, and independently, of these traditional but once fluid religious identities. The return of the Mahdi, accompanied by the resurrection of Husain and Jesus, will be heralded by the outward manifestations of extreme promiscuity and violations of sacred norms, precisely what used to happen within a religious context in the Indian festivals of Ghazi Miyan and Muharram, for the Mahdi "will demolish whatever precedes him just as the Prophet demolished the structure of the Time of Ignorance (al-Jahiliyya—the period before Islam)" (Momen 1985, pp. 169). While, on the one hand, the conservative streak of Wahhabi iconoclasm already inherent in Islam would reduce the Kaaba stone to a mere unifying symbol, the radical Shiism of the Carmathians, on the other hand, had already sought in 930 C.E. to eliminate the symbol altogether and thereby render the Meccan pilgrimage itself wholly superfluous (Jambet 1990, pp. 18–23).

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[28]Among Hindus during the "Shudra festival" of Holi, pent up aggressivity by the marginalized against those in authority and power, including by women who ganged up against their menfolk, was endured by tradition. Generalizing the (mock) violence of all-against-all served to diffuse its hold and impact and to minimize group conflict along inherited dichotomies. This is the atmosphere in which ritualized Shia-Sunni conflict took place.

6.5 From I-Thou to We-They: Modernity Aggravates the Religious Divide

> The kotwal, in particular, functioned as a hinge figure in the political order. Responsible to the Mughal Emperor for maintaining order and providing important information on the urban development of Banaras, he also had to command the confidence of all communities resident in the city in order to prevail on them to pledge "reciprocal assistance and [bind] them to a common participation of weal and woe." Evidence suggests, however, that in Banaras by the turn of the nineteenth century the preexisting relationship between kotwal (as representative of the state) and communities had begun to erode…. In the developments of the riot of 1809, too, we see evidence that the kotwal had lost the confidence of Banarsis. His inability to effect compromise and consensus was viewed by all (including himself) as a measure of the erosion of his power and position. (Freitag 1989b, pp. 36–37)[29]

Islam and Hinduism are fundamentally incompatible, even diametrically opposed, at the socio-religious level: Allah's transcendent uniqueness versus polytheistic pantheon, uncompromising iconoclasm versus anthropomorphic images, ritually encoded egalitarianism versus sanctified caste hierarchy, beef-eating versus the holy cow, orientation to Mecca versus the sacred geography of Mother India, triumphant history of the universalizing brotherhood (*umma*) versus the timeless mythology of the eternal return. The recognition of separate destinies has since resulted in Partition with the antagonistic nation of Pakistan midwifed by the otherwise secular Jinnah. Modernity, which has made it possible to bracket aside religious identities to interact amicably and productively in the secularized public sphere, has at the same time short circuited the gradual process of religious acculturation. Pre-colonial Hindu-Muslim interactions were defined by an "I-Thou" relationship that could range from a harmony of minds, through dialogue with a disconcerting challenger, to a heated altercation resulting in (much worse than) blows against a hostile adversary. But (the evolution of) self-perceptions (and self-construction) were still mediated by the reflected image of Self in the eyes of the rival Other: the face-to-face reciprocity that had shaped the religious syncretism that constituted the cults of Ghazi Miyan, Muharram and Lat Bhairon. When the colonial power and its secular administration usurped the place of the insistent interlocutor ("Thou") for both Muslims and Hindus, each was relegated to "They" in the eyes of the other, someone no longer worthy of talking to but only about— the "brokering" between the two faiths increasingly became the prerogative of an alien (-nated) intelligence, with its own agenda, that did not share their traditional

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[29]As divinized policeman-judge for the Hindu king, Bhairava encapsulated a sacrificial understanding and application of law and order, transgressive violence, and human salvation, a sanctified role that his towering statue at Darbar Square continued to play in Nepal until quite recently. Even after his mundane functions were usurped, first by the Muslim kotwal and then by the British district magistrate, the underlying dynamics of the scapegoat seem to have determined not only these 1809 riots but the tragic history of communal violence in India.

self-perceptions. Increasing Hindu-Muslim polarization is largely the product of a modern mentality that drags the deadweight of both traditions into its reductionist wake.

Self-standing cosmogonic pillars and temple flag posts were appropriated by encroaching Islam and transformed into de-sacralized victory monuments. So extensive and systematic was this appropriation that Muslims often no longer recognized their Hindu provenance. Not only did Islamic iconoclasm in the form of "Aurangzeb" leave the aniconic "Ashokan" pillar standing before the *idgah* when it tore down the surrounding pantheon of Hindu idols. The Muslims' own post-riot memorial which was "signed by 724 persons, 105 of whom were accounted individuals of note" went further to claim that this pillar of the world was in fact

> … the structure of Feroze Shah, like the pillar [Lat] at Allahabad, Delhi and other places, and which the [Hindus] state to have been erected by their own forefathers. But, be that as it may, it was not an object of their worship entitled to any great veneration like the temples of [Vishveshwar] and [Bhairon Nath]; for no account of this pillar is to be found in any of their orthodox books. The style of worship of the Hindus is this, wherever they find set up (a pillar) they call it, at the incitement of their priests, a place of their worship, and after sometime has elapsed they consider it as a place of worship of the highest sanctity. (Robinson 1877, p. 119)[30]

The same source notes that "for some years the lower classes of [Hindus] and [Muslims] have annually celebrated the marriage of the [Lat], and have divided the offerings between them" (Robinson 1877, pp. 113–114). The latter fact was still reluctantly admitted by the legal custodians of the *idgah* when we interviewed them in 1979 with John Irwin. The low-caste Muslims were primarily from the illiterate weaver (*Julaha*) community still living in Alaipura (which includes Adampura and Jaitpura wards) and who generally congregate at this *idgah* instead of at the Gyanvapi mosque unlike their caste fellows living in Madanpura. Such syncretizing popular cults still reflected an I–Thou relationship, where latent animosity deriving from incompatible religious ideologies did not entirely inhibit direct social intercourse around shared even if barely understood esoteric themes.

The "Lat Bhairon riots" of 1809 have played a crucial role in colonial historiography not only because of their gravity and magnitude comparable, we are told, only to the Kanpur outbreak of 1931 but also because they are among the first to be recorded in the colonial period (Pandey 1990, p. 29). Though the history of Hindu-Muslim riots goes back into the pre-colonial period (seventeenth century Gujarat, for example), and may be legitimately understood as the continuing legacy of the Islamic conquest of North India, it is noteworthy that there had been no significant outbreak of communal violence during the previous 100 years in Banaras, which has always remained the Mecca of Hindu orthodoxy (Pandey

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[30]All citations in this article from the conflicting Muslim and Hindu "memorials" and from Mr. Bird's personal record of the riots are from Robinson (1877), a photocopy of which from the India Office archives was received from John Irwin upon our first meeting in 1979 in Banaras when he arrived to study the Lat.

1990, p. 26, fn. 6). Banaras had been a "Mughalizing" city in the early eighteenth century and reflected cultural patterns that continued to be fostered by the Nawab's court at Awadh. Hence the strong ties established early in the career of the present Bhumihar dynasty—a landlord family, which had served as tax officials for the Nawab but had become virtually independent by 1750—with Muslim lower caste groups like the weavers. The triumvirate of power holders—royal clan, merchant bankers and Gosains—patronized an innovated and grandiose form of the Ram Lila, centred on the symbolic identification of the Maharaja with Lord Rama, which claimed the wholehearted participation of rival landowning and commercial groups like the Rajputs and the Marathas. Even the Muslims joined in celebrating it more as a civic festivity around the unifying figure of the king offered as an aesthetic spectacle in the public arena at Ramnagar and Nati Imli.

The British however had replaced Awadh as the national level authority in 1775 and the Resident's power at Banaras steadily increased until they finally took direct control of the city in 1784. The Bhumihars too had enriched themselves and come to power in the Banaras region precisely through British land reforms that had displaced the earlier supremacy of the Rajputs and Marathas. By 1809 the then Maharaja had suffered loss of power and face through his unsuccessful decade-long agitation to free himself from the control of the East India Company.[31] The Muslim kotwal too had lost the confidence of the Banarasis by 1803 when he acquiesced to highhanded British attempts to impose a tax for recruiting patrols of watchmen. Unlike the ostentatious participation of the Maharaja in the public arena, the British administration held aloof from community life and exercised its authority through local intermediaries, but intruding ever more profoundly into the interrelations, inherited structures, and autonomous functioning of the pre-existing communities. Though the social tensions and lines of fissure generated by these far-reaching politico-economic changes are difficult to determine precisely, the rationalizing mentality introduced by the British state had no doubt begun to have an insidious effect on the Banarasi "civic" culture that had for so long united the high and the low, both Hindus and Muslims. While praising the colonial administration, sometimes in obsequious tones, for having provided relatively impartial law and order and the overall conditions for economic prosperity for all of Banaras till now, both post-riot memorials appeal for British adjudication against "them" as others.

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[31]Unlike Pandey (1990), intent on restoring agency primarily to the lowest "subaltern" castes, Freitag (1989a, b) insists on the constructive mediating role of the stripped down Maharajah between the legitimate needs of his subjects as a whole and the demands imposed from above by the colonial administration. This sometimes impossible royal dilemma is well portrayed in the grassroots cross-caste resistance against the "austerities" imposed by exorbitant colonial taxation in Ashutosh Gowarikar's fictional movie *Lagaan* (2001). The ruling political dispensations across not only the Sunni world but also the Europe Union seem more responsive these days to the writ of the American superpower, beholden to global banking, than to the worsening plight of their own citizenry.

The joint participation of Hindus and Muslims in each other's cults and festivals should moreover not obscure the intense ideological struggle, even where peaceful and mutually accommodating, between the rival religions on the symbolic level for the heart, mind and soul of India. The Hindus could not remain oblivious to the living visual testimonies of the razing of the religious architecture of their sacred city (c. 1660s) by Aurangzeb who had sought to impose an Islamic city called "Muhammadabad" upon their socio-religious centre (Freitag 1989a, b, pp. 19–52). Having now lost their political supremacy, the Muslims, on the other hand, had been willing to submit to Hindu acculturation but certainly not to the extent of surrendering the divergent world view embedded into their own ritual orthodoxy. The Muslim memorial begins by observing that for 3 years Muharram coincided with the Hindu Dashahara and for 3 years with Holi; and that trouble had been averted each time by the British authorities restraining the Hindus from celebrating Dashahara till the Muharram was over and from dancing, etc., during Holi (Robinson 1877, pp. 112–213). The licentious Hindu festival of Holi formerly involved much indiscriminate violence on the ghats and elsewhere and it is therefore not surprising that Sherring (1868, pp. 191–195; cf. Pandey 1990, pp. 34–36, 80, 129; and Freitag 1989b, p. 51) simply attributed the cause of the Lat Bhairon riots to an unfortunate coincidence of religious calendars, which brought a mob of Holi revellers into headlong collision with a mourning procession of Muharram. In this climate of accelerated social change and disequilibrium brought about by British rule, all that was needed for the resurgence of the dualistic pattern of violence along redrawn Hindu-Muslim lines was an appropriate symbol to condense within itself the axial issue that separated Islam from Hinduism.

Though the weaver community in North India reverenced the flag of Ghazi Miyan to whom they ascribed the comparatively recent conversion of their ancestors, by the early nineteenth century they were already beginning to abandon such syncretic, "un-Islamic" practices under the growing pressure of Wahhabi reformism emanating from the Arabian Peninsula. For the downtrodden castes, the stricter observation of the Islamic law and personal code (*sharia*) provided the means of reasserting their social status in the face of politico-economic domination by the upper classes, both Hindu and Muslim (*ashraf*). A parallel process of purification was also occurring among the Hindu untouchables like the Chamars who were giving up liquor, meat, (blood-) red vegetables, etc., and demanding the abolition of caste and an end to idol worship. Despite its undisputed age-old sanctity, the now "brahmanized" Lat Bhairo or Mahashmashana-Stambha ("Pillar of the Great Creation Ground") was largely neglected by the Hindu scriptures no doubt because of the stigma of death and impurity associated with it. The growing religious polarization was further reinforced by the attempts of the colonial administration to systematically classify and publicly record everything, thus leaving the Muslim weavers little choice but to shed their Hindu names and customs in order to gain an equal standing within the fraternity of Islam (Pandey 1990, pp. 83–90). Partly a reaction to the derogatory connotations of their appellation as "Julaha" by others, the weavers now call themselves "Ansari" meaning "Helpers" (of the Prophet at Medina), thus crowning the tendency of South Asian Muslims to

see themselves as immigrants with a separate "biological" ethnicity rather than as native converts (Kumar 1988, pp. 49–57; 1989. p. 153; cf. Roy 1983, pp. 19–57, 249–253). Though such developments may be understood as already internal to the growth of an "Islamic consciousness" and not necessarily the product of politico-economic rivalry with non-Muslims (Mines 1981), it is nonetheless true that they set the social preconditions for religious conflict, especially when they are reflected in a shifting attitude to shared sacred spaces and symbols. The mock "tribal" conflict that seems to have been enacted by the tug-of-war between "Kols" and "Bhils" at the fair held there on the day before the new moon of Ashwin, fourteen days after Lat Bhairon's marriage, has long since disappeared. Perhaps it was rendered quite unnecessary by the even greater sacrifice of battle for the world pillar celebrated jointly by Hindus and Muslims under the divide-and-rule British impartiality of the latest district magistrate.

6.6 Lat Bhairon, Scapegoat of Lord of the Universe: The 1809 Banaras Riots

> The reconstruction of the Banaras riots in colonialist discourse, in its successive recensions spread over a 100 years or so, amounts to the making of a narrative form of strategic importance for the analysis of Indian politics. This is a form of representation of communal riots which assumes, over time, the importance of a master narrative and acts as a sort of model for all descriptions, and hence evaluations, of communal riots in official (and, I might add, nationalist) prose. In the colonial case, this communal riot narrative […] is simultaneously and necessarily a statement on the Indian 'past'. (Pandey 1990, p. 32)

> Notice that scarcely a word is altered in the text: and yet the change of context completely transforms the statement. What applied to a particular city, the experience of "convulsions" in the past and the "religious antagonism" of the local Hindus and Muslims now applies to the country as a whole. Banaras becomes the essence of India, the history of Banaras the history of India. (Pandey 1990, p. 28)[32]

Robinson (1877) has given a very detailed report using the memorials written by the Hindus, Muslims and the British shortly after the Lat Bhairon riots, so-called because the pillar was the destructive focus of the three-day carnage between Hindus and Muslims.[33] In 1809, the conflagration was sparked off by a

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[33]The only objection posed by Gyan Pandey, who attended my original talk at University of Chicago on which this paper is based, was to doubt the numbers involved and killed during these riots that he suspected were British attempts to sensationalize the Hindu-Muslim conflict. It turned out subsequently that he was unaware of Robinson's article at the India Office archives in London that John Irwin had passed on to us. I provided Pandey a photocopy of the same when he visited us shortly thereafter in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[32]Whereas Pandey's irony indicts colonial and nationalist historians for essentializing and thus perpetuating this repetitive narrative of Hindu-Muslim conflict, our account aims instead to reveal that the underlying violence that erupts so spectacularly and cumulatively—now between Sunnis and Shias across the Middle East or between Hindu castes and ethnicities—has a logic of its own that contemporary (Western-derived) "humanism" is incapable of recognizing, let alone resolving. In this regard, these 1809 Lat Bhairo riots are indeed paradigmatic.

trivial incident: in fulfilment of a vow upon his recovery from illness, a Hindu of the Nagar caste would have tried to replace the mud dwelling of Hanuman on the contested ground between the *idgah* and the pillar with a stone enclosure. At first the Muslim weavers were content to appeal to the law officer (*qadi*) and agreed to let the Hindus to continue with the Bharat Milap before referring the dispute to the court immediately after the Dashahara holidays. When they were over on 20th October, they instead held a mammoth protest meeting, in the excitement of which they polluted the Lat and its surroundings by overturning Hanuman's pedestal, uprooting the adjacent *tulsi* tree and beating the pillar itself with shoes. The conjuncture of events around the Lat so faithfully reflects the overlapping disposition of Hindu-Muslim sacred space between the Vishwanath temple and the Aurangzeb mosque, that Robinson's account mistakenly locates the Muslim demonstration around this mosque within the old Vishweshwar enclosure and shifts imperceptibly to the defilement of the pillar, which is in fact quite a long way from the religious centre of the modern city (cf. Pandey 1990, pp. 37–39). By daybreak the whole Hindu community had heard of the sacrilege and a crowd began to assemble at the Lat, so much so that the acting British magistrate had to deploy two companies of sepoys (Indian soldiers in the service of the colonial administration) to protect the Muslim places of worship. Anticipating retaliation by the Hindus, the outnumbered Muslim weavers, who were at the forefront of all these manifestations, decided then to sack the temple of the king of the gods, Vishwanath himself. Had the attempt succeeded, it would have certainly resulted in the utter annihilation of the Muslim community in Benares. The Hindus led by the Rajputs, whose attempts to assemble at the Lat had been thwarted by the district magistrate and the army, fell back and regrouped to bar the route of the Muslims who were advancing with raised standards and crying "Hasan, Husain." Outnumbered and beaten back by the better armed Hindus at Gai Ghat, the seven or eight thousand weavers retreated leaving about eighty of their dead.[34] To revenge their defeat, the Muslims slaughtered a cow on one of the holiest ghats and mingled its blood with the sacred waters of the Ganga and, according to Heber (1828, pp. 429, 431), the sacred well itself was subjected to the same sacrilege.

> The attack on the [Vishweshwar] had now been made and foiled, and the [Muslim] army, returning as it happened by another route to that taken by the crowds rushing to [Vishweshwar] arrived at the Lat and found it defenceless. They at once proceeded to mischief. A cow was dragged out from a neighbouring house and killed at the foot of the

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[34]Pandey (1990, p. 32) underlines, here as elsewhere, the mutual contradictions of the British reports: whereas the earlier records put the number killed at 28–29 (or 20) Muslims with 70 wounded, the *Gazetteer* (1907) claims several hundred killed; only 2 or 3 (and not 80!) Julahas were killed at Gai Ghat (p. 34). Given the "law-and-order" situation, there could have been just as much reason for British authorities to minimize as to exaggerate the extent of destruction and casualties. The Hindu and Muslim memorials are even more emphatic regarding the gravity and unprecedented nature of the 1809 riots (Freitag 1989a, pp. 210–211) than the highly impartial reports of magistrate Bird. Likewise, subsequent confusions in the British reports as to the (immediate) cause of the dispute and the site of the original Muslim demonstration make much sense in the light of the Hindu-Muslim representations as revealed in the subsequent memorials.

pillar. Its blood was taken into every corner, till all the sacred place was splashed with it, and then the carcass was flung, with shouts of exultation, into the holy tank of Bhairo. Firewood was heaped round the Lat and lighted to destroy no doubt the metal appendages of the pillar; and finally amidst cries of triumph, the Lat itself was overthrown, shattering in its fall into many pieces! (Robinson 1877, pp. 98–99)

Having triggered off this irreversible *quid pro quo* and now exulting over their short-lived triumph, the weavers simply went into hiding in their quarters. Such was the horror of the sacrilege that the Hindus, even upon receiving the news, would not visit the defiled spot and kept milling around the area of the Vishweshwar temple. The Rajputs, who had already been incensed by the report of a Muslim butcher having killed a cow on October 9th when the Hindus were still making offerings to the manes at Kapiladhara, counterattacked only on the following day.

But about noon…there was sudden call to arms, and as if from the earth a vast throng of armed Rajputs, some thousands strong, poured out and led by Rattan Singh and Mannear Singh, took their way to the Lat. Behind and mixed up with them were hundreds of Gosains, screaming invocations to the god, and by their cries and gestures excited the armed crowd to a frenzy of fanatical rage. At headlong speed the avengers traversed the intervening streets and soon arrived at the outraged Lat now lying in fragments and splashed with cow's blood. The mosque of [Aurangzeb] was soon in flames. Every [Muslim] found lurking within its precincts was put to the sword, and his body thrown into the blazing pile. A hog was brought in, killed at the pulpit, and its blood sprinkled over the corpses and ashes. Meanwhile the passage of the Rajputs and Gosains through the streets had filled the city with fanatical excitement, and from end to end Benares was given up to pillage and slaughter. (Robinson 1877, pp. 100)

The Rajputs had even begun to demolish the tombs around the Durgah of Fatima, the mother of the Imam Husain, and would have proceeded to do the same to the tomb of Prince Jewan Bukht, held in the highest veneration by the Muslims, had not Mr. Bird checked them in the nick of time. On re-entering the city, the latter saw that

multitudes of armed Hindus were assembled in every quarter directing their rage chiefly against the lives and properties of the weavers and butchers. The Gosains were busy dilapidating the [Gyanvapi Mosque] and had set fire to it. Several bazaars were in flames, and the whole quarter of the Julahars was a scene of plunder and violence. (Robinson 1877, pp. 100)

However due to the "diplomacy and firmness" of the district magistrate, the rioters were eventually broken up and the city was completely in the power of the large military force by the next day, but not before some fifty mosques had been destroyed. The subsequent Muslim memorial argued:

If in support of their religion they sought vengeance the destruction of the Imambarrah, which they had already accomplished, was complete; if their object was the effusion of blood, they would have directed their havoc and slaughter against those who had destroyed the [Lat] and not have plundered and robbed the whole body of the [Muslims] in the city who had no connection whatever in the licentiousness of the persons who aimed at its destruction. They murdered the innocent, though the [weavers] and other [Muslims], after witnessing the injury to the Imambarrah, with the exception of the

destruction of the [Lat] (which was in fact not an object of Hindu worship, and at all events be it what it might it was common to both parties[35]) did not extend the hand of rapine to their impure property. The murderous excesses therefore which were committed by the Hindus can be attributed only to a lust for robbery and plunder: some of the Hindus also took that opportunity of gratifying their private resentment and killed and wounded each other.[36] (Robinson 1877, p. 117)

The available details on the evolution of the riots rather suggest a cathartic eruption of self-consuming violence that exploited every possible fissure in the social fabric before falling back to more normal modes of self-regulation. It was perhaps inevitable that the Lat of the "sin-eating" Bhairava, who had always been the scapegoat of Vishwanath, was defiled and dismembered by the Muslims in the name of their own Lord of the Universe. And the irony of divine justice demanded that the Hindus should proceed to desecrate and destroy the royal Jama Masjid that had once housed their own Vishweshwar. After all, the Lord of the Universe was ultimately identical with the scapegoat Bhairava on whom he displaced his own ritual impurity, so necessary to the sacrificial process of death and rebirth.

> The [Muslims] concerned were of the lowest order, butchers and weavers. Among the Hindus were many of rank and influence. The Rajputs to a man, great and small, mixed eagerly in the mêlée and were prominent in it…. On neither side were there men of the very highest position; the Raja of Benares and the family of Mirza Jewan Bukht were alike thanked by Government for withholding their countenance to the rioters. As regards the religious classes, it is noteworthy that the higher Brahmins took no part in the riot. They expressed throughout a dignified and seemly grief and listened to reason when the magistrate asked their assistance to quell the excitement. It was a Brahmin who saved from death the [already severely wounded] child of the murdered Mutwali of the mosque [by voluntarily interposing his own inviolable body before the Gosain aggressor, a fact acknowledged by the Muslims and for which he was rewarded by the British].[37] The lower religious classes of the Gosains, however, behaved throughout with obstinate fanaticism, headed the mob in their atrocities, murdered, robbed and burned with their own hands, and opposed from first to last the restoration of order. (Robinson 1877, p. 93)

Much later in the 1920s and 30s, Hindu and Muslim landlords (*zamindar*) could still make common cause, for primarily socio-economic reasons, against lower castes like the Ahirs who were trying to improve their caste status by campaigning

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[35]The strongly caste-conscious weavers, who could venerate Lat Bhairon due to the shared symbolic paradigm that also encompassed Ghazi Miyan, were also emulating their still Hindu neighbours. They would rather destroy the sacred pillar, whose annual marriage they had been jointly celebrating, rather than allow the infidels to appropriate it completely (see note 5 on Girard's mimetic rivalry).

[36]Regardless of their ritualized dualism, the obligatory conflict during the Bhairava festivals in Nepal allowed for such violent settling of private intra-party grievances with no recourse to subsequent redress. We see here again that violence once unleashed, by whatever cause and between whichever parties, has a mind of its own.

[37]See notes 23 and 22 on the brahmin as role model and mediator, the full significance of which becomes more apparent in the 1811 nonviolent city-wide anti-House Tax protest against the colonial administration.

for cow protection and claiming the right to wear the sacred thread (Pandey 1990, pp. 155–157). The Hindu-Muslim conflict over the Lat thus seems to reflect, at least in part, the social tension between the low castes of Muslim weavers and butchers, who initiated the agitation, and the higher Hindu castes grouped around the "aristocratic" Rajputs. The "10 sects of Gosains" became involved only at the second stage, whereas the relatively "secular" Rajputs, who had once been the real mainstay of the Moghul army and provided some of its best generals, opposed the weavers' action from the start. With the advent of British administration, the Rajputs, who had been the main landed group from the 16th to the 18th centuries, had lost their traditional dominance in the region to the triumvirate constituted by the Bhumihar dynasty, the merchant bankers and the Gosains (Cohn 1987, pp. 320–342; also Cohn 1964). The District Magistrate, Mr. Bird, notes that

> On the 21st of October, the Gosains in general took no active part in the disputes at [Kapalamochana] between the Julahars and the [Rajputs]. The [Vishweshwar] was threatened with attack, the Lat Bhairo was absolutely destroyed, without a single effort on their part to prevent it; on that day the [Rajputs] presented the only obstacle to the excesses of the Julahars, but on Sunday, the 22nd, when a scheme had been concerted to retaliate on the [Muslims] at large, for the injuries done to the religion of the Hindus the Gosains were foremost in the work of vengeance. (Cited by Robinson 1877, p. 102)

Under these appalling conditions, it was only natural that Islam, particularly the Shia martyrs and the Indianized Ghazi Miyan, should provide the revolutionary banner for revolting against an enveloping Hindu order, which had acquiesced to the powers of the repressive state. The communal violence of 1849 at Shahabad, for example, was ignited when, precisely during the ritual procession (of *tazias*) on the tenth of Muharram, impoverished Pathan debtors stopped before the house of their moneylender, "the most respectable Hindu merchant in the district," in order to plunder his property and to build from the loosened bricks a miniature mosque on his very threshold (Pandey 1990, pp. 69–82).

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, however, witnessed a sharp increase in the demand for the weavers' goods and skills and those of Banaras, in particular, were perhaps less affected by the subsequent socio-economic upheavals (Pandey 1990, pp. 72, 75). More important than the loss of income for the fiercely independent Julahas was the preservation of an occupational lifestyle where weaving and worship, workshop and mosque, were wholly and deliberately identified. The period (of transition?) immediately preceding the riots may have rather seen the reformist (Wahhabi) wave of Islamic self-consciousness temporarily coincide with a heightened self-confidence and assertiveness conferred by recent economic prosperity (cf. Pandey 1990, pp. 96–107). Their very readiness to resist the encroachment of Hindu idolatry upon their *idgah* by defiling the Lat suggests that in the first place their own pillar never had for them the same sanctity that it had for the Hindus. Whatever be the nature and composition of the hidden tensions which led to the initial desecration of the Lat, it was sparked off by a religious dispute and the resulting conflagration engulfed the whole city and polarized the population along the Hindu-Muslim divide. Hinduism and Islam, after all, embody

and consecrate wholly incompatible social ideologies, the one hierarchic and the other egalitarian. The Hindu "memorial" of grievances presented to the British authorities after the riots was in the name of

> … we, all the Brahmins, [Kshatriyas 'aristocrats'], and persons of [Vaishya 'merchant/ peasant'] and [Shudra 'laboring'] castes…. We, every sect of the Hindu persuasion, have emigrated from all parts of the country to this place, for our religion tells us that [Kashi-ji] (Benares) is a spot eminent beyond all others for its religious purity and a place of worship and adoration. It is here that according to the [Vedas, Puranas,] and Shastras, the gods have always fixed their residence. (Robinson 1877, p. 106)

It was believed by the Hindus and Muslims alike that the Lat was and still is slowly sinking into the ground so that, when its top became level with the ground, not only would the Hindu caste hierarchy collapse but "all nations would be of one caste. The throwing down, therefore, of this pillar was regarded as most ominous and dangerous to Hinduism." Rev. Buyers also recorded a conversation between two brahmin soldiers guarding the prostrate pillar at the height of the riots:

> "Ah," said one, "we have seen what *we* never thought to see: Siva's Lat has its head level with the ground. We shall all be of one caste shortly. What will be our religion then?" "I suppose the Christian," answered the other; "for, after all that has passed, I am sure we shall never become [Muslims]". (Sherring 1868, pp. 192–193; cf. Heber 1828, pp. 430–431)

By the law, as then existing, the sentences passed on the offenders should have depended on the *fatwa* of the Muslim law officers, who would however have been obliged to release the Hindu prisoners in order to avoid meting the same punishment to the Muslim detainees. The acting British magistrate, Mr. Bird, hence protested,

> although common sense and natural justice must view the excesses of both parties as equal offences against the public peace, the authority of Government and the welfare of the society, still fundamental principles of the [Muslim] law are diametrically at variance with such a sentiment. That law resting on the assumption of the excessive sanctity of the [Muslim] religion and the heresy of all other modes of belief, will consider the slightest insult offered by a Hindu to a place of [Muslim] worship as heinous sacrilege and profanation, while in the greatest outrages committed against any object of Hindu superstition, it will see nothing but a laudable attempt at the extirpation of idolatry. (Robinson 1877, p. 104)

That the Government eventually dispensed with the *fatwa* to have the trials conducted by a special court only serves to underline the impossibility of any fundamental reconciliation so long as polytheistic Hinduism continues to define itself in terms of a caste hierarchy which must necessarily exclude or demote the impure Muslim, and so long as monotheistic Islam continues to define itself in terms of an uncompromising iconoclasm which it must necessarily impose on all infidels. The Muslim memorial ends with an appeal:

> the spots within the precincts of [mosques] which the [Hindus], contrary to fact pretend to call their places of worship, such as…the [Lat] ([Kal Bhairon Kula-Stambha] of [Feroz] Shah; and, which from the avarice of the ignorant [Mutwali] of the faithful they have for some time frequented for the purpose of [worship], be prohibited to them, in order that a

stop may be put to the dissensions which must constantly arise from participation of the [Hindus]. (Robinson 1877, p. 119)

The Hindu memorial makes counterclaims on the sacred sites of the city and remonstrates that

if the [Muslims] enjoy strength and power for war and combat, let them look to the [Kaaba] and [Karbala] the true places of their worship. It is but lately, as all the world knows, that a sect of their own, the [Wahhabis] attacked the [Kaaba], made a general massacre of their holy city, rooted up the tombs and monuments of their prophets and their imams, and plundering property by crores, carried it off as spoil…. Let them go there and wage war with the destroyer of their race, let them seek retribution for the blood of their own tribe, and in support of their faith kill the enemies and murderers of their brethren and be killed themselves. The fame of their attachment to their faith will thus spread throughout the world, and they may restore their dilapidated tombs and Imambarrahs. By their constant dissensions with us poor creatures, they vainly injure their own hopes in the next world, and only harass us. (Robinson 1877, p. 111)

The Hindu memorial adds for good measure that "the violence sustained at the hands of these short-sighted [Muslims] was not once practised under the administration of the [Muslim] Emperor. It has occurred under the Government of the English Company renowned for its active goodness" (Robinson 1877, p. 111). The *idgah* here had no particular sanctity but was esteemed by the Muslims only because it marked the former ascendancy of Islam over the religion of the Hindus, whereas the Kapalamochana tank and (what was left of) the Lat was of the highest sanctity to the Hindus. The district magistrate (now Mr. Watson) hence proposed to hand over the whole site to the Hindus as part of an overall policy of separating the two communities to prevent future clashes even at the price of totally excluding one or the other at disputed sites like Vishweshwar. However, Mr. Bird opined that both Hindus and Muslims had suffered so severely that neither would molest the other.

Government adopted his counsels and no alteration whatever was made to the original position of the parties. Permission was given to both alike to repair damages, and according to their respective religious customs each purified their violated altars. The Hindus held high ceremonies, and with prayers and Ganges' water the fragments of the Lat were restored to their original sanctity and reverently buried (Robinson 1877, p. 106). But it was not until June 1810, when the Hindus reconsecrated their outraged shrines and the veneration paid to the original pillar was transferred to the mutilated relic, that the first riot can be said to have actually concluded. (Robinson 1877, p. 102)

Human violence has its own logic and even the intervention of the Gosains, which signalled the disastrous "sacralization" of the conflict, was perhaps not a complete derailment of the archaic dualistic pattern around the raising and the felling of the Bisket *linga*. The brahmins and higher castes had been fasting on the ghats since the evening of the 20th to mourn and protest the sacrileges at the shrines particularly the Lat and the Ganga, which meant that liberation was no longer possible in the desecrated city. When they were finally persuaded by the district magistrate to disperse on the 23rd, the Gosains and other rioters, who had been too busy slaughtering and pillaging to participate in the fast, now took their

place on the ghats on the 24th morning. Bird observed that "they collected not like the Brahmins on the 23rd from religious principle, but for the purpose of obtaining concessions" which they could now extort through "the danger to be apprehended from their influence and example" at a time when the public authority naturally looked to the community leaders for support (Robinson 1877, p. 103). Having run its quasi-apocalyptic course along the Hindu-Muslim communal divide, the indiscriminate violence thus began to cut across religious barriers and assume political overtones increasingly directed against socio-economic injustices. The police had earlier

> divided themselves into two parties, Hindu and [Muslim], and wherever they were stationed sided with their co-religionists against each other instead of combining to preserve the peace against all comers…. The Kotwal himself was a [Muslim], and for his supposed complicity with his co-religionists went in danger of his life till he resigned his post. The soldiers [perhaps half of whom were brahmins; Heber 1828, p. 429], however, maintained throughout the utmost discipline, and, whether Hindu or [Muslim], remained true to their trust of guarding the places of worship of either denomination, acting as effectively against their co-religionists as against other disturbers of the peace. (Robinson 1877, p. 103)

But even as "the original disturbances marked only by shocking religious outrages had subsided in June 1810," a singular feud erupted between the military, the chief indigenous instrument of British domination and aggrandizement, and the agents of law enforcement, namely the police: "The sepoys carried on a guerilla warfare in the streets of the city against the police, and in either body Hindus and [Muslims] were indiscriminately mingled" (Robinson 1877, p. 103). The sepoys had not only persistently defied a magisterial order against the carrying of arms in Banaras but also ridiculed the police for their earlier role, which thus lead to a long succession of affrays in August and September 1810 (Pandey 1990, p. 40). Already during the Lat Bhairo riots, for about 20 days in October and November 1809, the sepoys were not allowed time off to bathe, dress, or prepare their food, so as "to *prevent them* as much as possible *from communicating with the people.* For this purpose they were provided with [local sweetmeats] that they might be at all times within the control and observation of their officers" (Pandey 1990, pp. 48–49). When a reinforcement of British troops arrived on November 21, the authorities withdrew a good many sepoys from the city but still retained, for the same reason, the entire contingent of European officers. The British civil and military officials were concerned that, like the Hindu and Muslim police, the Indian sepoys could also become infected by the contagious popular violence, which could have easily sought a fresh and perhaps more legitimate target, namely their own intrusive alterations of the existing socio-religious order. What transpired in 1811, in almost seamless continuity, was a well-coordinated uprising by the whole city—comprising both Hindus and Muslims—against the colonial administration but now in a resolutely nonviolent "Gandhian" mode.

6.7 Felling of the World Pillar: Islamic Fulfilment of Vedic Cosmogony?

> These are the laws and the rules which you must carefully observe in the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving to you to possess, as long as you live on earth. You must destroy all the sites at which the nations you are to dispossess worshipped their gods, whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree. Tear down their altars, smash their pillars, put their sacred posts to the fire, and cut down the image of their gods, obliterating their name from that site. (Deuteronomy 12, pp. 1–3)[38]

The violent conversion of Hindu temples into mosques was simply an extension of the original strategy of transforming (the idolatrous Arab pilgrimage cult around) the pagan Kaaba into the unifying sacrificial symbol of a triumphant and uncompromising monotheism (Peters 1990a, p. 233; 1990c, pp. 64–67). When the pre-Islamic tribes of the Quraysh were forming alliances for battle simply over the privilege of lifting the black stone into place in order to complete their joint renovation of the Kaaba, it was the (future) Prophet who ordained that all the tribes should equally participate by taking hold of the ends of a cloak to lift it into position so that he could establish it with his own hands (ibid, p. 191). Even then some of the first Muslims, as exemplified by Umar, refused to worship the Kaaba and did so only on the Prophet's insistence and example, and with full knowledge that they were kissing a mere stone (op. cit., vol. 3, p. 120). Because the polytheistic pantheon of Egypt had served to consecrate a socio-economic hierarchy with the oppressive god-king (pharaoh) at its exalted centre, the egalitarian ideal imposed upon the freed slaves was encoded into the Mosaic prohibition on idolatry. What distinguishes uncompromising Islamic iconoclasm from that of the (prior) "chosen people" was its triumphant plebian expansion across diverse ethnicities already long exposed to Jewish and Christian monotheism.[39]

Arabic inscriptions on the new entrance porch (Alai Darwaza) built by Alauddin Khilji to the mosque of the Qutb Minar at Delhi liken the latter to a second Kaaba (Baitu'l mamur).[40] Another Hindu *nagari* inscription on the right hand jamb of the main entrance door calls the Minar by the Hindu term for "pillar" (*stambha*). Qutb-ud-din Aibak laid the foundation of this "pillar of light" (from

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[38]Peters (1990c, p. 50ff). Such biblical passages are currently used to legitimize a narrow territorial understanding of "Greater Israel" and the forcible Zionist (re-) settling and (dis-) possession of Palestine.

[39]Graham (1983) focuses on the fundamental opposition between pervasive ritualism and "reformationist" iconoclasm in Islamic orthopraxy without attempting to resolve this apparent contradiction in terms of an inherent "project" presiding over the "final" revelation. I have outlined a dialectical understanding of the thin vacillating line separating (commemorative or decorative) symbolism from idolatry in the Abrahamic tradition rather in terms of the unifying egalitarian ideal encoded into the monotheistic iconoclasm.

[40]The following observations are culled from John Irwin's various papers on Islam and the Cosmic Pillar.

qutb and *manara*) in 1192 "both as tower of victory to celebrate the defeat of the Rajputs in battle, and as a minaret for the priest's call-to-prayer at the adjoining Victory Mosque (*Quwwatu-l-Islam*), built on the site of a Hindu temple dedicated to Vishnu" (Irwin 1987, p. 136). Though the mosque was dedicated in 1199 A.D., the Qutb was completed only after his death in 1211 A.D. by his successor Iltutmish. Alauddin Khilji (1296–1316) had started building a second and even larger Minar at the mosque but it was never completed beyond the basement storey. Before the Islamic Qutb, stands the equally famous fourth century Iron Pillar, which had stood on a mound facing a Vishnu temple. Fifteen years after Feroz Shah Tughluq ascended the throne in 1351 A.D., the Qutb was severely damaged by lightning and the Sultan repaired it by increasing its height and adding a new cupola, which also fell to the ground after the earthquake of 1803. By the end of his reign in 1388, he had pillar shafts brought to Delhi from Topra in the Ambala district of present-day Haryana and from Mirath in Uttar Pradesh; a third pillar bearing Ashokan inscriptions had been re-erected within the compound of his mosque at Hissar, 150 miles to the west of Delhi. The Topra pillar was erected immediately before his royal Jami Masjid in the fort at his capital, corresponding to the location of the "flag-pole" (*dhvaja stambha*) in the compound of the Hindu temple.

Feroz Shah was a patron of the cult of Ghazi Miyan and had made the pilgrimage in 1378 to Bahraich where he had his hair cut (Schwerin 1981, pp. 148–49). His Hindu mother and his awareness of the cosmogonic significance of the Indian pillar-cult notwithstanding, the iconoclastic Sultan would have had sound Islamic justification for (re-) erecting an even Ashokan pillar at the *idgah* at Banaras, so long as the monument was not treated as a divinity in itself. Akbar himself was keenly interested in the Allahabad (pre-) Ashokan pillar, which he enclosed within his own fort, and unsuccessfully attempted to transport an ancient pillar to his capital at Fatehpur Sikri before he eventually had his pillar throne (*diwani-khas*) constructed there in stone (Irwin 1986). In some of the Shiite traditions, moreover, "the link between God and the Imams is visualized as being a pillar of light descending from heaven upon the Imam," which only serves to identify his station even further with the "axis mundi" or "pole" (*qutb*), the Perfect Man (*al-Insan al-Kamil*) of (Sunnite) Sufism (Momen 1985, pp. 208–209). The inevitability of the socio-religious confrontation hence did not preclude—from the very beginning—a certain complicity between Hinduism and Islam in the symbolic interpretation of the violence to which the Lat had been subjected.

After all, the Muslim lower castes had connived at the Hindu worship of the world pillar, participated in celebrating its marriage, and even claimed it as their own, so much so that the Banaras myths of Ghazi Miyan reflect as profound an understanding of its function as the Hindu theologem of the "punishment of Bhairava" (*bhairavi-yatana*). For the Hindu mythico-history, on the other hand, the levelling of the Lat was as inevitable as the Kali Yuga, which would be redeemed only by a "barbarian" (*mleccha*) messiah (Kalki), a role readily fulfilled for certain Indian (especially Bengali and Gujarati) Muslim innovators by the Prophet Muhammad. More than just the tendency of Sunnis and Shias to close

ranks within a single community (*umma*), the Indian cult of Ghazi Miyan represents the symbolic implantation of this egalitarian Islamic ideal within the heart of (not only popular) Hinduism.

When following the example of Sikandar Lodi and Aurangzeb, the Wahhabi theologian Sayyid Mahmud Hasan proscribed the customary practice of prostration after taking control of the shrine at Bahraich in 1942, he was successfully challenged in court by the leading *ulema* of the time, including Baba Khalil Das of Banaras. Litigation was pending in 1989 for restoration of a more representative committee but the shrine continued to be managed by reformist administrators appointed by the UP Waqf Board, which was however denied any authority to interfere with the *dargah* practices (Mahmood 1989, pp. 39–40). In the months prior to the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1931, the same Vedic scholar cum devotee of Ghazi Miyan, Khalil Das Chaturvedi, had been leading the Tanzim movement in a vigorous campaign for social and religious reform among the Muslims of Banaras (Freitag 1989a, b, pp. 226–227). Though interrupting this process of syncretic assimilation at the folk level, even the spread of the iconoclastic Wahhabi ethos, which cannot be judged in terms of the mere numbers of its adherents (cf. Kumar 1989, pp. 162–163 for Banaras) nor be reduced to its Arabian trappings, thus tends in its own way to transform the Indianized symbol into a universal social reality (cf. Roy 1983, pp. 249–253).

The chaotic birth pangs of a new order based on the abolition of the caste segregation were already being jointly rehearsed by both Hindus and Muslims during the festivals of Ghazi Miyan and Muharram all over India, and by the Hindus themselves in their own festivals both before and after the arrival of the Muslims. The carnivalesque spring festival of Holi could easily be (re-) interpreted as an exteriorization of the (temporary but) necessary abolition of caste distinctions within closed Tantric circles, as in the esoteric Kaula cults of Bhairava, whose leading theoreticians were all brahmins like Abhinavagupta.[41] From the Hindu perspective, the Muslims were merely guilty of "hastening or forcing the end." Faced with the *fait accompli* however, the Hindu memorial simply translated the event into a re-enactment of a sacrificial embryogony:

> it has been ascertained that the Lat notwithstanding all these attempts, did not fall till they sprinkled it with the blood of a cow and her young, which they got from a [garden] and dragged, tied by the neck to the spot. On this outrage the [capital] on the [Bhairon Lat] spun round and tumbled and the Lat burst and fell to the ground. They cast the cow which they had slaughtered into the tank of [Kapalamochana] which is near the Lat and completely defiled it. (Robinson, p. 109)

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[41]My keynote address on 19 July 2013, complemented by Chalier-Visuvalingam's plenary talk on Rabelais and the Medieval carnival, at the "Bakhtin in India" international conference (Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar) was precisely on this topic, taking the (ritual) clown (*vidushaka*) of the classical Sanskrit theatre as mediator between the hidden ideology of transgressive sacrality and inversions of the popular carnival.

And like the fallen pole of the Indra festival, the Lat itself is said to have been thrown into the Ganga about half a mile away, whereas the physical probability is that the sandstone largely crumbled under the heat of the fire (Sherring 1868, pp. 191, 306).

The *Mricchakatika* successively assimilates the (innocent) brahmin being led to his execution to the Indra pole being carried to the cremation ground, to the sacrificial goat being led to the Vedic *yupa*, to the delivery of a calf (*gosava*), and his death to the birth of a son. Not only is this "chief person" of the sacred city (of Ujjain), whose body is imprinted all over with the extended hand in blood-red sandal paste, (falsely) accused of having murdered his beloved courtesan for her gold, but his own wife with whom she is symbolically identified prepares to throw herself into the fire just as he is being executed. However, the execution instead culminates in the (un-) expected reunion with his courtesan-wife at the stake, experienced as a rebirth from the throes of death. The untouchable Tamil folk hero Kattavarayan eagerly consummates his fatal wedding with the inviolably pure Aryan daughter of the Vedic brahmins likewise at the stake (Visuvalingam 1989, pp. 438–445). The calf "unexpectedly" found within the "barren" cow, which was "to be bound or immolated after" (*anubandhya*) the sacrifice as an offering to Mitra-Varuna,[42] was identified with the immortal Vedic sacrificer himself. The (premature) extraction of the embryo (of sometimes indeterminate sex) was assimilated to a normal delivery and it was decapitated only to be ritually (re-) united (by means of the *brahman*) with the golden womb of the dead mother so as to form a single sacrificial entity. "Thus that which is superfluous (*atirikta*) becomes not superfluous," declares the *Shatapatha Brahmana*.[43] By adding the detail of the calf, the Hindu memorial has simply translated the Muslim "sacrilege" into a brahmanicide "decapitation" of Lat Bhairon himself, into the death and "matricidal" (re-) birth of the sacrificer from the womb within. The present stalemate in India between the outward socio-religious manifestations of the "primordial" and the "final" revelations is best symbolized by the stubborn stump of Lat Bhairon remaining in the middle of the level prayer ground (*idgah*). The toll on the living will however continue, at least until Muslims and Hindus willingly join hands in completely levelling not the innocent pillar but the remaining socio-economic inequalities in what may perhaps be called an Islamic fulfilment of Vedic cosmogony.

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[42]The Vedic Mitra ("friend") was the beneficent face of the awe-inspiring Varuna, who ruled over the cosmic law and equilibrium (*rta*) punishing transgressors with his dreaded noose. Chalier-Visuvalingam and Visuvalingam (2004) has shown, through a sacrificial analysis of the Hindu pantheon, that the kotwal Bhairava has inherited his "underworld" role from Varuna. Likewise, the scapegoat aspect of the classical clown (*vidushaka*) is derived from the "evil-form" of Varuna as incarnated by a deformed brahmin standing mouth-deep in his native element of water.

[43]Cf. Visuvalingam (1989), pp. 435–436, 452-453. See *Shatapatha Brahmana* (4.5.2.1-18) for details on the *anubandhya* cow (Eggeling 1978). My unpublished but systematic scene-by-scene sacrificial analysis of the *Mricchakatika* is available at http://www.svabhinava.org/abhinava/Sunt harMrcchakatika/index.php.

6.8 Sacrificial Violence in Abrahamic Tradition: Vedic Brain in Islamic Body?

> Whether we call it Vedantism or any-ism, the truth is that Advaitism [Non-Dualism] is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab; yet practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, was never developed among the Hindus universally.

> On the other hand, my experience is that if ever any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone.

> Therefore I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose that path that suits him best.

> For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope.

> I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body. […]

Swami Vivekananda, letter written 10th June, 1898 to Mohammed Sarfaraz Husain of Naini Tal.[44]

The Vedic sacrificial embryogony deliberately read into the sacrilegious felling of the cosmogonic world pillar could just as well have been (re-) written by an Islamic scholar conversant with its esoteric parallels going back to the roots of his Abrahamic faith. Ibn Ishaq's *Life of the Apostle of God* already speaks of some of the treasure of the Kaaba being stolen from a well in the middle of it. It was on the stone of the Kaaba, created at the same time as heaven and earth, that Abraham would have united with Hagar to conceive Ishmael and it was there that he would have subsequently tethered his camel when he sought to immolate him for Allah (Peters 1990a, pp. 190–191, 244–245). The Kaaba stone, which is repeatedly referred to as a "pillar" in the context of the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage in the year of his death (Peters 1990c, p. 116), is also the Muslim counterpart of the

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[44]Standing at the fountainhead of Hindu revival, Indian nationalism, and interfaith dialogue, Swami Vivekananda's legacy has become the object of contestation between Hindu nationalists, Indian secularists, and globalizing Vedantists, as became so apparent during his 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations in 2013 in Chicago. Whereas Vivekananda is here recommending the adoption by enlightened (Indian) Muslims of a non-dual (*advaita*) spiritual perspective (that is also found in Abhinavagupta and ibn Arabi), this section argues that the (scapegoat mechanisms underlying the) Vedic sacrifice could very well complement this by clarifying the problem of violence.

stone that Jacob had earlier set up as a pillar in the Hebrew "House of God" (Beth-El), to mark the site where he had seen the ladder to heaven (Peters 1990a, pp. 34–35). The Prophet was transported on the Night of Destiny from the sacred Mosque at Mecca to the "distant" (*al-aqsa*) mosque where he ascended the ladder to "which the dying man looks when death approaches" so as to receive the first revelations of the Koran (Peters 1990a, pp. 208–210, 1990b, pp. 43–45). Even otherwise, the first intimation of the Koran on Mount Hira by Archangel Gabriel to the sleeping Prophet was already likened to an experience of death (Peters 1990a, pp. 193–194). The site of the ascension (*me'raj*), which seems to be a simplified version of the ascent through the seven palaces of the Jewish Heikhalot mysticism, was subsequently identified with (the al-Aqsa mosque standing before the Dome of the Rock built over) the Stone of the Foundation on the Temple Mount of Jerusalem (ibid, pp. 208–209).[45] On this rock, where Abraham had sought to sacrifice Isaac, had once stood the Jewish Holy of the Holies, a place of symbolic sexual union as represented by the twin cherubim, which were also equated with the palm tree. The episode where Jacob is maimed by an unnamed assailant who then blesses him with the name "Israel," is itself a symbolic enactment of the animal being immolated at the altar of the Temple so as to be borne to heaven by the "ladder" of the sacrifice (Peters 1990b, p. 84). Muhammad originally chose Jerusalem as the direction of prayer and is even reported, on the authority of (the future second Caliph) Umar, as worshipping before the Kaaba such that it stood between him and Jerusalem (Peters 1990a, pp. 207, 218–219).

The originally white stone, which had become completely black due to constant fingering by menstruating women, is interpreted by the great Ibn Arabi as (the evil in) the dark luminosity of the heart. The words of Al Hallaj as reported by al-Ghazali:

> People make the pilgrimage; I am going on a (spiritual) pilgrimage to my Host; While they offer animals in sacrifice, I offer my heart and blood. Some of them walk in procession around the Temple, without their bodies, For they walk in procession in God, and He has exempted them from the Haram.

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[45]A photograph of handprints stained with blood at the al-Aqsa mosque appeared in *Time Magazine* (October 29, 1990), p. 51, in the aftermath of the Temple Mount incident between the Israeli police and the Palestinians. "The Supreme Muslim Council expressly forbids anyone other than Muslims to pray on the Temple Mount. When right-wing Knesset members tested this restriction by praying outside the Dome of the Rock in January 1987, Muslim riots rocked East Jerusalem. Arab nations have voted to wage a jihad against Israel if the mosques are destroyed. This actually pleases the craziest of Christian fundamentalists and ultra-Orthodox, since they believe an all-out war, the Armageddon, must come along with the Messiah. If such a conflagration breaks out in the Middle East, it may explode over this big, unattractive, and intensely disputed rock on top of Mount Moriah" (Tierney 1989, p. 370). For the messianic expectations and the wave of prophecy sweeping through America in the wake of successive Middle East crises, see among others Steven Stark, "Apocalyptic fervor" in the *Boston Globe*, Monday, November 19, 1990, p. 13 cols. 1–2.

Hallaj's limbs were amputated before he was hoisted on the cross and finally beheaded not only for proclaiming his identity with Allah but particularly because of his affirmation that the Temple of the Kaaba itself had to be destroyed (within) as the last remaining "idol" separating the mystic from its Founder (Peters 1990c, pp. 112–122, 244–249). This axial "pillar" of the Muslim pilgrimage probably corresponds not only to the black spot that was removed from the heart of the Prophet when, as a mere child, his body was cut open and cleansed with white snow (Peters 1990a, p. 184), but also to the black kid sacrificed to the pole at the culmination of the Nepali festival of Ghazi Miyan. A syncretizing Bengali version of the prophetic genealogy assimilates this quasi-shamanistic ordeal to a purificatory punishment imposed by Allah on his exemplary Messenger for having struck an intransigent goat in anger (Roy 1983, p. 101). The camels slaughtered during the Hajj in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael, the progenitor of the Arabs, are but substitutes for the pious pilgrims themselves.

For the (Twelver) Shiites, the Hidden Imam (Mahdi), who bears the same name Muhammad (ibn al-Hasan al-Askari) as the Prophet himself, disappeared in 874 A.D. into the Well of the Occultation (*Bi'ral al-Ghabya*), while imprisoned with his mother, in the cave-cellar of his house-mosque at Samarra (Momen 1985, pp. 161–171). His messianic reappearance at the end of time will happen more specifically on the anniversary of Husain's martyrdom on the tenth (Ashura) of Muharram (Peters 1990a, pp. 382–385), the first month of the Arab calendar, whose choice as a Muslim festival was originally modelled on the Yom Kippur, which likewise fell on the tenth day of the first month (Tishri) of the Jewish calendar (Peters 1990c, pp. 109–110; Schissel (1990). Now, the ritual of the scapegoat on Yom Kippur, which symbolically identified the High Priest as both executioner and victim, also explains the splitting of the Jewish Messiah into a martyred (Jesus) ben Joseph and a triumphant ben David. The *Zohar* (Peters 1990c, 100b) moreover assimilates these 10 days of Awe to the stages of a divine wedding consummated on Yom Kippur. The Jewish sacrifice of the Red Heifer (Numbers 19:1–10), whose ashes rendered the pure impure and vice versa, was identified by Saint Paul and even more systematically by Thomas Aquinas with (the feminized) Christ on the Cross (Peters 1990b, pp. 230–232; 1990c, p. 47).[46] The transgressive Sabbataian Jews subsequently identified her with the Kabbalistic secret of the Messiah, who had abrogated the law of the Torah. The Koran scrupulously retains this "ridiculous" Mosaic prescription in its second Surah—that of the Cow (2.67–73)—to the effect that, in order to allay mutual accusations of murder, an unyoked and unharnessed cow must be sacrificed and its pieces used to hit the corpse of the

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[46]The late Hyam Maccoby, Talmudic scholar, who published a work on human sacrifice in ancient Judaism and introduced me to Patrick Tierney's work on the same in Andean religion, thought (our conversation of 28 July 1989) that its redness is particularly associated with menstrual blood. French Kabbalah scholar Charles Mopsik informed me of an esoteric Jewish tradition that would make the Red Cow the mother of the Golden Calf, whose idolatry prompted Moses to break (the original tables of) the Law.

victim. In the Jewish prototype, an untraced murder is expiated through breaking the neck of a heifer, enjoined by the judges upon the elders of the nearest Jewish city, who thereupon washed their hands over the corpse declaring "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Forgive, O Lord, Thy people Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed, and suffer not innocent blood to remain in the midst of Thy people Israel" (Deuteronomy 21.1–9). Even in mishnaic times the cow was symbolically assimilated to a man and, according to one source, the consent of a Bet Din of seventy-one members is necessary for the killing, which would amount to "re-inscribing" a purely criminal act into the properly sacrificial paradigm of the Red Heifer (contrast Patai 1983).

But what is the relevance of this transgressive embryogony to the larger contemporary question of human violence in an increasingly "secularized" world? The abolition of caste within the radical Tantric fraternities devoted to the cult of Bhairava was not so much the expression of an egalitarian political ideal, it was rather the direct consequence of the transgression of the otherwise binding rules of ritual purity which were also the foundation of the social hierarchy. Whereas the (triumphant) Sunni Caliph was the defender and propagator of the Islamic polity *vis-à-vis* the infidels, the (martyred) Shia Imam became the sacrificial focus of an ever-belied messianic expectation of the imminent abrogation of the religious law (*sharia*) that (provisionally) held this community (*umma*) together (Jambet 1990). The messianic liberty that inspires the Shia movement is however not so much a glorification of license—the carnivalized Indian Muharram that enjoyed massive Hindu participation—but a perfect interiorization of the maternal figure of the Imam who will simply render (the outward observance of) the law wholly superfluous. All the Imams are said to be not only martyrs on the model of Husain, but were born circumcised, with their umbilical cords already severed and even spoke from within their mother's womb (Momen 1985, p. 22)! In the final analysis, the Mahdi, who "will come with a new Cause just as Muhammad, at the beginning of Islam, summoned the people to a new Cause and with a new book and a new religious law (*sharia*), which will be a severe test for the Arabs" (Momen 1985, p. 169),[47] is no more than the "historical" hypostatization and religio-political institutionalization of the death and rebirth of the Muslim initiates from the inner womb of a Fatimid gnosis.

As the Mother-Creator figure, Fatima is "not very different from the image of Mary in Roman Catholicism, she is even referred to as 'virgin' (*batul*)" (Momen 1985, p. 236). Such "virginity" is no doubt also the primary significance of the "barrenness" of the *anubandhya* cow and the requirement that the Mosaic heifer must have never been yoked. Fatima represents the Sophia of the Shiite gnosis and would functionally correspond, in the Suhrawardian transposition, to the Avestan Spenta Armaiti (Corbin 1977, pp. 63–68). The Imams thus share the "maternal"

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[47]Interestingly, one of the Shia prophecies also predicts that "death and fear will afflict the people of Baghdad and Iraq. A fire will appear in the sky and a redness will cover them" (Momen, loc. cit.).

role of the brahmin (=cow): "the Imams are the 'brides' of the Prophet. And furthermore, since Initiation is nothing but the spiritual birth of the adepts, in speaking of the 'mother of the believers' in the true sense, we should understand that the real and esoteric meaning of this word 'mother' refers to the Imams. Indeed, this spiritual birth is effected through them…." (ibid., p. 67).

Bhairava himself was absolved of his brahmanicide only when he re-emerged from the Ganga at Kapalamochana during that precise conjunction when Banaras itself, the Great Cremation Ground engulfed an all sides by the maternal Ganges, assumed its full significance as the womb of Hinduism (Chalier-Visuvalingam 1989, pp. 178–180 on the *matsyodari-yoga*). The inner violence of this traumatic rebirth—outwardly expressed through the punishment of Bhairava, the martyrdom of Husain, and even the crucifixion of Christ—implied not just a positive valorization of (initiatic) death as liberation. It would suggest that the only way of completely uprooting the innate human propensity to violence is perhaps through an intense struggle (the "greater *jihad*") culminating in a conscious inner re-enactment of the marriage of Lat Bhairava and Ghazi Miyan, a perfect interiorization that would render wholly unnecessary this endless sacrificial cycle of raising, felling and resurrecting the pillar of all humanity.

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Part III
Contestations of Identities

Chapter 7
Group and Individual Level Determinants of Collective Violence: Socio-psychological Aspects of Hindu-Muslim Riots

R. Barry Ruback and Purnima Singh

7.1 Introduction to Collective Violence

Collective violence refers to groups of individuals committing physical assaults that result in personal injury, loss of life or damage to property (Grimshaw 1970). Typically, collective violence is viewed as the product of historical, cultural, social, economic, and political conditions. Not surprisingly, then, the major works on riots, revolutions, and terrorism are by historians, political scientists, and sociologists, who are concerned with large scale, societal level explanations of collective violence.

Although societal factors do affect the onset and type of collective violence, they are not the only factors that direct its course. In this chapter we argue that two other levels of explanation, group and individual, must be considered. Moreover, we argue that a social psychological analysis that takes into account both the interactions of the three levels (societal, group and individual) and the nested nature of these data is needed to complement structural explanations of collective violence. Finally, we briefly illustrate the advantages of a social psychological approach by discussing research on Hindu-Muslim violence in India.

R.B. Ruback (✉)
Department of Sociology, Penn State University, University Park, USA
e-mail: bruback@psu.edu

P. Singh
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-Delhi, New Delhi, India
e-mail: psingh@hss.iitd.ac.in

7.2 Structural Conditions

In the late nineteenth century many explanations of collective violence focused on the structural conditions of society. These explanations, consistent with a Marxist explanation of conflict, focused on such conditions as high rates of poverty, economic and social stratification, racial inequality, strong authoritarian hierarchy, control by violence, and a limited political opportunity structure. Today, however, few people believe that societal conditions by themselves cause violence. Rather, these conditions are seen as predisposing factors. That is, they increase the likelihood of derogatory behaviour and hostility toward out-groups and, if a triggering incident does occur, the violence can be subsequently justified by these predisposing factors.

For example (Smelser, 1963), the structural-strain theory assumes that collective action is the product of six factors, all of which must be present if collective violence is to occur: structural conduciveness, structural strain, generalized beliefs, precipitating events, mobilization for action, and the absence of social control. Structural conduciveness refers to factors in society that make some types of collective action more or less likely to occur. For example, collective violence is more likely to occur in totalitarian than democratic societies because democratic societies have mechanisms of social protest that can redress grievances. In terms of intergroup violence, structural conduciveness refers to the relative distribution of groups in a country. If the distribution is such that one group is much larger than another, riots are unlikely, as the highly disproportionate ratio means that group violence would result in the smaller group suffering large-scale personal injury and property destruction.

The second factor, structural strain, refers to social problems (e.g., widespread poverty, high rates of unemployment) that make individuals upset with the existing political and social system. The third factor, generalized beliefs, refers to ideological beliefs identifying the source of the structural strain in particular aspects of the social system. In the case of intergroup conflict, generalized beliefs identify the source of the structural strain in the other group and justify any action to be taken against that group. The fourth factor, precipitating events, refers to specific incidents that trigger collective action. For example, a violent action by a single individual against a member of another group (or even the rumor of such an incident) may lead to collective violence. Typically, the media seize on this one event as the "cause" of the collective violence. However, in Smelser's view, collective violence will follow this "cause" only if structural conduciveness, structural strain, and generalized beliefs were already present. The fifth factor, mobilization for action, refers to recruiting people for collective violence. The final factor, social control, refers to how authorities respond to the collective action. Their response determines the level of violence and how long it lasts.

Although Smelser argued that these factors occur in society, Brown (1965) believed that they occur in the minds of people. According to Brown, "… crowds indulge… in outbursts that are hostile or expressive when certain patterns of

impulse, restraint, and preference are present in a large number of people. For the most part these psychological variables of impulse, restraint, and preference are Smelser's determinants reconceptualized and located in minds. Structural conduciveness and structured strains and social controls and the rest are reinterpreted as mental forces in an effort to find the critical pattern of combination that activates them as determinants" (1965, p. 733).

Brown's reinterpretation of Smelser's theory suggests that structural conditions affect collective behaviour because they affect the individuals' beliefs. A similar approach is that of Staub (1989). Staub identified several conditions that may serve as precursors to violence, including economic problems (e.g. rising inflation, depression), political uncertainty, increase in crime, rapid social changes, the degeneration of moral and ethical values, and the erosion of social institutions and organizations. Moreover, Staub argued that there are cultural characteristics that predispose a country to collective violence: (a) a history of devaluation of a group, (b) a monolithic society, that is, one that has a limited range of accepted values and beliefs, (c) a strong authoritarian orientation, in which citizens rely heavily on leaders, even when those leaders urge them to commit violent acts, (d) group concepts of superiority or inferiority, or both, and (e) a high level of violence in the society. However, according to Staub, these societal conditions by themselves do not lead to violence. "They carry the potential, the motive force; culture and social organization determine whether the potential is realized by giving rise to devaluation and hostility towards a subgroup" (Staub 1989, p. 14). They may lead to retaliation and harm doing, defense of self, and motivation to elevate self and social identity.

In other words, both Smelser and Staub argue that structural conditions by themselves do not cause collective violence. Both approaches suggest that societal-level factors produce behaviour because they operate in the minds of men and women. Relevant to South Asia more specifically, in his United Nations-sponsored research on post-partition violence in India. Murphy (1953) argued that social, political, and economic factors provide fertile conditions for violence, but violence will not take place unless people are motivated to indulge in violent acts. To understand this motivation, we need to know about group and individual-level factors that explain why some persons are more likely than others to engage in violence.

7.3 Group Characteristics

In addition to factors concerning social structure, those that concern groups are also important for understanding collective violence. For example, research suggests that individuals who are most likely to participate in collective violence are those who have extensive friendship networks and involvements with organizations (Barkan and Snowden 2001). This research, which comes out of the social movement

literature (McAdam et al. 1988), suggests that it is these ties with specific individuals and groups that act as catalysts for recruitment into collective action.

Research on group factors relevant to collective violence is of four types. One concerns the manner in which people behave differently when in groups than they do when they are alone. The second concerns social identity and intergroup relations. The third concerns realistic conflict between groups. The final type concerns unequal power relations between groups.

7.3.1 Behaviour in Groups

There are two lines of thought about how being in a crowd can affect individuals. One, the dominant view since the nineteenth century, assumes that in large groups people do bad things because they are de-individuated. LeBon (1895) argued that because of anonymity, contagion and suggestibility, crowds are dangerous and violent. LeBon believed that individuals in a crowd lose their ability to control their unconscious instincts and that they behave like children and savages. Because people in a crowd become de-individuated (i.e., they lose their personal identity and sense of personal responsibility), they are, according to LeBon, more likely to engage in violence. In support of this argument, Zimbardo (1969) found in his experimental work that de-individuated individuals were likely to show higher levels of aggression. Similarly, McDougal (1921) characterized crowds as excessively emotional, impulsive, violent, fickle, inconsistent, irresolute, and extreme in action. McDougal argued that emotions like fear and anger spread rapidly in a crowd, because members' expressions of the emotion act as further stimulus for others.

Although this argument about how being in a group affects individuals is the best one known, there is an alternative perspective on the effects of groups that takes a slightly different view. According to this perspective, instead of becoming de-individuated, losing their identity, and therefore committing irrational (or at least non-rational) acts, group members become depersonalized, that is, less aware of their individual identity and more aware of their social identity based on group membership. Thus, group members are more likely to behave in ways consistent with group goals and biases. This approach assumes that the group members' behaviour is rational, given their understanding of the situation (Kelly and Breinlinger 1996).

7.3.2 Social Identity and Intergroup Relations

Being in a group can affect how people think about themselves and about other groups because people define themselves to a large extent on the basis of their social group membership (Tajfel 1978). The social identity perspective predicts

that members of social groups seek positive social identity and will differentiate primarily on dimensions that provide them with a favourable view of their own group (i.e., dimensions on which the in-group is superior to the out-group). This approach also maintains that intergroup discrimination is often driven by in-group favoritism rather than out-group derogation (Brewer 1979), and further that social categorization per se can cause intergroup discrimination. Studies show a persistent tendency to give higher rewards to another in-group member than to an out-group member (Bourhis et al. 1994). By giving more rewards to in-group members, people can ensure that their group remains the best. Moreover, because of the tendency to see the world as a just and fair place (Lerner 1980), perpetrators are likely to see the suffering of victims as being deserved because of their actions and character.

The anticipation of negative consequences resulting from negative experiences with out-group members produces intergroup anxiety (Stephan and Stephan 1985), which in turn is associated with bias towards the out-group, perceived out-group homogeneity, and negative attitudes toward out-group members. Moreover, there appears to be a link between intergroup anxiety and both hostility towards and avoidance of interaction with out-group members (Plant and Devine 2003).

One of the consequences of intergroup bias is prejudice, which refers to a negative attitude towards a person based solely on that person's membership in a particular group (e.g. race, caste, religion). Being a target of prejudice and discrimination (the behavioural manifestation of prejudice) is likely to result in negative self-esteem and sometimes both a psychological and physical threat (Herek 2000). Pervasive and repeated, prejudice and discrimination can lead to "stigmatization", which refers to a person's belief that he or she possesses a characteristic that conveys a devalued social identity in a particular social context (Crocker 1998). Stigmatization can lead to being excluded, ridiculed, and patronized, and to structural barriers to obtaining resources. Stigmatization may also have negative psychological implications for those who are targeted.

7.3.3 Realistic Conflict

A second approach to the understanding of intergroup behaviour is (Sherif 1966) the realistic conflict theory. According to this perspective, conflicts are rational and realistic in the sense that groups have incompatible goals and compete for scarce resources. In their original studies, Sherif and his colleagues conducted field studies of boys at summer camps, who were split up into groups and engaged in various competitive behaviours (Sherif et al. 1961). This competition resulted in intergroup conflict, which was reduced only when there was positive and functional interdependence between groups.

This realistic conflict approach is a useful way of looking at intergroup conflict in India. Most communal riots between Hindus (the majority) and Muslims (the minority) do not occur in rural areas or where Hindus are in a substantial majority.

Rather, they occur in those urban areas where the Muslim population ranges between 20 and 40 % of the total population and where they pose a challenge to the economic and other interests of the majority group (Engineer 1984; Saxena 1984). Consistent with this argument, research suggests that economic inequalities and rivalries are important factors in riots. As Rustomji observed, "a riot does not occur in a sleepy little village of Uttar Pradesh where all suffer equally…. It occurs in Agra, at Firozabad, and in all other towns where economic rivalries are serious and have to be covered with the cloak of communalism" (Singh 1988).

A history of conflict and mutual violence leads to cultural devaluation and to an ideology of antagonism, a conception of the other group as a dangerous enemy whose power must be limited (Staub 1989). This ideology of antagonism often develops between groups that have had conflicts over territory or power. However, significant components of even such conflicts are psychologically based, related to the group's self-concept and identity (Staub 1999). According to Grimshaw (1970), aggrieved groups are more likely to be violent if they believe state authorities are biased rather than impartial.

Collective violence may also result when a group faces the danger of a loss of rights and is supported by beliefs that legitimize violence. In such situations violence provides a unity of purpose and cohesiveness to the group. Moreover, collective violence can be a tactic that establishes and maintains a group's identity, that is purposeful, and that flows out of routine political life. This purposeful violence can be of three types (Tilly et al. 1975): competitive, reactive, and proactive. Competitive violence leads to feuds, brawls, and destruction targeted against those who infringe local customs. Reactive violence involves violent actions that are defensive and backward looking. Proactive violence involves attempts to control or influence the state. This sort of violence is generally organized and is based on clearly articulated goals.

7.3.4 Groups that Are Unequal in Power

A third type of research relates to asymmetric power and status relations, which are common with groups that are in conflict. When lower-status or minority groups perceive the dominant group's position as illegitimate, they may use a variety of strategies to obtain a positive identity, including redefining characteristics of their own group, finding new dimensions for making comparisons between the groups, or using a new comparison group. If these attempts are not successful, they may directly confront the other group. This confrontation, in turn, may threaten the identity of the dominant group, leading to a backlash.

Taylor and McKirnan (1984) provided another perspective on asymmetric power relations. They proposed a five stage model to understand intergroup relations in a society stratified on the basis of ascribed characteristics, such as in feudal societies. Their theory assumes that stratification takes place on the basis of selected criteria for group membership and that this division is not questioned by

members of either group. In such intergroup contexts, the pattern of social attributions and social comparisons is dictated by the power relations between the groups. This theory maintains that when members of the low status social group are unable to enter into the other group on the basis of individual social mobility, they initiate collective action and a process of consciousness raising. The five-stage model deals with collective action by talented members of a disadvantaged group. It does not deal with an equally important phenomenon, collective action by a disadvantaged group led by members of the advantaged groups.

7.4 Individual Differences in People that Engage in Riots

Even when conditions are conducive to the expression of collective violence, only a small minority of people actually engage in violence. One strategy is to look for factors that differentiate these individuals from those people in the same situation who do not engage in violence. Given the bias that those who engage in violence have something wrong with them, there has been a focus on negative characteristics. In particular, the focus has been on some pathology that separates terrorists from others. The view of sociologists like Le Bon and Sighele in the late nineteenth century was that the individuals most likely to engage in riots were "criminals, madmen, the offspring of madmen, alcoholics, the slime of society, deprived of all moral sense, given over to crime" (Rule 1988, p. 95). Today, this view is generally rejected, as research indicates that most terrorists do not have psychopathology (Barkan and Snowden 2001). The dominant explanation of collective behaviour is that individuals act rationally and instrumentally, rather than purely expressively (Barkan and Snowden 2001). Moreover, most research suggests that rioters and non-rioters do not differ in terms of criminal background. However, there is evidence that the two groups differ in terms of three characteristics (Barkan and Snowden 2001): gender, age, and family obligations. Rioters are more likely to be male and young (i.e. in their teens and twenties), and less likely to be married and to have children.

With regard to beliefs and attitudes, some research from the United States suggests that riot participants and non-participants generally hold similar views (McPhail 1971; Sears et al. 1971). Other research suggests that rioters hold political beliefs that are consistent with violence. The problem with such findings, however, is that because respondents were interviewed after the riots, it is not clear whether the attitudes caused the violent behaviour or were a result of having participated in the violence and being mistreated by the police afterwards (Barkan and Snowden 2001).

A final type of individual-level factor related to involvement in collective violence that has been investigated is differences in personality characteristics. In particular, four personality characteristics have been examined for possible links to involvement in collective behaviour (Kelly and Breinlinger 1996): locus of control, political efficacy, an individualist/collectivist orientation, and social

domination orientation. Locus of control refers to a generalized expectancy regarding whether the consequences of events are related to personal efforts. Internals believe events are under their personal control, whereas externals believe events are beyond their control. Although some studies have found a link between an internal locus of control and involvement in political actions, most studies have found no relationship (Klandermans 1983). Political efficacy refers to the belief that one can affect the political process. Most of this research has investigated involvement in anti-nuclear activities, and the evidence is mixed. Moreover, rather than feelings of efficacy leading to membership in groups, it may be that identification with and membership in groups leads to feelings of efficacy (Andrews 1991).

The third personality characteristic, independence-interdependence, (Markus and Kitayama 1991), is the individual-level analogue of the culture level characteristic, individualism-collectivism. Although collective solutions are not always used in collective societies (Smith and Bond 1993), they are probably more likely because group membership is an important component of identity, groups are less easy to leave, and group efforts are more likely to be successful (Triandis et al. 1988). Research at the individual level suggests that interdependent people are more likely to favour members of their own group, to stress group harmony and the sharing of resources, and to prefer group over individual goals. Together, these characteristics suggest that interdependent people are more likely to engage in collective action (Kelly and Breinlinger 1996). Moreover, there is evidence that individuals who are interdependent with their fellow group members and who have a comparative ideology (i.e., they evaluate their group by comparison to other groups) are more likely to favour the in-group over the out-group (Hinkle and Brown 1990).

The fourth individual difference factor, which has received attention in the recent past, is social dominance orientation. Social dominance theorists (Sidanium 1993) assume that members of high status groups have higher levels of social dominance orientation than do members of low status groups, and this difference increases with the level of inequality or hierarchy in a social system. Those who are advantaged under the hierarchical system have a desire to maintain that system, whereas those who are disadvantaged by it have little reason to support it. Thus, we might expect individuals at the tail ends of the distribution (i.e. those strongly in favour or strongly opposed to the hierarchical system) to be more likely to engage in collective action.

At the individual level, Staub (1989) argued that there is a progression along a continuum of destruction. Very small acts that initially may have no significance, like calling the other group a name, may lead to psychological changes that make further destructive actions possible. In other words, offenders come to believe that their actions are legitimate. According to Staub, people have to respond to psychological needs, even if those responses do not address the problems of external conditions. People devalue and use others as scapegoats to defend their self-image and to escape feeling responsible for their failure to protect themselves.

However, resource mobilization theory, for example, argues that the key determinant of whether or not individuals become involved in collective action is not their attitudes, grievances, and discontent, but rather their friendship and organizational networks (Barkan and Snowden 2001). Thus, although individual characteristics provide some information about involvement in collective violence, none of these factors alone is a strong predictor.

7.5 Mixed-Level Explanations

Single-level explanations, whether they involve social structure, groups, or individuals, are not sufficient to explain collective violence. A focus on structural conditions ignores the fact that most people suffering under poor conditions are nonviolent; only some groups and some individuals engage in violence. A focus only on groups ignores the fact that violence occurs under some structural conditions but not others. Similarly, a focus only on individual characteristics ignores the fact that violence is directed at certain groups and not others and that too only when certain structural conditions are present. Thus, given these qualifications, it seems that the best explanations are those that connect these levels of explanations.

One such theory is that of relative deprivation, which refers to a negative state that results when there is a discrepancy between individuals' objective conditions and what they believe they deserve. According to one statement of the theory, relative deprivation occurs only when an individual sees that similar others have the object or condition that the individual wants, feels entitled to, believes it is feasible to possess, and does not blame himself or herself for failing to possess (Crosby 1976; Folger et al. 1983) it. How individuals respond to relative deprivation depends on whether they direct their anger at themselves (intropunitive) or outwardly against society (extrapunitive), whether they believe they can change their lot or affect society (control), and whether or not they have real opportunities to bring about changes (open or blocked opportunities). People who are intropunitive, believe they can change their lot, have open opportunities and will engage in self-improving behaviours. If they are intropunitive, have high control, but have blocked opportunities, they will experience stress symptoms. In contrast, persons who are extrapunitive, believe they can affect society, and have open opportunities will engage in constructive change of society. If they are extrapunitive and have either high control but blocked opportunities or low control, they will engage in violence against society.

Crosby's statement of egoistical relative deprivation applies to the individual level. However, relative deprivation may also occur at the group level, a phenomenon referred to as fraternal relative deprivation (Runciman 1966). For example, whether people are intropunitive or extrapunitive depends in part on whether they perceive that other members of their group also are relatively deprived. If they do, it is more likely that they will make an external attribution to explain why they and

their fellow group members are deprived. This sense of collective relative deprivation is linked to collective action, although the link is not always strong (Kelly and Breinlinger 1996).

7.6 Application of the Socio-psychological Approach to Hindu-Muslim Riots

Attributing blame to another group may sometimes escalate conflict. Intergroup attribution refers to the ways members of different social groups explain the causes and consequences of the behaviour of members of their own and other social groups. In making attributions about the behaviour of another person, people use not only that person's individual characteristics but also the characteristics that are associated with the group to which that person belongs. Research has shown that intergroup attributions are ethnocentric; people make more favorable attributions for members of their own group than for members of out-groups.

Pettigrew (1979) referred to this pattern of attributions as the "ultimate attribution error." Specifically, people use internal attributions (i.e. personal, dispositional causes) to explain the negative behaviours of out-group members. That is, when out-group members do something bad, their behaviour is explained in terms of negative dispositional factors. In contrast, to explain positive behaviours of out-group members, in-group members will make attributions to one or a combination of the following factors: to luck or special advantage, to high motivation and effort, to situational context, or to the fact that this one individual is exceptional and different from his or her group.

These ideas about attributions have been studied in India by several scholars. An early investigation of intergroup attributions was carried out by Taylor and Jaggi (1974) in southern India against the background of the conflict between Hindu and Muslim groups. Subjects (Hindu adults) first rated the concepts Hindu/Muslim on 12 evaluative traits and then rated 16 one paragraph descriptions. They were asked to imagine themselves in a given situation, being acted towards in a certain manner by another Hindu (in-group member) or Muslim (out group member). Situations were described as socially desirable or undesirable. Subjects had to explain the behaviour of the other person involved by choosing one of a number of explanations. In each case one explanation was internal, the remainder external. For socially desirable behaviours, internal attributions were more likely for in-group than for out-group actors, whereas for socially undesirable behaviours, internal attributions were less likely for in-group than for out-group actors.

Islam and Hewstone (1993) investigated attributions by members of majority and minority groups, Muslims and Hindus, respectively, in Bangladesh. As in the Taylor and Jaggi (1974) study, their three studies showed strong ethnocentric biases. That is, positive acts by in-group members were attributed to internal, stable, and global factors, and negative acts were attributed to external, unstable, and specific factors. In contrast, attributions for out-group members showed the

opposite pattern: internal, stable, and global factors to explain negative acts, and external, unstable, and specific factors to explain positive acts.

Other studies have investigated the relationship of attributions, relative deprivation and intergroup relations (Ansari 1981; Naqvi 1980; Tripathi and Srivastava 1981). These studies have shown that minority group members (i.e. Muslims) suffer from feelings of relative deprivation more than majority group members (i.e. Hindus). Further, Muslims who feel high fraternal relative deprivation show more negative attitudes towards Hindus than do Muslims who feel lower levels of fraternal relative deprivation (Tripathi and Srivastava 1981). Similarly Kumar (1999) found that two minority groups, Christians and Muslims, both feel higher fraternal relative deprivation than do majority Hindus. Feelings of relative deprivation affect attitudes and attributions towards the other group. For example, Naqvi (1980) found that compared to Muslims low on fraternal relative deprivation, Muslims who experience high fraternal relative deprivation are more likely to blame Hindus for the instigation of Hindu-Muslim riots.

A final group of studies conducted in India have investigated how perceptions of norm violations relate to intergroup relations between Hindus and Muslims (Ghosh et al. 1992) and found that both Hindus and Muslims rated norm violations by their own group as mildly negative. However, in terms of how they anticipated the other group to react to norm violations, Hindus gave significantly more negative ratings than did Muslims. Thus, Hindus displayed a somewhat exaggerated anticipation of stronger other-group reactions, whereas Muslims tended to show a more consensual, shared, and valid appraisal of the other-group reactions.

7.7 Discussion

Going from the individual level to the societal level, there is a continuum of approaches to the understanding of collective violence: (a) personality characteristics of individuals that make them more likely to participate in collective action; (b) attitudes and beliefs that make individuals more likely to participate in particular types of collective action; (c) membership in specific small groups that increase the likelihood of collective action; (d) membership in large groups (e.g., religious communities, caste); and (e) characteristics of the social structure. Most of the theorizing on collective violence has focused on the last two levels. There is also some research on individuals, particularly personality characteristics and attitudes.

7.7.1 Parallel Analyses

Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) argued that individuals' core beliefs about intergroup relations are thematically similar to the worldviews of groups. In their

paper, they examined five belief domains at the individual and group levels: superiority, injustice, vulnerability, distrust, and helplessness. The first four, superiority, injustice, vulnerability, and distrust, lead to violence. An argument reflecting these four beliefs might be something like the following:

> We are a special people deserving of high stature (superiority), but we have been unjustly denied our rightful place (injustice). Our situation is precarious; we are staggering toward an abyss (vulnerability). Why is this the case? Because other groups have repeatedly acted against us and betrayed us (distrust). We must pull together and take action now. (Eidelson and Eidelson 2003, p. 189)

In contrast, the fifth world view, helplessness, probably serves to reduce mobilization: "But there is nothing we can do about it, we can only accept our fate" (Eidelson and Eidelson 2003, p. 189). According to Eidelson and Eidelson, individual-level beliefs grow out of family and interpersonal relationships, whereas group-level worldviews are based on broader cultural understandings of the in-group and out-group. Both individual beliefs and group worldviews create biases that distort perception and interpretation, and they are both resistant to change.

Although it seems reasonable that individuals' core beliefs about intergroup relations are parallel to the worldviews of groups, future research needs to test whether these two levels are actually similar or whether the two are related in different ways. For example, group beliefs may simply be the sum of individual beliefs, in which case talking about groups would be redundant in the presence of individual-level work. Alternatively, individual beliefs may be the product of group processes, in which case talking about individuals is unnecessary. Or, both individual and group beliefs may be reciprocally related or be the product of larger social forces.

7.7.2 Cross-Level Analysis

In contrast to a view of individuals and groups operating in parallel, our research, using a social psychological approach, was concerned with cross-level analyses. Specifically, we were interested in assessing individuals' responses to structural conditions and to individual and group actions. We conducted three studies investigating social psychological aspects of collective violence (Ruback and Singh 2007, 2008). Our first two investigations were based on the judgments of 408 adult respondents (231 Hindus, 177 Muslims) living in Allahabad. In the first investigation, respondents were asked to rate on a 4 point scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") the importance of 16 historical incidents and of 6 social conditions for contemporary Hindu-Muslim relations. Results indicated that Hindus and Muslims differed in their judgments of all six contemporary social conditions they were asked about (religious conversions, Hindu orthodoxy, Muslim fundamentalism, the marginalization of Muslims, the religious intolerance of both groups, and the relative deprivation of Muslims). Moreover, Hindu and Muslim participants' ratings were significantly different on 10 of the 16 historical incidents, suggesting

that the two groups' perceptions of the past contributed to their perception of current conditions.

Our finding that Hindus were more likely to consider events from the early 1500s as important today is consistent with Murphy's (1953) finding that Hindus were more likely than Muslims to believe that historical facts were relevant to contemporary relations. Murphy (1953) suggested two possible reasons for this difference. First, there might be a difference in time perspective that is religiously based; because of the vast amount of time in the Hindu cosmology, Hindus might be more likely to see reality as ageless. Thus, they would be inclined to see historical events as part of contemporary reality. Second, because Muslims are more likely than Hindus to be currently experiencing negative events in their lives, they are more attuned to the present and immediate future than to the past.

In a second study, we investigated differential perceptions of value of life by asking Hindu and Muslim participants to indicate how bad it would be if individuals died in a riot. We systematically varied the number of individuals who were said to have died in the riot (1, 5, 10, 50, 100, 500 or 1000) and the religion of the individuals killed in the riot (Hindu or Muslim). Results indicated that at the extremes (1 and 1000) Hindus and Muslims did not differ in their evaluations of lost lives. However, in between those extremes (5, 10, 50, 100 and 500) Hindus valued Hindu lives lost more than Muslim lives lost. In contrast, Muslims basically showed no difference in the valuation of Hindu and Muslim lives lost and, if anything, valued Hindu lives more.

In a third study, involving 173 college students (82 Hindus, 90 Muslims), we investigated whether Hindus and Muslims differ in their notions of collective responsibility. Participants read descriptions of two riots, the first started by a small group of Hindus (or Muslims) and the second started by a group of Muslims (or Hindus). They learnt that the number of deaths in the first riot was low (about 5) or high (about 100) and the number of deaths in second riot was either the same as in the first riot (about 5 or about 100) or much greater than in the first riot (about 100 or about 1000). Among other findings, results indicated that when offenders were from the participants' own religious group, participants (both Hindus and Muslims) blamed the individual offenders the most and their own community the least. However, when the offenders were from the other religious group, participants (both Hindus and Muslims) blamed the other religious community. This latter finding is consistent with the idea of deeming a group responsible for the actions of individuals (Lickel 2003). In particular, this collective responsibility is likely for groups that have high entitativity (Campbell 1958), that is, in which the members are bonded together in some way.

7.7.3 Future Research

Aside from the question of causation, there is a question about how best to conceptualize individuals, groups, and the larger society. In the past, as we have

suggested, different disciplines have focused on different levels of analysis. That is, psychologists have examined individuals, social psychologists have looked at groups and individuals within groups, and sociologists and political scientists have looked at large groups and at societal structures. One problem with such a restricted, discipline-bound focus is that it is impossible to test cross-level interactions.

Moreover, the single-level focus ignores the fact that individuals are nested within groups and groups are nested within the larger society. Until recently, researchers could acknowledge the fact that nesting exists but were unable to do anything about it. However, in the past decade new statistical techniques have been developed that allow the testing of cross-level effects.

We believe that future research on collective violence needs to take account of cross-level as well as single-level explanations and needs to examine the nested nature of individual, group, and social factors. Few studies examining collective violence have used statistical techniques that take into account the fact that people within a group are likely to be correlated (i.e. to be more similar than people in different groups) and that groups within one location are also likely to be correlated (i.e. to be more similar than groups in different locations). However, analytical tools, such as the HLM program (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992), can account for the nested nature of individuals and groups, and can provide tests that can measure the extent to which explanatory factors vary across contexts.

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Chapter 8
Identity, Activism, and Political Violence: A Psychosocial Perspective on Kashmiri Militants

Shobna Sonpar

8.1 Introduction

While economic, political, sociological and historical perspectives shed considerable light on the emergence and maintenance of political violence, the subject may be further illuminated by understanding how the social realities of economics, history and politics mediate with the inner life of man to produce political actors who use violent means towards political ends. For this, social science must turn to the psychology of individuals, groups and situations, a psychology that explores emotional and non-conscious dynamics along with processes that are rational and conscious. Drawing on a study of former militants in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (Sonpar 2007), this paper explores political violence from a psychosocial perspective that assumes that any behaviour, including political violence, results from a complex combination of factors within persons, within their interpersonal and group relationships, and within the wider sociopolitical and cultural context.

The topic poses a challenge to individual psychology to extend study to the psychology of situations and of systems. This is a significant concern since contributions on the subject of political violence from the discipline of psychology have typically focused on individual personality and pathology despite overwhelming evidence that those who use political violence do not exhibit unusually high rates of clinical psychopathology, irrationality or personality disorder in comparison to the general public (Taylor and Quayle 1994; McCauley 2001, 2008; Victoroff 2005). Nor do they differ greatly from other people in education and socio-economic status (Abadi 2004; Krueger and Maleckova 2003).

S. Sonpar (✉)
Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist, New Delhi, India
e-mail: shobnasonpar@yahoo.co.in

Greater insight is offered by a psychosocial perspective that calls for a dialectical and dynamic understanding of the psychosocial whole. One such model is that developed by Varvin (2003) and colleagues in which violent movements are understood as arising from disturbances in three dimensions relating the person to another, to the group and to cultural discourse. At the person-other dimension, disturbances may arise as a result of trauma or other humiliating blows to self-esteem arousing overwhelming and difficult emotions. The second dimension concerns the person's relation to the group bringing to the fore issues of group belonging and identity. Disturbances in this dimension often cause the feeling of community ('we-ness') to be overtaken by identity assertion ('we are'). The cultural discourse dimension concerns the subject's relation to culture in the broadest sense: cultural narratives, myths, philosophies, dominant ideologies, morals, folklore, literature and other social discourses. Being a reservoir of cultural understandings of existential themes, it is often the source of the regulatory principles that structure meaning in other dimensions, providing perspectives that help maintain a safe position in the human community and connect with important moral codes. In disordered societies, healthy diversity of cultural narratives, ideologies and beliefs collapses into disorienting chaos or into a 'singularity' where an inflexible, fundamentalist ideology treats alternative perspectives as alien and poisonous (Rosenbaum and Varvin 2007). The psychosocial system is a dynamic one so that disturbance on one dimension has repercussions at the other levels. For instance, cultural narratives of ethnic victimization in the cultural discourse dimension can change the way that the group's identity is formed and maintained and have serious effects on personal and intimate relationships including the socialization of children and the relations between women and men.

The relation of the person to others and to otherness, that is, the dialectic between the self and the Other, is a significant concern in the study of political violence. Social psychological theories, such as Brewer's (2007) Optimal Distinctiveness theory, view phenomena such as prejudice and "scapegoating" as arising in the dynamic between opposing needs for belonging, inclusion and assimilation on one hand and differentiation on the other. Both needs are satisfied simultaneously when the in-group provides belonging as well as distinctiveness from other social groups. Hostility towards out-groups and othering may serve the purpose of reinforcing in-group belonging and distinctiveness.

Psychoanalytic views suggest that othering is a way of defining and securing one's own positive identity through stigmatizing an Other. Self and the Other develop in a relational manner such that self-affirmation comes to depend on the denigration of the other group such as has been described in Hindu–Muslim relations in India (Kakar 1995). The relation between self and Other can also be understood in terms of the three dimensions of the psychosocial model outlined above (Rosenbaum and Varvin 2007). In the personal dimension, self-worth and positive emotional state are maintained by projecting troubling and disavowed aspects of oneself onto the Other. This also occurs in the group dimension where the Other group becomes a familiar "target for externalization" (Volkan 1990) and a container of disavowed aspects of the group-self. Importantly, this projective

process occurs both ways so that groups may be familiar and indispensable "enemies" for one another in a long-standing relationship without too much overt conflict. Such othering also takes place in the cultural discourse dimension and is reflected in cultural stereotypes and in the vying for dominance of a single ideology that is intolerant of other perspectives, which are seen as impure and polluting. A dramatic shift occurs when the perceived "familiar enemy" becomes truly an enemy, when symbolic othering gives way to actual othering. Real events, particularly those that are discriminatory, repressive or violent, can tip these otherwise normative processes towards a malignant course.

A psychosocial perspective on political violence is oriented by at least three considerations. First, it speaks of an overlap between normative, everyday processes and behaviours and destructive, malignant forms. The psychological mechanisms that underwrite the latter such as projection, externalization, dissociation, impaired mentalization and so on, as well as dynamics of identity and power, may not be different from those that underlie more mundane behaviour (including those that are both mundane and malignant such as domestic violence). It is the transition to "malignancy" that needs to be articulated. Second, it necessitates a process view that heeds historical and dialectic aspects indicating multifactor determinants with different elements assuming salience at different points in history. Finally, the psychosocial correlates of action/praxis need to be understood along with attitudes of hate and prejudice since the connection between emotional attitude and action is by no means simple and linear.

The kind of malignant unfolding suggested above and the complexity of factors involved is illustrated in an instructive example of a popular movement against drugs and gangsters in the Western Cape Province of South Africa (Dixon and Johns 2001). People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) was formed in 1995 out of an open network of anti-drug, anti-crime citizen groups and neighbourhood watches but developed into a violent vigilante organization and by 1998 came to be seen as an urban terrorist organization. The early years of the movement were critical in that dissatisfaction with the loose structure, the violent resistance of drug dealers to PAGAD's nonviolent public demonstrations outside their homes, and disillusionment with the state's lack of response to repeated demands for action against gangsterism, coincided with the growing influence within PAGAD of more politicized and organizationally experienced elements associated with radical Islam. This led to the emergence of a new leadership, a tighter structure and adoption of aggressive tactics. In dialectical interplay with these changes, the state's response to PAGAD changed from constructive engagement to forceful enforcement, demonization and repression. Associating PAGAD with globalized Islamic fundamentalism transformed it into a more homogenous, isolated and defensive group. Although its back was ultimately broken, what remains is an underground terrorist organization structured into autonomous cells for the purpose of military operations. Factors of history, race and ethnicity provide the backdrop to this unfolding. Apartheid social policies had led to a demographic pattern in the Western Cape in which 54 % of the population was coloured; they were not white enough in the eyes of the old apartheid regime and not black enough for the new

regime. One-third of the coloured population belonged to the Muslim community. This was a community struggling with the advent of modernity, the inadequacy of traditional community institutions in meeting new problems, and a history of internal conflict in the 1980s about whether to join the liberation struggle or seek their own liberation based on political Islam rather than constitutional democracy.

Similar malignant unfolding can be discerned in the histories of the insurgencies in Kashmir and the north-east of India and the revolutionary Naxalite movement. Secessionist movements are by definition criminalized and bring down the armed might of the state. A heavy militarized response in the absence of any attempt to address grievances reinforces views among the disaffected that their enemies are oppressive and hostile and persuades others that injustice is being done. It is difficult for state security forces to contain political violence that is located in a "sentiment pool" (McCauley 2008), a broad base of popular support, and thus, they resort to increasingly repressive measures despite the conclusions of military historians that the key to successful counter-insurgency is the winning over of the hearts and minds of the public and that militarized responses are ineffective. As violence escalates and spreads, human rights violations abound on all sides, a climate of fear prevails, and perceptions of "good" and "evil" become more rigidly polarized.

Alderdice (2002, p. 12) remarks, "One thing at least is common to both the terrorist and those who are combating terrorism. Both believe that to kill off the 'evil thing' is good, and should one die in the attempt; it is not only a moral and courageous act but also one that confirms the wickedness of the enemy". Labels about political violence—militancy, insurgency, extremism, terrorism, freedom struggle, *jihad*—vary depending upon how violence is morally deployed and legitimized. This bears out Hinshelwood's (2002) comment that all wars may be seen as 'holy wars' because they all depend on a projective arrangement of morally toned aggressiveness. questions are usually raised about the legitimacy of particular violence but rarely about the use of violence per se.

The political violence in the north-east, Kashmir and areas of Naxalite influence in India is likely to have many aspects in common in that these constitute "terrorism from below", that is, political violence of relatively small groups with less power though perhaps a wider support base. They also call forth similar reactions from the state. The psychosocial dynamics and course of "terrorism from above", which is political violence sponsored by the state or perpetrated by groups with more power are likely to be different. State violence is legitimized in terms of national security imperatives and buttressed by laws that make violations of civil liberties technically legal and insulated from prosecution. This makes it likely that violence will be more extensive and have a wider impact. Authoritarian attitudes, fear of punishment for disobedience (Varvin 2003), the "banality of evil" (Arendt 2006) that suspends thinking and judgment making violence another bureaucratic exercise may be additional factors to consider. Another set of psychosocial dynamics may operate in the violence of dominant groups in gender, race, class and ethnic conflicts. These are likely to include issues related to entitlement (Foster 1999), privilege and superiority (Edelson and Edelson 2003) and threatened egotism (Baumeister et al. 1996).

8.2 Background and Present Study

This paper draws on a study of former militants in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). An armed struggle for the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir from India began in 1989 with hundreds of young men crossing the border into Pakistan for arms training, riding the wave of popular sentiment. India maintains that J&K is an integral part of the country since the Hindu ruler of the erstwhile princely state acceded to India in 1947. Pakistan's claim on it derives from it being a Muslim majority state. Although both are committed by UN resolution to hold a plebiscite to exercise the right of self-determination in their respective areas of Kashmir, neither has done so.

Militancy in Kashmir can be said to have had three phases beginning with a nationalist, secular movement for *azadi*, independence, spearheaded by the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Since 1994 when the JKLF declared a unilateral ceasefire, it has continued to wage a nonviolent struggle for independence. The second phase in the early 1990s saw the rise of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), a wholly indigenous *tanzeem* (militant organization) affiliated with the Jamaat-e-Islami that favoured union with Pakistan. Fierce internecine battles for supremacy took place between the JKLF and the HM and led to the emergence of the reviled *ikhwanis* ("renegade" militants largely belonging to the Ikhwan-ul Muslimeen, an associate of the JKLF, who joined Indian counter-insurgency efforts to quell the HM and became a law unto themselves). By late 1990s, massive state repression and counterinsurgency-related excesses as well as the degeneration of the militant movement saw the establishment of a culture of fear. This, together with international developments targeting Muslim nations, provided fertile ground for a threatened identity polarization around Islam. Thus, the third and current phase of militancy saw the rise of pan-Islamist *tanzeems* such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM). Pakistan has supported militancy in J&K through its Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and has provided training, arms and finances throughout. This has led to Kashmir militancy being called Pakistan's "proxy war" and "cross-border terrorism". It has drawn attention to Pakistan's role and ignored the public support for the goals of the Kashmir *tehreek* (movement) and the fact that at a vast majority of militants are Kashmiri.

Statistics about the number of persons involved in militancy vary depending on the source but the numbers are considerable. A rough idea of the numbers involved may be gathered from the following figures from the Institute of Conflict Management's database. From 1990 to 2001 the number of militants arrested was 51,588 and the number of those who surrendered was 3195; the number of militants killed till early 2006 was 19,515 and from 2006 to April 2009 a further 1554 have been killed (South Asia Terrorism Portal 2006, 2009). It is estimated that the number of ex-militants in J&K is at least 30,000.

The sample in the present study consisted of 24 men who had been involved in militancy but now lead civilian lives (except for one who later returned to militancy). Their ages ranged from 25 to 42 years, more than half had joined militancy

between the ages of 15–19 years, two-thirds had at least high school education, and three-fourths described themselves as falling within the middle socio-economic bracket. They had belonged to different *tanzeem(s)* including the JKLF, HM, Al Jihad, Muslim Janbaz Force, Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen, Al Umar and LeT. Eight respondents exited militancy through surrender, 15 were captured and served prison terms before release and one quit before being charged.

The methodology used was qualitative and adopted a phenomenological stance to grasp the experience of ex-militants from their frame of reference and across their life histories. Data were collected through a long semi-structured interview with individual respondents and one focus group discussion with another group of approximately 20 ex-militants. Most of the individual respondents were interviewed on two occasions for a total of about 3–4 h, but several were interviewed more often over a period of many months. Understandably, there was some reserve and suspicion in the beginning because the researcher was Indian and a woman. The interviews took place in a variety of settings including a rural health centre, a restaurant, the interviewer's hotel, and in the homes of the respondents. All the interviews were conducted during a 17 months period between October 2004 and February 2006.

Consistent with its phenomenological stance, the study uses the terms "militants" and "ex-militants" since these are the terms that the respondents and Kashmiri society at large uses to refer to them.

8.2.1 Major Themes

The findings are presented in the form of major themes emerging in the life narratives of the respondents during the period preceding militancy, during that of militancy and post-militancy in relation to the self and the Other, the underlying psychological processes, and the factors compelling a movement from the cognitive-affective realm to that of action. In the pre-militant period, a powerful sense of victimization and a sociopolitical context, marked by collapse of social and symbolic moral order, prepared the ground for the youth to join militancy. Once this step was taken, the secret, closed world of militancy imposed its own logic eventuating in "justified" acts of violence. Masculinity-related dynamics also appear more prominently at this time. The post-militant period is marked by a renewed sense of victimization but with the new possibility of nonviolent activism.

The accounts that the respondents give of their lives, aspects of which will be discussed in the following sections, are self-narratives that compete with other discourses. Such competing narratives are encountered, for instance, in discourses about the freedom fighter or holy warrior as opposed to those about the terrorist, the insurgent and the crazed fanatic. Ross (2001) describes psycho-cultural narratives as the common sense explanations that people use to make sense of complex, emotionally powerful events. Narratives matter because a narrative's metaphors and images tell us a lot about how individuals and groups understand the social

and political worlds in which they live, and reveal the deep fears, perceived threats and past grievances that drive a conflict. Most crucially, narratives sanction certain kinds of action. In the course of the study, it was noted that the oppositional discourses about militants had the following features:

i. It denies them legitimacy. While militants see themselves as soldiers fighting for a just cause, the oppositional narrative views them as terrorists using violence that is unjustified and illegitimate. "*The point is that they kill people, often innocent people. They do not have the authority of the state forces that allows them to kill under specified circumstances. Also, who has given them the power to slit someone's throat when they do not follow any procedure to determine guilt and so on?*" (Senior J&K Police Officer)

ii. It denies them agency. This takes different forms ranging from the assertion that militants in J&K are largely foreign citizens, to viewing the militancy in J&K as wholly a Pakistani creation. The narrative of the "proxy war" and "cross-border terrorism" belongs here. Another way of denying agency is the assumption that militants have no independence of thought being prone to Islamic fundamentalism ("*What is the use of talking with them? They're all brainwashed jihadis, aren't they?*"—NRI woman) or that they are susceptible to "misguidance" being young and presumably uneducated.

iii. It denies them reason or sense. They are thought to be irrational and therefore beyond reason and dialogue. "*There must be something wrong with them otherwise why would they have gone into militancy in the first place…. It is good that you are looking at their mental problems*" (Army officer). Some of the psychological discourse has been in this strain too, and has looked to psychopathology and personality disturbance to explain militancy.

iv. It denies them morality. They are thought to be criminal or psychopathic. Their involvement in militancy is seen as a way of making money through corruption, extortion and other crimes. "*All the ex-militants I've met are crooks… how much money they've made…it is a cover for criminal activities like cutting down the forests, illegal tree felling…*" (Army officer)

v. It denies them humanity. It was a frequent experience for the researcher, when outside J&K, to be asked whether militants were fearsome in appearance or manner, or told that just being in their physical presence must be dangerous and frightening. The "war on terror" rhetoric has generated another form of dehumanization in that it does not refer to the human beings involved in acts of political violence as human beings, rather, preferring to refer to them impersonally as "terror".

This discourse reflects othering that has progressed over time. Emerging from the polarization that inevitably accompanies violence, this discourse is ultimately a dehumanizing one. As described below, militants and the communities that support them demonstrate similar processes of othering directed towards the Indian state, the security forces and Hindus.

Pre-militancy Period

The most striking themes emerging from analysis of the pre-militant phase of the respondents' lives are their marked sense of victimization and the "sociotrauma" that described their social and community context. Developmental issues of adolescence and youth—identity, autonomy and authority—interweave with the above to produce the militant "mind-set" and become doubly compelling being the very issues engaging the Kashmiri sociopolitical world. Some refer to *jawani* (youth) itself as being a contributory factor. As Aziz put it, "*Jawani thi. Us umar mein soch hi alag hota hai—khoon sunta hai. (We were young. At that age the thinking itself is different—it is the blood that responds)*".

Sense of Victimization

Journalistic accounts (Rees 2005) as well as research studies of violent political activists repeatedly point to a deep sense of humiliation and victimization. In the present study, the sense of victimization is seen to link with three outcomes—the foregrounding of collective or social identity, the compulsion to undo the experience of humiliation and passivity, and the polarization of self and the Other, eventuating in demonization and dehumanization of the enemy.

Arif's personal story meshes with the political struggle of Kashmiris against India and of Muslims against Hindus. *"My family lived in Batmaloo originally but had to move as the mohalla was burned down by Indian forces in 1947 and again in 1965…. In 1984 I was in the 9th class, about 13 years old. It was February 11, the day that Maqbool Butt was hanged. I used to play football and remember that I was climbing the bund to go to the football ground. There were three older boys going along and I remember them talking casually about Maqbool Butt. Maybe they were NC (National Conference) sympathizers. They were talking loosely, implying that he had been a double agent. At a home there was mourning (matam). Every one was shocked and upset. I could not go to school. Later we heard worse things—that his brother was not allowed to collect his body from Tihar. It was the first time that a strong feeling rose in me that this was not right… Muslims have felt strongly that Pandits were dominating and were given all the benefits—from childhood we were made to feel that Pandits have been imposed on the Muslim population to oppress us (dabav dene ke liye). …I studied in a Public School, received an English education. More than 80 % of the teachers were Hindu. I was a very good student but they used to discriminate against me. I wanted to prove them wrong—that I was a Jamaati but I would excel….The Kashmiri psyche is against India. A Kashmiri will even cheer for Israel but not for India…. I worked with the Islamic Students League during the '87 elections. Our aim was to defeat the NC. It was not a militant organization—it aimed to raise political awareness through protests and demonstrations. I was involved in putting up posters and making banners and speeches. But when the election results came, they were obviously rigged. The police reacted violently to nonviolent protests. We had looked up to Aijaz Dar, a leading campaigner for Syed Salahuddin, the first martyr of the movement in '88. He was much admired for his personality*

and charisma. His body was removed from his grave which is a sacrilege…People I knew were tortured, including my uncle who was branded with a hot iron. I got convinced that democratic means were no longer possible and there were no options left. It was time for militancy (wakt militancy ka hi tha)".

Irfan speaks of the torment of human right violations. "*When I joined, militancy was at its peak. It was also the peak of excesses by the security forces. Human rights violations, custodial killings were common. It was a very emotional time for young men like me. We were angry and humiliated. We thought that there was so much discrimination and oppression of Muslims and only the militant movement was fighting on behalf of the Muslim qaum. For this we were willing to sacrifice every drop of blood in our body*".

Kakar (1995, p. 192) reminds us that social identity, like personal identity, is an unconscious human acquisition that becomes salient and enters consciousness only when there is a perceived threat to its integrity. Otherwise in everyday living identity is for the most part constituted in "a zone of indifference". It is when this "zone of indifference" is breached that the contours of identity stand out most sharply. This happens in times of wars, riots, persecution and also at certain stages in the life cycle, as in youth. Hutnik's (2004) research on self-categorization and minority identity in India has shown how the perception of threat causes a "switch" whereby people begin to view themselves in terms of group rather than personal identity. In the present study too, Kashmiri Muslim identity is foregrounded. In many instances it is sharply differentiated from, and set in opposition to, being Indian and Hindu. It was found that among the Shia respondents, similar processes of perceived threat vis-à-vis the Sunni Muslim majority aggravated the sense of being a threatened minority leading several to join the militant movement to deflect harm to their community. Jamal says, "…*Why I took to the gun in the first place was because in early 1990, a lot of Pandits left the valley. They were a minority and made to feel like one…it was the majority KMs (Kashmiri Muslims) who made them feel like one…After them, the next minority was us, the Shias. I took to the gun to protect my community which I thought would be the next target*".

This identity assertion based on religious affiliation has little to do with religiosity and illustrates the distinction between religion-as-faith and religion-as-ideology (Nandy 2001), the latter being readily deployed as an identity marker in ethnic conflict.

When collective or social identity is already foregrounded by processes such as the above, personal trauma becomes a "conversion" experience that powerfully brings home to the victim the victimhood of their ethnic group. Ethnic victimization is a state of individual and collective ethnic mind that occurs when the traditional structures that provide an individual sense of security and self-worth through membership in a group are shattered by the aggressive, violent political outsider (Montville 1990). Politicized collective identity unfolds as a sequence of politicizing events transform the individual's and group's relation to the larger society; shared grievance, adversarial attributions and awareness of power struggles set the stage for the emergence of perspectives that bestow meaning on personal and group experience and also recruit agency for change or resistance (Simon and Klandermans 2001).

According to Tariq, *"It was in '96, I was going to a cricket ground near AS College with my friends—we were to play a match. There was a grenade attack in the area and so a crackdown started. We were picked up and interrogated because we were not residents of that locality. I was taken to CRPF headquarters in Rambagh and kept there for 3 days under continuous interrogation. They kept asking who threw the grenade and abused us saying, "All you Kashmiris are alike". They beat me severely. They gave me the roller treatment and electric shocks to my penis. They kept using vulgar abuses towards my mother and sisters and threatened they would do something to them. After my release, I stayed at home for 5–6 days recuperating from my injuries. I was anguished at what had been done to me even though I was innocent. I felt so helpless and humiliated. I thought about all the newspaper reports of how innocent people are tortured and threatened. My friend and I talked—he had also been picked up along with me—we thought we should join militancy ourselves".*

Traumatic experiences frequently leave in their wake, intense feelings of shame and humiliation when they are associated with passivity and impotence. The movement from humiliated and enraged passivity to violent action is empowering and wards off the fear that continued passivity will ensure further victimization (Montville 1990). In a revealing account, Menachem Begin (1950), himself a member of what was once labelled a terrorist group and later Prime Minister of Israel, and Nobel laureate, writes about the political violence that accompanied the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. He says, "When Descartes said: 'I think, therefore I am,' he uttered a very profound thought. But there are times in the history of peoples when thought alone does not prove their existence. A people may 'think' yet its sons, with their thoughts and in spite of them, may be turned into a herd of slaves—or into soap. There are times when everything in you cries out: your very self-respect as a human being lies in your resistance to evil: We fight, therefore we are!" (p. 46)

Palestinian suicide bombers are described as being the children of the first *intifada*—they witnessed so much trauma as children that as they grew up, their own identity merged with the national identity of humiliation and defeat which they now avenge (El Sarraj 2002). Indeed, national groups have frequently formed out of mythic-historical events of group victimization. Palestinian children, who survived the massacres in the Lebanese refugee camps in 1982, were found to have been severely traumatized by violence before and after the massacre and later became members of terrorist suicide squads (Fields 2002).

In contexts of victimization, the "enemy system" becomes increasingly polarized with demonization and dehumanization of the enemy (Mack 1990a, b). Developmentally, the self extends as a "we-self" to a person's affiliative bonds with family, ethnic, religious, school, and work groups, nation and so on. These group affiliations provide belonging, worth and protection with ethnic or national groups commanding particularly intense affiliation. However, at the same time as affiliative processes strengthen the we-self or social identity of a person, differentiating processes create a sense of cleavage distinguishing "us" from "them", "me" from "not-me". As described earlier, under normal circumstances, the Other may

enable a group to regulate its narcissistic sensitivities by becoming the container for the group's disavowed and externalized aspects. The "indispensable enemy", who we are certain is a despicable Other, is in fact littered with parts cast out from the self (Stein 1990), making it imperative to maintain the boundary between "us" and "them" so as to keep the "good" inside and the "bad" outside. As the narratives of the respondents show, perceived and actual victimization destabilizes the balance and propels the negative stereotype of the "familiar enemy" towards demonization.

In terms of psychological processes, the experience of threat and victimization impairs the capacity for mentalization with grave consequences for imagining others. Mentalizing entails interpreting and responding to the behaviour of oneself and others in terms of intentional mental states such as desires, beliefs and the like (Allen 2006) and therefore implies the ability to imagine the mind of another. Mentalizing enables one to imagine various ways in which others may think, striving to make their actions intelligible. It is quick to collapse under conditions of high physiological arousal such as that accompanying chronic or traumatic fear and leads to the categorical, stereotyped and polarized thinking—characteristic of othering. Impaired mentalizing inevitably affects the capacity to anticipate the psychological consequences of an act on another and thus also affects empathic and altruistic function.

The psychosocial context

While the felt humiliation of a group may prepare the ground for violent action, it does not fully explain the transition to organized violence. For this transition to take place, certain societal conditions as well as a certain type of leadership must be present (Varvin 2003). The societal condition most vulnerable to the outbreak of violence is one where the symbolic order or law has broken down. The most malignant situations come about when this symbolic order is corrupted from above—that is, by the state or by the leaders. This is the case when brazen acts of corruption and injustice, of terror and repression, are sanctioned by the authorities and justified by the state. Such breaches of the symbolic order create a state of psychological alienation. They make violence permissible by perverting the moral code that governs our ideals and our taboos and thus erode internal limits.

In his detailed analysis of the Stanford Prison Experiment (a simulation of a prison environment with role-playing prisoners and guards) and the real-life prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, Zimbardo (2007) draws attention to the fact that abuse and violence are not just the creation of situations but also of the system that provides the support, authority and resources that allow situations to operate in the way they do. System power involves authorization to behave in prescribed ways and to forbid and punish actions that are contrary to them. It provides the "higher authority" that gives validation to new rules and actions that would ordinarily be constrained by preexisting laws, norms, and ethics. Indeed, many caught up in such situations send messages to the system asking for containment but are failed in the same way that the researchers of the Stanford Prison Experiment failed to contain the spiralling coerciveness of the guards and the abjectness of the prisoners until the experiment as a whole had to be abandoned.

Montville (1990) uses the term "systemic stress" to describe conditions where there is severe economic distress and breakdown of political, legal, social and cultural institutions that ordinarily provide order and predictability. Using the Cambodian example, he draws attention to the large-scale system collapse on the eve of the Khmer Rouge victory—massive human and material losses in the Vietnam War, displacement of large numbers of rural population who became refugees, famine, and destruction of traditional social structures.

Systemic stress also described the conditions prevalent in Kashmir in the restive years pre-dating the outbreak of political violence, and was intensified by the repression and brutality with which the state responded once political violence began. There is reason to believe that psychological alienation—a sense of meaninglessness, powerlessness, "normlessness" and social estrangement—was pervasive in Kashmir when militancy began. Certainly, there was widespread disgruntlement about lack of accountability in the system, corruption, discrimination, political chicanery and the breakdown of all important democratic institutions. Hence there was euphoria when militancy first entered the picture. Among the youth in major Indian cities, psychological alienation has been found to significantly correlate with endorsement of violent means to address sociopolitical ills (Kapur and Sen 1996).

Over a period of time, the political violence unleashed on Kashmiri society created conditions of "collective trauma" (Sonpar 2000). While culture acts as a buffer and as a supportive system for individual members who depend on it for meaning and direction, collective trauma assaults and damages the continuity and integrity of the cultural system itself (De Vries 1996). Somasundaram (2007, p. 6), writing in the context of Sri Lanka, uses the term "collective trauma", "to represent the negative impact at the collective level, that is, in the social processes, networks, relationships, institutions, functions, dynamics, practices, capital and resources; to the wounding and injury to the social fabric". The social tissue of the community is damaged in ways that are similar to tissues of the body and the mind, resulting in a "loss of communality" (Erikson 1976).

More alarmingly, there is breakdown of social and moral ordering principles based on trust and goodwill and it is replaced by a malevolent order based on terror, silence and powerlessness—a culture of fear. "Extreme violence un-makes the internalized culturally constituted webs of trust, based on social norms, worldviews, and moral conventions" (Robben and Suarez-Orozco 2000, p. 43). The inner representations of trust and safety shaped during childhood that constitute the "background of safety" are overwhelmed by the terrible outer reality (Gampel 2000). The normal containing function of the community is lost as it is unable to deal with its own terror, so that what is re-introjected is a terrifying environment of meaninglessness lacking in compassionate interconnectedness and helpfulness (Twemlow 2000). Indeed, the emotional climate in the Kashmir context was dominated by fear, distrust, anger, cynicism, powerlessness and despair (Sonpar 2000). Such trauma damages the assumptions that ground, secure and orient people. It destroys normative constancy or belief: belief in goodness, meaningfulness and self-worth (Janoff-Bulman 1992) and the "sense of coherence" arising from

the ability to comprehend, manage and extract meaning from events (Antonovsky 1987).

For the youth, breakdown of the symbolic order and attendant psychological alienation has an added dimension. When children grow up in situations of political conflict and have chronic exposure to the older generation's powerlessness and inefficacy in the face of intimidation and injustice, their idealization of parental models crumbles. Rogers (1990) describes how the young generation of any nation or group hears their fury when their parents describe the perceived enemy and also their inner shame and feelings of failure. Into the vacuum created by the parents' fall from their pedestal step the peer group and the revolutionary leader. The youth looks for security in peer relationships and finds substitute parental guidance and idealization in the revolutionary leader. The leader gives meaning and indicates the path to remedy wrongs in clearly defined dichotomies of good and bad. The youth then turns from words to actions.

The accounts of the respondents in the present study testify to the crucial role played by leaders and peers. Memories of the time immediately preceding their entry into militancy are full of impassioned discussions with peers, attendance at political rallies and the speeches of political leaders. They talk of leaders like Azam Inqilabi, Shabir Shah, Farooq Rehmani and others who fired their imagination and gave them direction. Friends played an enormous role in motivating one another, created together the idealized image of the liberation fighter, and exerted pressure to conform. Indeed the decision to join militancy was seldom a private one but made along with friends.

Psychological alienation may be dissolved by the adoption of an ideology that gives meaning, worth and identity. The ego ideal, the internal representation of an ideal-self with its own values and moral standards, is consolidated in youth. Mack (1990a, b) points out that adolescence is the time when recruitment into groups that seem to hold the promise of ego ideal fulfilment occurs with particular readiness; it is the time when religions most readily find their converts and military organizations draw the most volunteers.

Certainly, the narratives of the respondents are replete with allusions to ideals and moral values—justice, humanity, sacrifice, loyalty, truth, piety and so on—and indicate the salience of these themes for them. The dominating socio-cultural discourse of the time also exhorted youth to join the struggle against perceived injustice, eulogized Kashmiri nationalism and exalted martyrdom. The identity of the *jihadi*, the holy warrior fighting for justice, honour and freedom for his people and religion, is nascent but present as an idealized identity. Many of the respondents in the present study identify with nationalistic ideals and urge *azadi* for Kashmir while others speak of fighting for the "Muslim *qaum,*" the Muslim people.

Aberrant social and personal circumstances distort ego ideals by influencing both their content and form. Ego ideals may include directives to eliminate "evil" and may permit the use of violent means to do so. Ego ideals may also take the form of rigid, fundamentalist ideology that is unequivocal about what is right and what is wrong.

Akhtar (2005) points out that fundamentalist ideology finds recruits by providing answers to a human condition that has become intolerable because of physical insecurity, devalued identity, alienation, disempowerment, and threats to generativity. Fundamentalist answers offer certainty, simplicity, moral clarity, purity and immortality while taking away personal responsibility. A flavour of this is found in the narrative of one respondent, Basheer, a devout Muslim, for whom all meaning, structure and purpose are to be found in Islam. His faith is the central organizer of his psyche and a steady anchor under trying circumstances. He lives strictly according to its precepts and talks about it with evangelical zeal. His piety has served to contain desire and willfulness, fulfil ideals of self-subjugation and service and deal with questions of personal responsibility. It was when the interview turned to questions of guilt and responsibility that he launched into a lecture on Islam and society concluding that everything lies in the hands of Allah and nothing happens that is not his will. Using an ethnographic account located in Sri Lanka, Spencer (2001) makes the reverse point that not becoming a terrorist involves staying uncomprehending and confused and not succumbing to the "sense" that any ideological argument for violence confers.

Twemlow et al. (2004) caution us that fanaticism and martyrdom may also be understood as perverted forms of activism. When a society devalues and rejects the ideals of the committed social activist, fails to restore safety and a return to a stable social and moral order, intense social commitment may convert to martyrdom or destructive terrorism.

In the present study, the choice to commit to violent political action by joining a militant group was found to be a way of regaining a balance that restored self-worth, social belonging and meaning. In terms of Varvin's framework (2003), a remedy and outlet in violent action is found for dysphoric feelings of humiliation and helplessness at the personal level. The interpersonal relationships forged with comrades and leaders help to modulate distressed feelings while affirming group belonging and identity. At the same time, cultural discourses that eulogize the struggle and exalt martyrdom give meaning and applaud the militant option.

Ideally, the essential psychosocial ingredients enabling action to follow constructive rather than destructive routes include the following: (a) mobilizing the capacity to reflect and to mentalize by facilitating repair to the damaged sense of safety and by modulating painful emotions arising from terror and loss, (b) providing legitimate avenues for voicing distress and outrage and for acting constructively so that humiliating impotence is replaced by self-respecting empowerment, (c) ameliorating mutual othering, polarized thinking and paranoid fears by ensuring reality-testing through free flow of information, transparency, unimpeded mobility and prevention of fragmentation or isolation of communities, (d) restoring social and moral symbolic order by ensuring rule of law and justice, and by instituting mechanisms such as those of transitional justice for prosecution, redress and reparation.

Instead, in J&K, the state's counter-insurgency response has been overwhelmingly militarized. In contrast to the number of active militants, estimates of which hovered around 2000 in earlier years and was reported by Army sources to be

around 800 in 2007, India deploys between 250,000 and 400,000 security personnel (army, police and paramilitary) in the state. Sadly, this has not enhanced the perception of safety but has ended up terrorizing the local population so that chronic fearfulness, rather a sense of security, prevails. Avenues for legitimate protest are blocked, for instance, by laws that prohibit the assembly of more than five persons, and mobility is restricted. There has been virtual impunity granted to security forces through laws such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, Public Safety Act, Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Disturbed Areas Act despite gross human rights violations including custodial deaths, enforced disappearances, torture and rape. Militant violence reinforces the security discourse and confirms the "evil" of anti-India forces in the eyes of the general public.

Similar circumstances are seen to prevail in the north-east. Reflecting on the protracted nature of the insurgencies there, Baruah (2005) concludes that the real cost of the way that India has chosen to engage with the challenge of insurgency is a "democracy deficit", an erosion of the principles of rule of law, accountability and transparency. Further the goal of counter-insurgency has been to crush or coax particular insurgent groups to surrender on the government's terms while neglecting to address the conditions on the ground that breed and sustain insurgent political culture.

Militancy Period

The act of joining a militant group represents a significant threshold in the transition from the cognitive-affective realm to that of action. Two further steps mark the onward journey of these men into the particular context of the militant world. The border crossing for the purpose of training into Pakistan administered Kashmir appears in the respondents' narrative of their journey into militancy as a significant step. Its danger and arduousness make it a rite of passage while also cementing bonds with companions.

> Crossing the border is my best memory. It was very hard…the terrain was rocky, covered in ice and snow. We had no food or water. But I enjoyed it also because I was with my friends …the hardship made us feel strong. (Aziz)

Holding a gun and learning to shoot marks another important milestone in the respondents' narrative imagination. The wielding of a gun marks a return of a sense of agency and power, replacing feelings of helplessness and humiliation. The feeling echoes the statement of a respondent in the study by Kapur and Sen (1996, p. 104) who says, "…*Now to get justice one does not need a fist, one just needs a finger*".

Several respondents drew attention to the clandestine and isolated nature of their lives when in the field. This has important implications. First, the simplest and most mundane tasks—cooking a meal, drying washed clothes and so on—become complicated and effortful because of the need to maintain secrecy. Secondly, it is a life constantly shadowed by danger and the fear of betrayal.

In fact, the informer, the *mukhbir*, is a ubiquitous figure in their lives and imagination. The secrecy, danger and isolation create a situational context severely limiting information and exposure to alternative perspectives thus impairing reality-testing. In this closed world where criticism and the influence of ideas from outside the particular belief system are severely restricted, the influence of leaders and ideology becomes magnified. The context of "unsafety" is itself apt to impair the capacity for mentalization and thus aggravate polarized and paranoid perceptions of the Others. It is factors such as these that consolidate and deepen the terrorist life style according to Taylor and Quayle (1994). Based on their research of terrorists in Northern Ireland, Middle East, Italy and Germany, they conclude that while diverse factors influence people to get involved with terrorist groups, particular acts of terrorism are better explained by contextual factors of the terrorist lifestyle than by factors that contributed to the initial involvement with terrorist groups. This is in keeping with the conclusions of Zimbardo (2007) in his exhaustive situational analysis of the abusive behaviour of role-playing guards in the simulated Stanford Prison Experiment and of the atrocities committed by real guards at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

It is also in line with the staircase model of terrorism proposed by Moghaddam (2005). He uses the metaphor of a narrowing staircase leading to the terrorist act at the top of the building. The vast majority of people stay on the ground floor despite perceptions of injustice and relative deprivation. Some climb to the first floor and try different doors in search of solutions to what they perceive as unjust treatment. Their perception of possibilities to improve their situation and the fairness of the authorities determine whether they will climb further up the staircase. Influenced by leaders who provide persuasive interpretations of the situation and identify the "enemy" to be held responsible, they may ascend the stairs and gradually engage with the morality of the terrorist organization that justifies the use of violent means towards "just" goals. Secrecy, isolation, fear and affiliative bonds facilitate the commitment of recruits to this new morality. Further up the staircase, pressures towards conformity and obedience reinforce the perceived legitimacy of the terrorist organization while strengthening categorical, black-and-white thinking. Psychological distancing enables the sidestepping of inhibitory mechanisms as terrorist acts are conceived and implemented. Such distancing is achieved by categorizing the target as the "enemy", by exaggerating differences between the in-group and the out-group, by finding justification for the act in some lofty goal, as well as by avoiding proximity to the victim through the use of devices that permit killing from a distance.

In the present study, the respondents' relation to their violent militant acts is not simply one of justified, empowered action but is complex and conflicted. This is partly related to the constant sense of danger and attendant anxiety that is a part of militant life. For instance, Khalil's account illustrates how a numbed dissociation may characterize much of the life in the field.

> I never felt anything much—whether it was something good or something that was bad, I just felt okay. Even when I escaped miraculously from what would have certainly been my death, I did not feel anything great. Yes, I have had moments of intense fear when I

thought I was just about to get caught. And sometimes, I would not be in any dangerous situation, just sitting somewhere in a normal way, and for no reason, a wave of fear would engulf me….Usually when I was in real danger, I would be in a strange state of calm.

There was also a foreboding awareness that with gun in hand, violence can spiral out of control. Several of the respondents who had been in positions of authority spoke of having to keep a watchful eye on their men.

Men with guns in their hand can go out of hand. They feel very powerful; nothing can stop them. When I was Commander, I never stayed away from my group for too long. I made sure I was physically there as far as possible because they could have done anything. (Khalil)

They also comment on the way that the militant movement itself became degenerate, the gun being turned increasingly towards their own. Their accounts are deeply aware of how violence in such contexts spreads among rival groups, enveloping ordinary citizens who suffer in "collateral damage", in being suspected of spying or sympathizing with the enemy, and in being victims of extortion and crime.

When they come close to their own violent actions, the respondents tend to minimize the harm, distance themselves, or resort to ideological justification. Most commonly, the respondents justify their violent acts in terms of the broader conflict by blaming the Indian government and security forces. In this scheme they are acting to defend their *qaum*. The ideological justification helps create a distance from the concreteness of violence. This is a common response among those who use political violence. In their interviews with terrorists in different parts of the world, Taylor and Quayle (1994) found two themes that recurred. First, their violence is deemed legitimate and appropriate; it is derived from the right to defend when there is a threat to the community, a right deriving legitimacy from role models, traditions of the community, moral homilies, community-based songs and similar cultural products. Secondly, their violence is never initiated but is a forced response to past or present aggression. Clearly, those who engage in political violence need to justify their actions as morally defensible in their own eyes.

Not all respondents were able to find such moral comfort. There were those who acknowledged being conflicted about the use of violence in militancy and resisted personal involvement in violent action even though they had joined and trained in militant groups.

Gender-related aspects emerge more explicitly in this period with militant identity being identified with a masculine, soldier identity. In the pre-militant phase, compulsions related to gender identity are implicit rather than stated in the accounts of the respondents. That men would naturally be the ones to go off to fight to defend their *qaum* is taken for granted in the way that gender role prescriptions were deployed. In the early years of militancy, Kashmiris were rallying in the streets, women in the forefront, shouting "*Marde mujahid, jag zara ab, vakt shahadat aya hai*". (Manly warrior, now arise, the time has come for martyrdom)' (Manchanda 2001). Arif said, "*My mother knew that I was going. She told my father later…She is proud that her son is fighting for justice, that he has not been involved in lootings and has not surrendered*".

Young men were also the ones most likely to be picked up and picked upon by security forces. Kashmiris lament that the elderly have had to take over many tasks outside the home since it is unsafe for young men to venture out. This is in keeping with the belief that aggressive acts are inevitable for maintaining status among men and a sense of masculine identity. The fear is that young Kashmiri men could easily get drawn into this dynamic in case of interaction with men from the security forces. In this regard, Archer (1994) points out that acts of violence between men are often precipitated by some challenge to self-respect. Verbal threats and insults transform the dispute into one about reputation and social identity. Anger fuels an escalating sequence and at some point, the challenge to self-esteem makes it compelling to enter into a physical fight to save face. Indeed the humiliation described by some of the respondents seems to come out of their powerlessness in restoring self-respect in this manner.

Cock (1991) describes how the construction of soldier identities is essentially gendered in nature—the transmutation into a masculinity that is hard, tough, aggressive and able to kill. The subjection to authority and aggressive attitudes towards the enemy are core components of this identity. From a wide survey of cultural models, McCarthy (1994) describes four values to be common to the warrior ethos: (1) physical courage in the face of possible injury and even death (2) endurance, or the capacity to withstand extremes of climate, pain, hunger, fatigue, etc. and to fight on despite reverses (3) strength and skill in terms of being physically robust, proficient in the use of weapons and shrewd in strategy (4) honour, in that the warrior keeps his word, is loyal to his leader and comrades, fights honourably, protects the wounded and the weak and responds forcefully if there is insult to his own honour or to that of his group. There is an evident connection between conventional notions of masculinity and warrior values.

These values are exemplified in Husain's account.

> In '92, I and a comrade challenged that we would attack the security forces camp near D…—it had both BSF and CRPF troops. We said we would do it between 8 and 10 pm and we did it. …I am still held in high regard by the people of the 15–20 villages that fell in my area of command. This is because I always made sure that action took place well away from the villages except when we happened to be trapped close by and there was no choice. I also made sure to attack the security force whenever there was a chance. Some villagers used to think that militants eat well off the village but run away when the security forces come. I also collected money to provide financial help to the very needy and got money from the tanzeem for the marriage of girls from very poor families. People respect me a lot because even after my torture and interrogation, I did not divulge any information causing harm to any person of the tanzeem. I saw to it that my gun was returned to the tanzeem even though I was in jail. So I am seen as a hero.

They see themselves as upholding and defending the moral and physical well-being of their people. In so doing, they feel justified in behaving in independent and authoritarian ways that flout the behavioural norms considered appropriate for youth in a conservative society. Indeed, in the early years of militancy, the common people turned to these youthful militants to resolve all kinds of disputes and deferred to their authority. "*People used to look upon us as if we were the judges,*

imams, police, arbiters, everything rolled into one…if there was any dispute, even a minor family quarrel, the militants would be asked to settle it".

While clashes between militants and security forces are often gleefully recounted in terms of outwitting the enemy in audacious attacks and escaping by a hairsbreadth, the dynamic becomes starker as a struggle for dominance after capture or surrender. The respondents' accounts of imprisonment and interrogation are painful and shocking. For some, the experiences of custody continue to evoke fear, anger and shame, or have led to post-traumatic stress symptoms. For most, there is a renewed sense of victimization. These experiences are invariably related to torture.

The torture was physical, mental and sexual. The accounts of the nature of the torture are very similar—beatings with belts and *lathis*, the "aeroplane" or hanging upside down or from the wrists and being beaten on the soles of the feet, the "180°" where the legs are made to stretch apart until they are at nearly 180°, the "roller" where a heavy log is rolled over a prone prisoners legs, sometimes weighed down by one or more interrogators who sit or stand on it, force-drinking of two or more buckets of water, near drowning by shoving the head into water, suffocation by tightly covering the head with a wet sack and squeezing the nose, inserting sticks or iron rods into the rectum, inserting a thin iron rod into the penis and passing an electric current or giving electric shock to the testicles and other sensitive body parts. The accounts of the respondents tally with those collated by the Public Commission on Human Rights, Srinagar (2006) . The conditions in custody are described as filthy and degrading. Often there was just a bucket for urinating and defecating to be shared by a large number of prisoners all crowded into the same cell, with the provisions for eating and excreting lying side by side. There was also intense mental torture. Vulgar abuse and threats to dishonour female family members were common. In one instance the 11 years old brother of the respondent was kept in the same prison and given electric shocks to make the respondent talk. The boy was mentally disturbed for a long time and continues to suffer till today.

Being stripped and kept naked is mentioned as a constant and common state. This was felt to be particularly shaming and induced a heightened sense of vulnerability. Even now nakedness, as when bathing, induces irrational anxiety. Other kinds of shaming experiences are mentioned—witnessing the nakedness of an elderly teacher, the forcing of a man to suck the penis of his son, the forcing of another man to urinate in the mouth of his nephew. Such humiliation as well as torture was meant to destroy the "manhood" of the prisoners and in many cases succeeded in doing so. Sexual problems such as erectile dysfunction are a common complaint among the respondents who were tortured, and the humiliation of such experience ignites feelings of helpless rage. Mohamed complained, *"Torture se namard bana diya (They emasculated me through torture)"*.

Zarkov (2001) draws attention to the fact that while sexual violence against men has been a fact of war for hundreds of years, it has been a rather well-hidden fact of contemporary wars. She draws on her research on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and concludes that the invisibility of sexual violence towards men

by other men is related to the position of masculinity and the male body within nationalist discourse on ethnicity and nationhood. Sexual humiliation of a man through sexual assault and homosexualization is proof that he is a lesser man. When he is an ethnic Other, his sexual humiliation is also proof that his ethnicity is of inferior nature.

This dynamic, played out in wars and other violent conflicts, has roots in certain psychic fault lines of masculinity. According to Chodorow (2003), masculinity and male selfhood include two components—masculinity as not-female, and maleness as adult man rather than boy-child—not humiliated, shamed, or defeated by another man, but strong and dominant. Thus, the physical and sexual humiliation and torture of men prisoners, ostensibly to get security-related information, may also be understood in depth psychology as covertly intended to assert dominance and elicit submission, thus proclaiming the victor's superior masculinity.

Herman (1992) describes captivity as prolonged, repeated trauma meant to disempower and disconnect, to instil terror and helplessness, and to destroy the victim's sense of self and relation to others. Captivity thus produces a profound alteration in the victim's identity; whatever new identity emerges in freedom, it must include the memory of his enslaved and debased self. Thus the final phase of post-militancy following release from prison or return to civilian life after surrender is marked by a renewed sense of victimization.

Post-militancy Period

The respondents' accounts of their post-militant lives support the conclusions of other researchers, that the interchangeability of victim-perpetrator roles is seldom as vividly embodied as in the person of ex-combatants (Gear 2005) and that victims and perpetrators may not be different in any absolute way.

Renewed victimization is experienced at the hands of the security forces, and in relation to society and new cultural discourses. Describing the plight of ex-militants, Zafar Abdul Fateh, Chairman of the J&K Salvation Movement (JKSM), a political organization of former militants asserted, "…*Our aim is political rehabilitation, to heal the wounds of militants, give them dignity, a space, a voice, shelter, protection. We want this to be a home not a tanzeem…We are not terrorists who cannot do anything without a gun. We want ex-militants to live a normal life and the tehreek should carry on without the gun. The July 2000 ceasefire and dialogue happened because we were always hearing about death, destruction, rapes— it was too much; the common people had to be given relief. This was one important reason…It is not welcoming when militants are released and return home— property has been destroyed or sold to pay for bail, for extortion,* etc. *There is no job, no employment, no marriage. They have to give daily hazari and because they have to go the camp, they are suspected by the community. Our program is against hazari because it gives scope for torture and extortion and the released militants cannot return to normal life. We are against interrogations—the*

mukhbir have to make their living and they give any name, that so-and-so has guns, even when they have no actual information… A cool mind is required to work for a peaceful settlement. But when atrocities occur, heat returns and people want to pick up the gun again. We are trying to create that platform but when atrocities occur, there is a setback".

Frequent interrogations including torture, short periods of custody and a menacing attitude characterized the way in which security forces dealt with ex-militants. These dealings were quite regular because of the requirement that ex-militants give *hazari* or attendance every week at the local police or army post. When they went to give *hazari*, they would be made to do work—cut grass, clean the compound, carry loads, polish shoes, clean latrines, and other forms of labour. The pressure to become informers and help in counter-insurgency was often intense. The identity (ID) card assumed huge significance in everyday life. On one hand, they were furious that they needed to prove their identity to outsiders in their own land. On the other, being found without an ID card meant immediate custody and the dreaded possibility of becoming yet another undocumented custodial death. For the security forces, all ex-militants are the defeated enemy whereas Kashmiri society makes a distinction between militants who "surrender" and those that are "released", the former being viewed negatively for having sold out or for working with the Indian security establishment.

> I have been interrogated so many times since my release—they put pressure on me to give information, to influence militants known to me to surrender. I feel constantly insecure. I could be framed any time on some made-up charges… Now I have changed—I don't have my earlier josh. I am not a jihadi, I want aman (peace)…If the government continues to behave like this with people who were militants…if they are beaten up, abused, have no jobs, militancy can rise again. This time it will be like Osama bin Laden's militancy… There is constant harassment, betrayal and deception. I only hope things don't compel me (majboor na kare) to take up the gun again. (Aziz)

> Since my release I have been picked up 22 times by the security forces. Each time I had to go to hospital. I have had broken bones, once my shoulder was dislocated from being hanged from the roof by my wrists. Since I am economically better-off, all this did not have much effect on my livelihood. But what of those who are poor and depend on daily wages for their livelihood? (Kader)

Many former militants rejoined the militancy after some time. They invariably did so to put an end to the harassment, humiliation and threat they experienced. This threat was also from active militants who feared betrayal. One respondent who eventually returned to militancy in the course of the study described the turmoil in his mind urging him to rejoin militancy because he found it impossible to live life as a civilian "*with respect and without fear*" (Hussain).

The sociopolitical and cultural context to which former militants return is not the same and they have to cope with new realities and identity-related concerns. Foremost is the ambiguity of their social position. This ambiguity arises from the fact that the socially idealized identities are those of the militant or the martyr, *shaheed*; the ex-militant identity is an anomaly that, in their private experience,

brings physical insecurity and disappointment and little respect. Yet it is an identity that brands them, the lens through which everyone sees them. It gives little space to live out a personal life with dignity, and to fulfil personal dreams for a happy family and future.

They return to a society that has been severely damaged by the violence they helped unleash without being any closer to their goals. Thus, they embody their society's failed aspirations as well as its distancing from the violence in which it was complicit. This is often reflected in the gap between being publicly feted but privately kept at a distance. This is not an unusual experience for ex-combatants. In South Africa they say that they have been forgotten, "wished away" or "spat out like morning mucus" (Gear 2002).

The sociopolitical changes on the ground and a new set of social discourses pose challenges for former militants to integrate the context of their past and future. These include the peace discourse with Pakistan, which has progressed in fits and starts over the years. There is both a sense of being abandoned by a mentor as well as disillusionment for having been used cynically for Pakistan's own political ends. There are also new geopolitical realities of which the U.S. led "war on terror" and its fallout on Afghanistan and Pakistan stand out. A second reality is the exhaustion and demoralization of the local population after being wracked by a political violence that has left approximately 80,000 dead according to human rights groups, thousands of widows and orphans, as well as huge numbers of rape victims and disappearances. This is partly reflected in the population's new willingness to engage in democratic elections placing good governance at the top of their agenda. There have also been attempts by the Indian state to reduce the "democracy deficit" by ensuring fairness of elections and by instituting prosecution for human rights violations. Indeed for several years there has been an awareness of the need to "win hearts and minds" of the people such as reflected in the army's "Sadhbhavana" (goodwill) programme.

These realities inevitably raise questions for former militants as to whether the costs of militancy have been too high and gains small. Most take comfort in the fact that although the political situation remains unresolved, militancy focused the attention of the international community on Kashmir forcing the Indian state to take heed. "*Our voice was finally heard*".

Frustration and dejection about psychological and material losses—innocence, idealism, trust, aspiration, youth, education, money, friends and family—and nagging doubts about whether it was worth this scale of loss take a toll. It results in increased irritability, more *sakhti* (hardness) and sometimes bad-tempered verbal or physical violence, inflicted on members of the family. Militarized identities are blamed for perpetuating violence but this is not inevitable. Drawing together the lessons from a long and extensive project on violence and transition in South Africa, Harris (2005) concludes that it is the marginalized, excluded, yet militarized forms of masculinity that present a risk for future violence. The challenge is how to demilitarize masculinity by providing alternative, positive role models for men in a time of peace.

In the present study it was found that now that the respondents were in civilian life, identity concerns related to the male role as provider, protector and as sexual partner were pressing. Those who were married were stressed by their powerlessness to keep the harassment by security forces or other militants out of their homes. Most had lost out on educational and vocational opportunities during their years in militancy and could not obtain a decent means of livelihood thus failing to provide sufficiently for their families. In some cases, they were physically weakened by their years in prison and torture had rendered them sexually inadequate. The difficulties faced by those who were not married centred on not being able to find a wife. Families were unwilling to marry their daughters to ex-militants because of the continuing physical and financial insecurity of their lives. This reinforced the inadequacy that these men already felt about themselves.

Despite the sense of victimization, personal unhappiness and ambivalent social position, a large number of the respondents now find expression for their concerns in nonviolent activism. More than half of them are engaged in some form of sociopolitical activism. For several respondents this is connected with pursuing their political struggle through nonviolent means. Others have won respected positions in their community through their involvement in social welfare work related to education and civic action. Many were involved in relief work during the natural disasters—a devastating earthquake and a spate of avalanches—which struck Kashmir during the period of the study. Their physical courage, organizational skills, team work and knowledge of the terrain in remote areas stood them well in these crises.

The activist identity is clearly recognizable as a significant personal identity strand running through their life. They demonstrate personal qualities typical of activists—action-orientation, concern for social justice and welfare, and an engagement with issues larger than themselves. In this sense, their involvement in political violence was violent activism, but activism nevertheless. Kapur and Sen (1996) had also found their sample of "violent protesters" (former Naxalites, members of People's War Group, Punjab militants and members of ULFA) to be similar to their sample of "nonviolent protesters" (environmental activists and others) in this regard.

The life course of several of these respondents illustrates a mellowing down of their activism through an evolution of consciousness even as they sustain ideological commitments. Importantly, this evolution has come about through a painful and ongoing process of introspection and integration of the past, specifically of the way that violence shaped subjectivity and action. They try to make sense of the brutal internecine fighting that took place between rival militant groups, a fight in which they lost many comrades, lost credibility and damaged the movement. They often mention their awareness of violence as a force that can get out of hand, of the gun as a mode of power that is easily abused. Thus, most of the respondents are now committed to nonviolent activism even as they ruefully acknowledge the attraction of violent action at times when frustrations mount and the "heat returns".

This evolution resonates broadly with the findings of a study on the consciousness development of peace activists (Adams 1987). The study notes that anger against injustice is an inevitable starting point. While not all anger is useful for consciousness development, it can also be constructively channelled. Secondly, action is a central step in consciousness development. It marks the crossing of a certain threshold that impels further evolution. Thirdly, affiliating with others sharing a similar vision and goals equips one with the skills of emotional intelligence—patience, willingness to compromise and accept group discipline, overcome negative habits, cooperate, work in a team—that are essential to realize goals.

In conclusion, it is often not recognized that ex-combatants have personal attributes, skills and capacities that are valuable resources. In fact, the very qualities that drove them towards violent action make them well-suited for developmental and peace-building activities (Sonpar 2008). Indeed, it has been seen in different parts of the world that the passionate commitment to social justice that motivates people to join armed groups can also drive efforts to promote peaceful social change (Van der Merwe and Smith 2006).

In terms of Varvin's (2003) psychosocial model, the former militants in this study experience disturbance at the personal level conditioned by experience of torture and betrayal, their own bodies feeling deficient and hurtful and their sense of relationships forever contaminated by the knowledge of what one person can do to another. At the level of the group, there is the pain of guilt and sorrow of loss in relation to the family, and a loss of the identity mooring provided by the *tanzeem*. At the level of cultural discourse, disconfirming discourses contribute to alienation, frustration and the sense of betrayal. The outcry against years of violence and the new peace process generate their own discourses that have to be integrated. Those who have firm ideological beliefs and are active in political groups seem least distressed, perhaps because they experience the least discontinuity and incoherence of identity.

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Chapter 9
Religious Violence and the "Developmental State" in Rajasthan

Sarbeswar Sahoo

On 23 December 2007, when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was celebrating the electoral victory of Narendra Modi in Gujarat, a group of 150–200 militant Hindutva activists in Kandhamal district of Orissa pulled out a pastor from the bus. He was beaten, tonsured and paraded naked. The next day, a mob of about 3000 people, armed with tridents, axes, crude bombs and kerosene, attacked the Church of our Lady of Lourdes, burnt the altar and destroyed the Christmas decorations. Within the next 72 hours, across the tribal dominated Kandhamal district, five parish churches, 48 village churches, five convents, seven hostels and several church-run institutions bore the brunt of a Hindutva onslaught (Anand 2008). Not just in Orissa, incidences of such violence against religious minorities, especially Christians and Muslims, have increased in different parts of India since the 1990s. Another recent and most horrific example is the Gujarat riot of 2002 where more than 2000 Muslims were killed and 150,000 were left homeless (Sabrang Communications and SACW 2002, p. 8).

Although the recent phase of violence against religious minorities is in some way unique, religious conflict in general, more commonly known in South Asia as "communalism", is not new to India. According to the scholars of secular nationalist historiography, the British colonial rule, especially its "divide and rule" policy, was responsible for Hindu–Muslim conflict and the breakdown of communal harmony in India. For example, Varshney and Suranjan Das have argued that communalism was constructed and promoted by the British to secure allies. They raised Muslim communalism as a counter weight to the emerging Indian nationalism (Varshney 2002, p. 34; Das 1990, p. 22). Mushirul Hasan has similarly noted that the roots of communalism in India lie in "the Morley-Minto Reform of 1909

S. Sahoo (✉)
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT, New Delhi, India
e-mail: sarbeswar@hss.iitd.ac.in

which, by creating communal electorates, exacerbated Hindu-Muslim divisions and fostered the spirit of political exclusivism" (Hasan 1980, p. 1395). This was further exacerbated by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, which not just retained separate electorates for religious minorities but also suggested devolution of power to Indian hands that led to a struggle for power and patronage, and widened communal divisions in Indian society (Hasan 1980, p. 1397). In a way, the British colonial state was responsible for communal violence in India (Pandey 1990).

These explanations, however, provide only a partial understanding and ignore "the *longue duree*" of the construction of religious and communal identities in India (Van der Veer 1994, p. 30). Scholars such as Bayly (1985) and van der Veer (1994) have extended the discussion to the pre-colonial period and have argued that religious and communal conflict had a pre-history in India even before the consolidation of the British rule. For them, it is the "community-based state policies" which created communal conflict in India during the pre-colonial period (Bayly 1985, pp. 184–86; Van der Veer 1994, p. 32). For example, the reign of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1618–1707) witnessed relentless animosity and repression against Hindus and Sikhs. He imposed taxes on Hindus, destroyed their temples and also personally ordered the execution of the Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur. Similar policies were also evident during the rule of Jai Singh II of Jaipur (1688–1743) who attempted to create a society based on Hindu ideology. These evidences suggest that religious and communal conflict is not solely a colonial construction. It existed prior to the British rule. However, it is true that such preferential exclusivist community-based policies were intensely implemented during the British rule, which ultimately resulted in the territorial division of India into the Islamic state of Pakistan and the Hindu dominated but secular India.[1]

Religion and exclusivist religious identity have also acted as sources of conflict in India during the post-colonial period. Following the reemergence of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the 1970s after its long exile from the Indian political scene for the killing of Mahatma Gandhi, incidences of religious violence against Muslims and Christians have tremendously increased. Five judicial commissions have exposed the role of RSS in various communal riots: Ahmadabad 1969, Bhivandi 1970, Tellicheri 1971, Jamshedpur 1979, Kanyakumari 1982, Mumbai 1992–1993 and others (Lobo 2002, p. 63; see also Heredia 2003, p. 208). The demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 by the militant Hindus resulted in the spread of Hindu–Muslim riots across the country. Although anti-Muslim sentiment had been, what Varshney calls, the "master narrative" of Hindutva politics (Varshney 2002, pp. 55–57), it is observed that since the 1990s the Christian population have increasingly become the targets of Hindutva violence (Heredia 2003, p. 207; for a similar account, see Sarkar 2002, p. 215). As Lal has observed, from 1964 to 1996, only 38 incidences of violence against

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[1]As per the 2001 Census, Hindus constitute 80.5 % of the Indian population.

Christians were registered in the country. However, in 1997 alone, 24 incidences were noted by the United Christian Forum for Human Rights, and in 1998, the number went up to 90, though some Christian spokespersons claimed that the true figure is several times higher (Lal 2006, pp. 767–774). Recent data from the All India Christian Council suggests that each year from 2001 to 2005, about 200 anti-Christian attacks were reported in India.[2]

What is interesting about this is that most of these atrocities have occurred in states that not only have a sizable tribal population but also are ruled by the BJP or its allies such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Karnataka. These incidences thus raise some uneasy questions about the nature of democratic politics, the relationship between religion and politics, and the role of the state in Indian society. The central questions, however, are, why did instance of anti-Christian and anti-Muslim violence increase in India in the 1990s as compared to the previous years? Why have the BJP-ruled states experienced more cases of violence than the others? How can we explain this increasing religious intolerance in India in general and in the BJP-ruled states in particular? And, what role has the state in India played in this direction? In order to understand the increasing religious conflict this paper focuses on the north-western state of Rajasthan which has, in recent years, experienced a rise in anti-Christian violence.

9.1 A Chronicle of Anti-christian Violence in Rajasthan

Although Rajasthan has not witnessed large-scale violence like Orissa or Gujarat, it has experienced a large number of incidents of violence against religious minorities, making it as one of the "communally sensitive" (*sambedansil*) states of India. A recent survey of the National Crime Record Bureau points out that Rajasthan has experienced the highest number of riot cases continuously between 1990 and 2001. Attacks against Christian missionaries and converted tribals have tremendously increased. These attacks and atrocities against Christians suggest an alarming pattern of violence. The intimidation and physical attack on priests, burning of the Bible, ban on missionary schools, false allegations of forced conversion, destruction of Christian institutions such as schools, hospitals and orphanages, rape of nuns and attack on Christian meetings and congregations have become regular events in Rajasthan. For example, on 19 February 2004, the RSS and Bajrang Dal activists staged a violent protest against the Emmanuel Mission International (EMI) in Kota; they accused the Mission of converting students and successfully managed to send back a group of 270 students from Andhra Pradesh who had come to attend the annual graduation ceremony of Biblical courses (Rajalakshmi 2005).

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[2]http://indianchristians.in/news/content/view/439/43/; accessed on 15 November 2011.

Similar attacks have continued over the years. In March 2005, the Hindu militants beat up eight protestant clergymen who had gathered to pray in Koida village of Alwar district and desecrated their copies of the Bible.[3] In June 2005, members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal attacked a peace and spiritual session in Jodhpur organized by Father Paul Mathew.[4] A major blow came when the BJP government of Rajasthan decided to ban the functioning of the EMI in Kota on grounds of religious conversion. The EMI was established in 1960 by Archbishop M.A. Thomas, which today runs around 11,138 churches, 23 Bible institutes, 103 orphanages, one hospital, 140 schools and one college, among other institutions (Rajalakshmi 2005). The government severely harassed the EMI members but it finally lifted all restrictions after a few months. These are only some incidents that have been reported; it is doubtless that many incidents have not been reported at all. In addition to this, violence against Muslim minorities has also been increasing in the state. Such attacks and atrocities on religious minorities have continued over the years, tainting the image of Rajasthan in recent years and portraying it as an intolerant place for religious minorities.

How can we then explain this increasing violence against the religious minorities in Rajasthan? I would argue that in order to understand the increasing violence it is important to understand the political economy of the tribal society and the larger political developments in India as well as in Rajasthan.

9.2 The Political Economy of Tribal Society

Rajasthan is geographically the largest state of India and has a significant tribal population. The southern part of the state is heavily concentrated by the Bhil tribes who comprise 39 % of the state's tribal population. In Udaipur district almost half of the population is tribal and some Blocks like Kotra, where this research was conducted, has tribal concentrations as high as 90 %. Kotra is commonly known as the "Kalapani"—extremely remote and inaccessible—where the government officials are sent as a "punishment posting".

The Bhils mainly reside in the hilly regions. The primary sources of their livelihood are shifting cultivation, hunting and collection of forest produce. During the feudal rule in Rajasthan, the tribals were heavily exploited as bonded labourers. With the arrival of the British, the Bhils were classified as a violent "criminal tribe" and their right to use the forest became heavily restricted, which continued even after independence. In addition to this, due to the hierarchical structure of

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[3]http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Hindu-fundamentalists-attack-Christian-preachers-in-Rajasthan-2785.html; accessed on 15 November 2011.

[4]http://indianchristians.in/news/content/view/89/45/; accessed on 15 November 2011.

public administration, alarming bureaucratic corruption and huge network of patron–client relationship, the fruits of developmental planning have not reached the tribal society. The tribal population of Rajasthan suffer from widespread poverty and marginalization and is deprived of citizenship and welfare entitlements. In 1981, 54.16 % and in 1991, 44.73 % of Rajasthan's population lived below poverty line, and majority of them were tribals. The state also suffers from regular draughts accompanied by inevitable scarcities of jobs and food, resulting in acute hunger, malnutrition and disease. The tribals also perform miserably low in many of the socio-economic indicators. Illiteracy is very high, life expectancy is very low, and infant and maternal mortality rate among the tribals are very high. All these factors have combined to cause not only economic deprivation but also political powerlessness.

Following this, many non-state actors have taken up the responsibility to improve the lives of the marginalized. Two such major groups are the Christian missionaries and the family of Hindu nationalist organizations, collectively referred to as the Sangh Parivar, that carry out "development" projects in the tribal areas. However, in the process of doing development, the clash of identity, interest and ideology between these two groups have resulted in confrontation. The Sangh Parivar has accused the missionaries of converting the poor tribals into Christianity through force as well as through allurements. The missionaries have similarly accused the Sangh Parivar of converting the Christian tribals into Hinduism. This raises questions about the power and agency of the tribals and the Dalits (low-caste people). I would argue that this should not be viewed as a situation where the tribals lack an autonomous agency and are easily susceptible to conversion. This is, however, a very complex and contingent issue and can be understood only within the social and political context in which this is carried out.

Taking the larger political context of the 1990s into account, I argue that there is a direct co-relationship between the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP to power at the national as well as state level and the increasingly ferocious and frequent attacks against Christians and other religious minorities in different parts of India.[5] The primary reason for this is that the BJP and the Sangh Parivar's tendency towards moral absolutism incline them toward intolerance and, when mobilized politically, such intolerance often results in oppression and violence (see McGraw 2010, p. 30). The BJP-led developmental state in Rajasthan has provided significant support—ideological, political, economic and legal—to the Hindu nationalist organizations that are very active at the local level. It will thus be interesting to see how the organizations of Sangh Parivar have collaborated with the state in Rajasthan to strengthen their political ideology and to exam the implications of such collaboration? Before we discuss this, it is important to briefly discuss the role of Christian missionaries in the tribal areas of Rajasthan.

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[5]Similar arguments are also made by Copland (1998, p. 204) and Lal (2006, pp. 767–774).

9.3 Christianity, Conversion and the Tribals in Rajasthan

Until the early nineteenth century, missionary activity was significantly curtailed by the East India Company's concern about keeping missionaries from disturbing local sensibilities, but the Church pressure in England, the growing legitimation crisis of the empire, and the passing of the Charter Act of 1813 conspired to open India up to Christian proselytization on a significant basis (Smith 1963, pp. 194–198; Dirks 1996, p. 116; Jaffrelot 1996, p. 14). According to David Hardiman, the first missionary to work in Rajasthan was James Shepherd of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. He began his work among the Bhil tribes of Udaipur district in 1877 (Hardiman 2006, p. 144). However, Chaudhary has noted that the Christian missionaries first entered into the tribal areas of Rajasthan with the establishment of the Mewar Bhil Corps (MBC) by the British in Kherwada and Kotra in 1841. They provided medical and education services to the tribals in Pai, Baghpura and Banswara (Chaudhary 1986, p. 130). Some reasons for this could be: (1) although the missionaries could manage to convert some caste Hindus into Christianity, it was very difficult for them to spread their faith amongst the majority caste Hindus; the missionaries thus concentrated upon the tribals and low-caste Hindus who were exterior to and oppressed under Hinduism, and whom they described as people with no religion (Sinha 1991, p. 65) and (2) the British considered the tribals as aboriginals and backward and believed that it was their moral duty to "civilize" these backward people (Hardiman 2006).[6] Colonial medicine in particular proved to be a useful tool in this mission to civilize the backward tribals. In Rajasthan, "the tribals attracted the attention of missionaries owing to their horrific practice of human sacrifices, deplorable socio-religious and economic conditions and their exploitation by the higher caste Hindus or moneylenders, Rajas, petty police officials, and traders in the tribal areas" (Shyamlal 1989, p. 193).

The number of Churches and missionary activities in the tribal areas has significantly increased. A news report notes that there are more than 10 Churches in Udaipur (Ahmed 2010). These churches have been providing medical, educational and social welfare facilities to the poor tribals in Rajasthan. In the process of providing social services to the people, the missionaries also propagate their faith, which eventually has resulted in the conversion of many tribals into Christianity. The RSS data shows that the share of the Christians in the Indian population has increased from 2.53 % in 1981 to 2.61 % in 1991 (cited in Sridhar 1999). In Udaipur, the Christian population has increased by 79.73 %; in Rajasthan as a whole they form 0.1 % of the total 56.5 million people (cited

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[6]The idea of "civilizing mission" was used as a powerful tool to legitimize colonial rule around the world. The basic assumptions were: (1) Western culture was superior, and (2) colonial subjects, or the natives, were too backward to govern themselves and thus required "uplift" (Froerer 2007, p. 14).

in Sridhar 1999).[7] Following the rise of Christian population, the members of the Sangh Parivar have heavily criticized the missionary work and have accused them of carrying out conversions through force and material inducements.

However, the Census data of India shows that Christian population in India has in fact declined from 2.45 to 2.32 % between 1981 and 1991 (cited in Sridhar 1999). The Justice Wadhawa Commission of Enquiry also concluded similar findings and noted that between 1991 and 1998 the Hindu population increased by 2.5 %, while the Christian population increased by 0.008 % (cited in Sridhar 1999). How can we explain this paradox? On the one hand, Hindu nationalists claim that the Christian population in India is rising while on the other hand, data shows that Christian population in India is actually declining. This inconsistency can be explained only if: (1) as V. Sridhar has argued, in their analysis of the Census data, the RSS has abused the statistics in several cases, suppressed relevant facts in others, and used bogus figures in still others (Sridhar 1999), or (2) as the RSS has argued, the reason why there seems to be a decline of Christian population in the Census data is that since the 1980s the Christians have adopted the strategy of concealing the actual figures of Christian population in India; their goal is to make India a Christian nation in the next three centuries (Chadha 2000, p. 1). A third reason could also be that many of the tribals and Dalits who have been converted to Christianity are not officially registered as Christians because that would not allow them to access government concessions originally meant for the tribal and Dalit populations. As the *World Christian Encyclopedia* points out, in India there are a substantial number of "crypto-Christians", defined as secret Christian believers not mentioned in Census figures (cited in Chadha 2000; see Barrett et al. 2001, pp. 370–381). Similarly, *Operation World* by Patrick John Stone gives 2.61 % as the official figure of the population of Christians in India and 4 % as the unofficial figure. It also says that the Census figures are "artificially low" because a number of converts from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and other communities do not register themselves as Christians in government records (cited in Chadha 2000).

Whatever be the reason, it is undeniable that Christian missionaries are involved in religious conversion. The Christians see this as their legitimate right because Article 25 of the Indian Constitution has granted all citizens the "Right to Freedom of Religion" which entails that "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health". Although missionaries have accepted that they are involved in religious conversion, they strongly deny the alleged use of force or inducements to convert people in tribal areas. They have also declared that conversion is not carried out institutionally or in an organized manner. It is only a matter of personal faith.

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[7]The Christian Solidarity Worldwide data suggests that in 2006, Christians are estimated to make up no more than 100,000 of Rajasthan's population of 70 million. http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=513&search=rajasthan; accessed on 18 November 2011.

Denying all accusations of forced conversion, the Christian organizations in India have condemned the violence carried out by Hindu nationalists. They have presented themselves as innocent victims and argued that such violence is perpetrated by "fundamentalists with an ideology of intolerance, cultural exclusivism and dominion, who deny the pluralistic cultural heritage and the right of the poor". They have further noted that this is "an attempt by high caste Hindus to retain their hegemony and dominate Indian society" (Kim 2005, p. 226). Gauri Vishwanathan has also countered the Hindutva claim and asserts that "it can, and should be, argued that if missionaries give people services they would otherwise not have had, no one has a right to restrict their activities, particularly when there are no other state-supported or private initiatives. After all missionaries do not have a monopoly on the opening of new schools and hospitals, and there is nothing to stop Hindus or any other group from doing likewise" (Vishwanathan 2007, p. 347). Although these arguments explain some aspect of the problem, they do not, however, tell us why do the Hindu nationalists find religious conversion a problem? It is thus important to understand the Hindu nationalists' perspective on the problem of conversion in India, which will be discussed in the next section.

9.4 Religious Violence and the Politics of Hindu Nationalism

If profession, practice and propagation of one's religion are legitimized by the Constitution of India, why do the Hindu nationalists and the Sangh Parivar oppose religious conversion that is carried out by the Christian missionaries? This question lies at the heart of the problem and can be explained through an understanding of: (1) the ideology of Hindu nationalism and its perception of Christianity and conversion, (2) conversion and the post-colonial anxiety and (3) the decline of secular nationalism and the rise of the BJP to power.

(1) The Ideology of Hindu Nationalism Although Hindu nationalism, for the first time in Indian history, managed to capture political power at the national level only during the 1990s, it has a long history. Its origin goes back to the founding of the RSS in Nagpur in 1925 by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, who understood the multiple divisions within Hindu society and wished to unite all Hindus against both British colonialism and Muslim separatism in India. Eventually, Hindu nationalism began to be developed as an "alternative political culture to the dominant idiom in Indian politics, not only because it rejected non-violence as a legitimate and effective *modus operandi* against the British … but also because it rejected the Gandhian conception of the Indian nation" (Jaffrelot 2007, p. 4). Mahatma Gandhi's idea of India was based on religious pluralism and harmonious living of all communities. Although the leaders of India's religious minorities also resisted Gandhi's universalistic conception, Gandhi strongly believed that he spoke for the wellbeing of all communities. For Gandhi and for the Congress, "the Indian nation was to be defined according to territorial criterion, not on the basis of cultural features: it

encompassed all those who happened to live within the borders of British India" (Jaffrelot 2007, p. 4).

Hindu nationalism, however, rejected Gandhi's universalistic idea of the Indian nation and advocated for a cultural/religious one where India's national identity would be based on Hinduism which constituted the original and dominant religion of India, and the minorities were to be assimilated with the dominant culture (Jaffrelot 2007, p. 5). This notion of nationhood is best described by Savarkar, known as the father of Hindutva ideology, in his book *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* A similar account is also written by the second supreme chief (*sarsanghchalak*) of the Sangh Parivar M.S. Golwalkar, popularly known as Shri Guruji, in his book, *A Bunch of Thoughts.* Savarkar provided an exclusive, extremely radical and uncompromising form of nationalism and citizenship, which maintained that India, that is Hindustan, is the land of Hindus and its identity is embodied in Hindu culture and civilization. According to him, there are three essential characteristics of Hindutva or Hinduness: a common nation (*rashtra*), a common race (*jati*) and a common civilization (*sanskriti*); and a Hindu is he who looks up this land as not only a Fatherland (*pitribhu*) but also a Holy Land (*punyabhu*) (Savarkar 2003, p. 67).

Savarkar further pointed out that religions like Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism qualify to be considered as a part of the Hindu dharma as their forefathers once belonged to the Vedic Hindu religion and as they share the common cultural and civilizational conceptions of the land. The Muslims and the Christians, however, asserted that they cannot be identified as Hindus. Although they carried the blood of the Hindus before being converted, they do not consider India as their Holy Land. For them, Arabia or Palestine is the Holy Land because it is where their mythology and ideas originated (Savarkar 2003, p. 69). For Savarkar, Muslims and Christians are foreign aggressors and "culturally alien" people (*mlecchas*) who have forcibly converted Hindus into non-Hindu religions. As a result, the love and loyalty of the converted community has been divided between their Fatherland and their Holy Land.

Hindu nationalism thus does not visualize the Christians and Muslims as a part of the Indian nation. They are regarded as aggressors, who pose a threat to the unity of India's culture, identity and nationhood. The history of Muslim conquest of India, the memories of Hindu–Muslim communal violence, the killing of cows and the Partition of India have all established Muslims as the enemies of Indian/ Hindu nation. There is, however, not much corresponding narrative that will establish Christians as the enemies (see Sarkar 2002, p. 217). This issue has been cleverly articulated by the Hindu nationalists, who have equated Christianity with colonialism/imperialism and provided narratives that depict various kinds of colonial oppression such as the forced mass conversion of the Hindu population by missionaries, which was supported by the British colonial state.[8] The Hindu

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[8]For example, Lord William Bentinck, while governor of Madras, gave every encouragement to the missionaries to carry on their work of converting Hindus. Such support was significantly increased with the passing of the Charter Act in 1813. Even a governor of a province publicly declared that he looked forward to the Christianization of all India. See Smith (1963, pp. 195–197).

nationalists thus see conversion as a major threat, which is used by the Muslims and Christians to increase their demographic strength as well as to divide the Hindu/Indian society. For them, conversion is "violence against humanity" and "converting religions are necessarily aggressive, because conversion implies a conscious intrusion into the religious life of a person and is violence against people who are committed to non-violence" (see Kim 2005, p. 229).

Gandhi was also similarly very much opposed to religious conversion and argued that there should be no attempt to "wean out" anyone from his or her religious affiliation. He strongly "deprecated the offering of material advantages like money, educational facilities and medical services to secure religious conversion" (Rao 1999, p. 144). He feared that the British divide and rule policy, expressed particularly through the provision of separate electorates not only for Sikhs, Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and Indian Christians but also for "the depressed classes", might eventually separate the great mass of lower caste Hindus from the rest of the Hindu community. He was also concerned that the Muslim and Christian proselytization might draw large numbers of untouchable from the Hindu fold. For this reason, he became increasingly opposed to missionary activity especially that aimed at converting Hindus and also often described them as "anti-national" activities (see Bauman 2008, p. 6).

Gandhian opposition to conversion thus provided some legitimacy to the Hindu nationalist claim. The Muslims and the Christians continued to be considered as the conflicting "non-self" or "the intimate enemy" of Hindutva's homogenizing nation-state project. This project of homogenization and denial of pluralism is a reflection of Hindutva's moral absolutism, which not only breeds intolerance towards "the other" but also justifies violence in society. When such intolerance is supported by the political authority or the state, which has the monopoly over coercive forces, the matter may become more disastrous as it has been observed during the BJP rule in India in general and Gujarat and Rajasthan in particular.

(2) Religious Conversion and the Post-Colonial Anxiety At the onset of independence, British India became divided into the Muslim dominated Islamic state of Pakistan and the Hindu dominated but secular India. Large-scale Hindu–Muslim communal violence erupted in different parts of the country, which resulted in the killing of 600,000–1 million people (Frankel 2000, p. 6). The fear of disorder, violence and separatism engulfed the post-colonial state of India. Various secessionist movements also emerged in different parts of the country. Political integration of the Princely States, which were autonomous during the British rule, became rather difficult and threatened the unity of the country. For example, the Nizam of Hyderabad expressed his will to remain independent. The independence of Hyderabad, however, was considered as a threat to peace and security, which forced Nehru to send the Indian Army and to integrate Hyderabad with India. Several other Princely States like Kashmir, Junagarh, Tripura and Manipur insisted on separation. This period also witnessed violent tribal and peasant uprising in West Bengal and in Andhra Pradesh. The peasants, led by the militant Marxist groups, demanded their rightful share in agriculture and violently resisted the feudal oppression. Added to this, a movement for the creation

of new states on the basis of language emerged which resulted in the linguistic reorganization of states in 1956. The southern states also strongly opposed to the imposition of Hindi as the national language. Taking into account these fissiparous tendencies, Selig Harrison in his book *India: the Most Dangerous Decades* concluded that India would soon lead to balkanization or dictatorship (Harrison 1960).

The territorial unity of the post-colonial state in India was constantly threatened. One such major challenge came in the early 1950s from the tribals of central India, especially from Chhotanagpur region, who demanded a separate state on the basis of their tribal identity. They even submitted a petition to the Linguistic State Reorganization Committee, which was rejected on the ground that the tribals of the region did not share a common language (Bauman 2008, p. 28). This movement came to be known as the Jharkhand movement and threatened the territorial integrity of the Indian nation. It so happened that a majority of these tribals who demanded a separate state were Christians and several Christian missionaries had also been active in this region. As a result of the missionary work during the colonial period, many tribals had been converted to Christianity in this area.[9] Added to this, when the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister R.S. Shukla visited the tribal areas, there were strong protest with black flags and he was asked to go back. This created the suspicion that the missionaries were involved in inciting the tribals and conspiring to divide the country.

The number of missionaries in the country was also increasing considerably: from 4,683 in 1952 to 5,700 at the beginning of 1955 (Smith 1963, pp. 199, 206). This rise in the number of missionaries and increasing conversion of tribals alarmed the government and created suspicion in the minds of many Indians. Two major steps were taken by the government in this direction. First, following the advice of Thakkar Bappa, well known for his work among tribals, the government of Madhya Pradesh invited Balasaheb Deshpande, a RSS volunteer, to work among the tribals, which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) in 1952 with the objective of tribal welfare and prevention of religious conversion. This organization is currently working among the tribal populations in all states of India. Second, the government of Madhya Pradesh appointed a Christian Missionary Activities Inquiry Committee in 1954 under the chairmanship of B.S. Niyogi, a retired chief justice of High Court at Nagpur. The committee submitted its report in 1956 which concluded that "Christian missionaries were inducing low-caste Hindus and tribals peoples to convert with promises of employment, education, or health and other social services" (cited in Bauman 2008, p. 3). The report also suggested that "large numbers of Dalits and tribals were converting to Christianity, that the number of Hindus in the region

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[9]In Jharkhand, the Permanent Settlement of 1793 turned the traditional *tikhedar*s (tax collectors) into zamindars (landlords). Tribal land began to be alienated to the zamindars. At that stage, the Belgian Jesuit Constant Lievens who studied their land laws and helped them to save their land came to be viewed as their saviour and, as a result, mass conversions followed. See Fernandes (1999, p. 82), Bauman (2008, p. 26).

was declining, and that the ultimate goal of Christian evangelistic work was secession—either in the form of a Christian-dominated state within the Indian Union or an independent Christian nation along the lines of Pakistan" (cited in Bauman 2008, p. 3).

The Niyogi report alarmed many state governments because of which they increasingly sought to curb conversion and Christian activity. As Chad Bauman has rightly argued, "resistance to conversion to Christianity in this context emerged not out of concern for the spiritual state of converts so much as out of anxieties, real or perceived, about the survival of the fledgling Indian nation" (2008, p. 3). The creation of Nagaland in 1963 provided increasing legitimacy to the Niyogi report as four-fifths of the Naga tribes were Christians who demanded for the creation of a separate state (Jaffrelot 2011, p. 202). With such fear, a number of states introduced the anti-conversion legislation ironically known as the Freedom of Religions Act. This Freedom of Religions Act was first passed in Orissa in 1967, then in Madhya Pradesh in 1968, and in Andhra Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh in 1978. The Indian government refused an unprecedented number of visa applications for new missionaries of recognized societies and, as a result, the number of foreign missionaries decreased to 4,800 by early 1959 (Smith 1963, pp. 200, 206).

The Nehruvian Congress government was also pressurized to pass an anti-conversion law at the national level. Even the Hindu lobbies pressed for a constitutional ban on conversion during the Constituent Assembly debates (1946–50). However, Nehru's uncompromising commitment to secularism, which he had adopted as the "official ideology" of the post-colonial state, led him to block the Indian Conversion (Regulation and Registration) Bill before the Indian parliament in 1954. In fact, on October 17, 1952 he actually distributed a letter to his chief ministers instructing them to clamp down on the harassment of Christians in their states (Bauman 2008, pp. 6, 23). Nehruvian state strongly followed "religious neutrality"; all religions enjoyed equal status and none either determined citizenship or dominated the functioning of the state (Varshney 1998). By propagating the secular ideology, which intended to "reassure the religious minorities that they would be secure in the newly independent state", the Congress party established itself as the legitimate guardian of the Indian state (Seshia 1998, p. 1039). However, the progressive deinstitutionalization and decline of the Congress in the 1970s and the rise of the BJP to power radically transformed the political climate and also the relationship between religion and politics in India.

(3) The Decline of the Congress and the Rise of the BJP The Nehruvian secular nationalism had provided a pluralistic and secular model of nation-building. However, after the death of Nehru, the Congress experienced severe internal contradiction during the leadership of his daughter, Indira Gandhi. A series of corruption scandals were exposed. Mrs. Gandhi's tenure also witnessed a highly centralized, autocratic and confrontational style of personal rule, which was heavily opposed by a Gandhian named Jaya Prakash Narayan (known as JP) along with Gandhian NGOs, the RSS and other Hindu nationalist organizations. With the fear being deposed, Mrs. Gandhi imposed Emergency rule in the country on June 26,

1975 for 21 months, which also ultimately resulted in her defeat in the 1977 election and the coming of the Janata party to power. In Rajasthan, the Hindu nationalist leader B.S. Shekhawat was also elected as a result of his resistance to the Emergency rule. After coming to power, the Janata government heavily supported the Gandhian NGOs and Hindu nationalist organizations who were its allies during the anti-Emergency movement. It is important to note here that it was during this time that the VKA, the tribal welfare wing of the RSS that was confined only to Madhya Pradesh, became an All India organization and its Rajasthan branch was opened on August 25, 1978 in Kotra Block of Udaipur district.

The Hindu nationalist BJP was founded on April 5, 1980 as an alternative to the Congress. Although it performed relatively well in the state assembly elections in 1980 in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat, the assasination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards generated a wave of sympathy vote for the Congress and, as a result, Rajiv Gandhi came to power. During his rule, the principle of secularism was heavily undermined and religious minorities were left unprotected. For example, in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, which followed the assasination of Indira Gandhi, more than 2,700 people were killed over the course of a few days, roughly 2,150 in Delhi alone, and the government did not do anything to protect them (Hibbard 2010, p. 152). The Congress also followed both Hindu and Muslim communal policies to appease the members of these communities. In order to capture the Muslim vote, Rajiv Gandhi followed the decisions of Muslim fundamentalists and over turned a 1985 Supreme Court ruling that gave Shah Bano and all Muslims the right to seek alimony. Similarly, to appease the Hindu majority, it supported the Hindu nationalist led Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which had begun with the goal to build a temple for Lord Rama at his birth place in Ayodhya by replacing the Babri Mosque (see Van der Veer 1987; Hibbard 2010, pp. 157–160). In addition to all this, Rajiv Gandhi and his party were also implicated in a number of corruption scandals, which created popular disillusionment among the masses.

The erosion of secularism and growing corruption scandals questioned the credibility of the Congress party. The BJP opposed the Congress government's minority appeasing policy and supported the Hindu nationalist cause, which was already set in motion by the "soft Hindutva" policies of the Congress party during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure. The Hindu nationalists were also opposed to religious conversion and strongly reacted to the 1981 mass conversion to Islam at Meenakshipuram by non-caste Hindus. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement provided political mileage to the BJP. The ideology of the BJP appealed to the middle and upper caste/class people and eventually led to its victory in 1998 general election. The increasing political dominance of BJP since the 1990s has simultaneously led to increasing anti-minority policy. The enactment of Anti-conversion law became an important issue for the BJP for which it called for a national debate on conversion in 1999. Following the national mood, Chhattisgarh in 2000, Tamil Nadu in 2002 and Gujarat in 2003 passed the anti-conversion legislation. Rajasthan also attempted to pass a similar law in 2006 but failed to do so due the disapproval of the Governor of the state. The confrontation between Hindu

nationalists and Christian missionaries significantly increased in the tribal areas, and Rajasthan was no exception to this. It should be noted here that in Rajasthan, the BJP came to power in 1990 and has since then ruled the state for several times. It is thus important to understand the tribal encounters with Hindu nationalism and the implications of the BJP-led state for the religious minorities in Rajasthan.

9.5 The Tribal Encounters with Hindu Nationalism in Rajasthan

The recent anti-Christian violence in Rajasthan should be understood in a historical perspective. The tribals of Rajasthan first encountered an organized form of Hindu nationalism on August 25, 1978 when the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (Tribal Welfare Association—VKA) opened its Rajasthan branch, known as the Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad (RVKP), in the in tribal dominated Kotra region of Udaipur district. Although the objective of the RVKP was to promote tribal development and welfare, its latent agenda has always been to stop religious conversion in the tribal regions. As mentioned earlier, the Christian missionaries first came to Rajasthan following the establishment of Mewar Bhil Corps by the British in 1841 and began working among the Bhil tribes of Kherwada and Kotra region. Missionaries have since then been very active in the region and, as a result of their social service, many tribals have been converted to Christianity. This had worried the Hindu nationalists. The Janata government at the centre and B.S. Shekhawat's government in Rajasthan in the late 1970s facilitated the entry of Hindu nationalists into the tribal regions of Rajasthan. Some other reasons for which the VKA decided to establish its branch in Kotra were: (1) this region provided a series of historical narratives that reflected the strong bonding between the Bhils and the caste Hindus, (2) the tribals of this region had a long history of fighting against the so called "alien" or foreign forces such as the Mughals and the British and (3) besides active Missionary work, this region has also been dominated by the other so called "disruptive" force—the Muslims—who were largely brought to the region by the British. Kotra thus provided a fitting space and the Hindu nationalists have exploited the historical context to strengthen their position in the region.

One major objective of the Hindu nationalists has been to dissociate the tribals from the missionaries and bring them to the so called "mainstream" of the Hindu society. There is a long debate about the identity of the tribals in India. The missionaries regard them as animists and non-Hindus and thus justify their conversion. However, the Hindu nationalists have disagreed with such pronouncements and have held that the British colonialism labelled the tribals as *adivasis* or indigenous people (thus, the Hindus as aliens) and their religion as animism as a part of its "divide and rule" policy to prolong the colonial rule. The Christian missionaries played an important role in this direction by linking up humanitarian activities with proselytization (Sinha 1991, p. 65). The Hindu nationalists although accepted

that there is geographical distance between the tribals and the caste Hindus as the former live in the forests (*vanvasis*) and the latter live in the villages (*gaonvasis*) or cities (*shahrvasis*), there is no cultural distance between the two. For them, the tribals constitute an indispensable part of Hindu social and religious order and thus justify their opposition to conversion. This Hindu nationalist view has also been bolstered by the Census of India which has classified the tribes as Hindus, unless explicitly claimed otherwise (see Baviskar 2005, p. 5107; Froerer 2007, p. 10).

However, according to Ghanshyam Shah, "if Hinduism means the institutional fourfold brahmnical social order, the model presented by *Manusmruti,* accepting Vedantic philosophy, etc., the adivasis [tribals] are certainly not Hindus" (1999, p. 314). He further points out that the caste Hindus also do not consider the tribals as part of them; the tribals are always looked down upon and placed outside the caste based social order (p. 314). N.K. Bose has argued that although the tribal groups existed outside the Hindu social organizations they have been acculturated and absorbed in the lower structures of the Hindu society (Bose 1949/1996, pp. 168–181).[10] According to Mann and Mann, such acculturation or "Hinduization" among the west-Indian tribes occurred when the tribals first came in contact with the dominant caste Hindus who entered the tribal belt not only as rulers but also as trading, priestly and serving castes. The tribes acquired the cultural traits of the caste Hindus as their reference group behaviour with the objective to elevate their position as well as to attain higher social status in their society (Mann and Mann 1989, pp. 156–183). As a result of such acculturation, argues Beteille, "[i]n India … some tribes have ceased to be tribes and have become castes or something else, and this has happened extensively elsewhere as well" (Beteille 1998, p. 190).

In Rajasthan, although such contact between the Bhil tribes and the caste Hindus, especially the Rajputs, existed for a very long period, it increased to intimacy in the medieval period during the rule of Maharana Pratap, who was helped by the Bhils to fight against the Mughal emperor Akbar during the battle of Haldighati in 1576 (Mann and Mann 1989, pp. 158–159). This was further strengthened by the Bhagat movement, which was first started by Mavji Maharaj in the eighteenth century and popularized by Govind Giri in the early twentieth century, especially between 1907 and 1913. It propagated the Sanskritic traits and Hindu religious values, such as believing in Karma, reincarnation and the omnipresence of god, following of vegetarianism, not to kill animals, stop drinking alcohol and so on among the tribes of Rajasthan (see Mann and Mann 1989; Vashishtha 1997). Due to this long acculturation, a majority of the tribals today follow Hindu rituals, worship Hindu gods and goddesses, and celebrate Hindu festivals like *Durga Puja, Ganesh Puja, Deepavali* and so on.[11] Such celebration of rituals or what is referred to as the "quintessential customs" has served as an all-purpose social glue that has bound the tribals with the Hindu society (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, p. xv).

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[10]Considering their cultural closeness to the Hindu social and religious order, Indian sociologist G.S. Ghurye has declared them the "backward Hindus". See Ghurye (1959).

[11]Discussion with some tribal people in Kotra on September 21, 2006.

This long history of cultural closeness of the tribals to the Hindus has also, in a sense, justified the activity and claims of the Hindu nationalists in Rajasthan. However, the tribals constitut economically one of the most backward and marginalized group. The welfare benefits of the post-colonial state have not reached them. The Hindu nationalists have been able to improve their economic conditions as well as to stop the missionaries who have manipulated their tribal brothers to be converted into Christianity. In Rajasthan, data suggests that there is also a strong resentment among people against religious conversion (67 %) and inter-caste marriage (74 %) compared to the all India level (54 and 57 % respectively) (Lodha 2004, p. 5461). The Hindu nationalists have thus organized *Gharwapsi* (homecoming) or *Shuddhikaran* (purification) programmes in the tribal areas to bring back those Christian tribals who, through conversion, have left the Hindu religion. In this context, the Hindu nationalists, in their effort to curb conversion and bring about development in the tribal region, have received significant economic, political, legal and ideological support from the BJP-led state, which came to power in Rajasthan in 1990 and has since then ruled the state several times.

Today, the RVKP is working amongst all six major tribal communities (Bhil, Mina, Damor, Kathodi, Garasia and Sahriya) spreading across 2858 villages in 32 administrative Blocks in all 10 tribal districts of Rajasthan (RVKP 2011, p. 14). Like the Christian missionaries, the major strategy of the Hindu nationalists has also been developmental in nature. Data suggest that the RVKP currently runs 1257 developmental projects, 1218 village committees, 18 urban committees and 288 rural women committees in Rajasthan (see Table 9.1). Each of these projects intends not just to dissociate the tribal populations from the missionaries and Muslim business communities but also to bring them closer to the organization and ideology of the Sangh Parivar. The RVKP has utilized these developmental

Table 9.1 Development Projects of the RVKP

***Shiksha Prakalp* (Education)**	***Gram Vikash and Arthik Unnayan* (Economic Development)**
Hostel—13 Primary School—43 Upper Primary School—2 Secondary School—2 Ekal Vidyalayas—39 Coaching Centre—5 Village Library—4	Self Help Groups—23 Gram Vikash Kendra—11 Sewing Center—03
***Sanskara Prakalp* (Child Care)**	***Khel Prakalp* (Sports)**
Bal Sanskara Kendra—282	Sports Centre for the Youth—108
***Chikischha Prakalp* (Health)**	***Shradha Jagaran Prakalp* (Faith and Culture)**
Arogya Rakshak—78 Hospital—1 Medical Camp—27 Ambulance—1 (Chal Chikischha)	Bhajan Mandali and Satsang Kendra—639 **Total Project—1257** **Total Project in Places—1162**

Source RVKP (2011, p. 14)

projects as a medium to enter the tribal region, to gain legitimacy and to spread its ideology amongst the tribals.

These development projects carried out at grassroot level by the RVKP have also acted as a means for political mobilization and have often helped the BJP gain political power. The BJP government has also, in return, provided financial support to the RVKP and funded many of its development projects. As Abdul Aziz Khan, a Muslim leader in Kotra mentioned:

> …the [R]VKP was actively promoted during the eight-year-long BJP rule [1990-98 – when B.S. Shekhawat was the chief minister] in Rajasthan. In a bid to provide legitimacy to the Sangh Parivar outfit, the previous BJP government had allocated a number of projects under the tuberculosis control programme, Shiksha Karmi Yojana [an education scheme] and Vidyalaya Viheen Ikaai [units outside schools] to the [R]VKP for popularizing among the tribals.[12]

Such kinds of state support to the RVKP intensified with the return of the BJP to power in Rajasthan in 2003. Although the BJP lost in the 2008 Assembly Election, during its rule from 2003 to 2008, it heavily promoted the organizations of the Sangh Parivar by facilitating their communal campaigns and ensuring that the state machinery turns a blind eye on their misdemeanors. The various institutions of law and governance such as the courts, the police, the legal system, instead of providing security to the minorities, acted as facilitators of violence. This type of endorsement emboldened RVKP activists who felt protected by the state machinery. According to data, the BJP government in Rajasthan (2003–2008) led by Vasundhara Raje used to allocate up to 5 million rupees per annum to the RVKP to run hostels (Singh 2004). Mrs. Raje also continuously visited Beneswar Dham, a sacred place for the tribals in Rajasthan, and donated money for religious activities. Her government lifted the ban on *trishul* (trident) distribution in Rajasthan and selectively withdrew a large number of cases related to communal conflicts filed during the previous Congress government in the state (Rajalakshmi 2005). As per a news report, the government withdrew 122 communal cases, which were against the activists of the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, RVKP and Shiv Sena for inciting communal violence in the state. However, cases registered against members of the minority community in the same communal incidents have not been withdrawn. Many of these cases pertain to 2002 in the areas adjoining Gujarat and are linked to the genocide (*The Hindu,* 13 August 2004; Taneja 2004).

The BJP-led state in Rajasthan has also taken a belligerent stand on religious conversion. Besides its attempt to ban the Kota Immanuel Mission, it also introduced the Rajasthan Dharma Swatantraya (Religious Freedom) Bill in the State Assembly in 2006, which aimed to stop "conversion from one religion to another by the use of force or allurement or by fraudulent means" and promote freedom of conscience. The Bill was sent to the Governor for approval. But the Governor refused to approve it on the ground that it violated the fundamental right to

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[12] http://www.islamicvoice.com/January.2002/investigation.htm; accessed on 18 October 2006.

religion of the individual. In response, the BJP argued that a law restricting forcible religious conversions was the need of the hour as such activities had adversely affected communal harmony. Jogeshwar Garg, a BJP Minister of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) declared that "problems of fanaticism, terrorism and secessionism have always arisen in the areas where Hindus were reduced to minority by large-scale conversions" (*The Hindu,* 21 March 2008). Madan Dilawar, the Social Welfare Minister in the BJP government in Rajasthan, also pointed out that "in tribal areas and localities of poor Dalits, all kinds of efforts were being made to tempt or force people to change their religion and we will not tolerate these designs". Thus, the BJP government reintroduced the Religious Freedom Bill with certain changes, which was passed in the Assembly on March 20, 2008.

The new Bill makes the provision of stricter punishment—2–5 years of punishment—if the convert is under age, a woman, a tribal or a Dalit.[13] It also makes it mandatory for anyone intending to convert to send notice at least 30 days in advance or face a fine up to 1,000 rupees. However, it adds that the same requirement and penalty will not be applied to a person who is wishing to "reconvert" people to their "original religion" or to the "religion of one's forefathers" (see Coleman 2008, p. 264). The Hindu nationalists also do not consider *Gharwapsi* or *Shuddhikaran* as conversion because they are just bringing those who have "strayed" from the Hindu fold back to their native religion. Thus, by providing legal protection, the BJP government has actively encouraged the Hindu nationalists to reconvert the Christian tribals into the Hindu fold. These examples show that the BJP-led state is, in some way, related to the increasing violence against the Christian minorities in Rajasthan. It has provided extensive economic, political and legal support to the Hindu nationalists and facilitated their expansion into the tribal areas. The support from the state has provided moral and political confidence to the Hindu nationalists to "control" the activities of the so called antinational forces as well as to prevent the tribal population from being converted and to bring the already converted ones back into the Hindu social and religious fold in order to strengthen its political project of "making India Hindu".

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[13]http://www.worthynews.com/1622-india-rajasthan-passes-new-anti-conversion-bill; accessed on 25 Nov. 2011.

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Part IV
Towards Harmony and Peace

Chapter 10
Between Revenge and Reconciliation: The Significance of Truth Commissions

Rajeev Bhargava

10.1 Introduction

The morning of 16 August 1946 saw the beginning of what came to be described as the "Great Calcutta Killing" in which about 4,000 people were killed and another 11,000 injured. Trouble was already brewing for some time. "There was fear about, and fear in India means trouble", Francis Tuker, a colonial army officer, had written in April (Dalton 1970). But the magnitude of the tragedy caught everyone unaware. The "intensity of the hatred let loose and the savagery with which both sides killed each other" surprised everyone. Soon people began describing the killing as "civil war" and the foreboding of "impending terrible disasters" began to grip collective imagination. *The Statesman*, the local English daily, in lament claimed that Calcuttans desperately needed "psycho-therapy on a mass scale".

Gandhi arrived in Calcutta in August 1947, on the very day of the first major sabotage of a train in Punjab and declared that his "head hung in shame at this continuous recital of man's barbarism". When Suhrawardy, the Muslim League Chief Minister of Bengal, pleaded with him to stay on in Calcutta and see it through in times of trouble, Gandhi knew that the breakdown of trust between the two communities was the principal cause of the violence and therefore that this "experiment" by him, a Hindu, would be crucial for winning back the trust of ordinary Muslims. Chastened by the violence, Suhrawardy agreed. Hindus, on the other hand, reacted to this proposal with horror. How could Gandhi live with a known League member in the midst of Muslims who had slaughtered Hindus?

R. Bhargava (✉)
Parekh Institute of Indian Thought, Delhi, India
e-mail: director@csds.in

However, Gandhi's argument and charisma eventually prevailed. Communal violence was halted. Hindus and Muslims flocked to Gandhi with their grievances, pleading innocence and pinning the entire blame for the violence on members of the other community or on *goondas*. Gandhi predictably asked everyone to "turn the searchlight inwards", and to accept collective responsibility for evil.

For a while the ploy worked. This experiment of rebuilding trust between two estranged communities had affected a remarkable catharsis. Collective ill-will was not suppressed but Gandhi had succeeded in transforming it into mutual goodwill. However, the explosion of communal harmony was intense but short-lived, forcing Gandhi to undertake a fast unto death. Now people began to respond with greater resolve: peace demonstrations were held, resistance groups to prevent killings were formed, civil servants joined in the fast and even *goondas* offered to submit to any penalty Gandhi wished to impose on them. Peace returned but Gandhi did not stop his fast. His objective was to bring about not merely a temporary truce but lasting peace which in his view, depended on a real change of heart. Only when the worst offenders within both communities pledged to forgive one another, reconciled their differences, and vowed to lay down their lives for communal amity, did Gandhi break his fast. Hindus who had earlier cried for the blood of Muslims now agreed to protect them. Calcutta began to witness a more stable peace. By all accounts, "a truly wonderful victory over evil had been achieved".

My objective in recalling this slice of Indian history is to draw attention to something that holds a lesson for all societies. Clearly, every society needs to pull back from barbarism; if it has lapsed into it, it must immediately restore peace. After arresting the immediate round of violence, it must ensure a way out of the cycle of revenge and self-destruction and prevent the recurrence of evil. For Gandhi, this cannot be achieved by forgetting or repressing grievances. These must first be allowed full expression and then tamed by "confronting the *goonda* we harbor within". We must take collective responsibility for the evil that has been generated. This alone helps reconcile differences, and rebuild communal harmony—our final objective. In Gandhi's view, this then is the structure of moral action in the aftermath of evil:

> BARBARISM—restoration of peace—expression of grievances—their truthful assessment—the acceptance of collective responsibility for evil—forgiveness—RECONCILIATION (A society where formerly estranged members are morally reconciled may be called a fully decent society).

In what follows, I endorse this Gandhian structure of moral action in the aftermath of evil. Nonetheless, a number of questions remain to be asked. For instance, it is worth asking how stable peace could have been restored in Calcutta in the absence of Gandhi. Impressed by the "magician", the Congress leaders urged Gandhi to go to civil war-stricken Punjab. He never managed to go there, but if confronted with evil on a much larger scale, would Gandhi have succeeded? How would a society not blessed with a Mahatma, without moral saints, find a way out of barbarism? What other mechanism can perform roughly the same function? Do societies anyway not require *institutions* for a more stable harmony between two

radically differing communities that have been at war with one another? It is one thing to stop violence and quite another to get people to talk to one another, to induct everyone into the process of negotiation. Which institution can perform this function? In Calcutta, the killers were known to the victims but in situations where victims have disappeared without trace, where the basic facts are not known, institutions must do more than becoming vehicles of collective catharsis. What more will an institution need to do in such situations? I believe that even societies that have had the benefit of moral saints require institutions to perform similar and related functions, particularly when they have faced evil on a large scale. A South African style Truth and Reconciliation Commission is one such institution that could contribute to the realization of the Gandhian structure of basic moral action in the aftermath of evil. However, the principal argument of my paper is that their function is more limited. In one way, truth commissions do more than what is suggested by the Gandhian structure. They help unearth the truth; but overall, they aim to achieve results that are lesser—and therefore, more modest—than what is suggested therein. This is why, in a way, I also seek to modify the structure. In my view, the structure can be realized only by a complex set of institutions, and that too in stages, and over a period of time.

10.2 Distinctions Between Barbaric and Minimally Decent Society

In order to amplify this point I wish to introduce and fully flesh out a distinction implicit in the account given above: the distinction between what I call a barbaric and a "minimally decent society". A minimally decent society is governed by what I call "minimally moral rules". A complete breakdown of such rules characterizes a barbaric society. In this context, what makes these rules moral is their capacity to prevent evil and not their ability to promote a particular conception of the good life, including a substantive conception of justice. Such rules embody a commitment to abjure violence and include negative injunctions against killing and maiming one another. It follows that a violation of such rules is an act of grave immorality. It is of course true that acts of grave immorality can be committed within a minimally decent society. Consider the case of a serial murderer, say, Jack the Ripper, who murdered several persons by slitting their throats and mutilating their bodies with the consummate skills of an expert in human anatomy. Such evil acts can occur in minimally decent societies, within a moral order that is reflected at least partly in the law. The offender can be brought within due process of law and punished in proportion to the crime. But the situation in barbaric societies is qualitatively different, for here the scale of evil is much greater and the potential of the criminal justice system to deal with it, far less adequate. Such a situation is beyond legality, and has even crossed the threshold beyond which moral notions are virtually inapplicable. This is a monstrous universe, exemplifying pure and unadulterated evil. Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia

provide the most recent examples. But for Indians, the partition of the subcontinent, that left more than half a million dead and many more dispossessed, remains a vivid, festering example of such madness. Accounts of partition reveal this collective insanity. Here is a sample:

> My earliest memory is of a hot summer day in Delhi in 1948. I remember that as I unlocked the door to our house, I saw, stretched out on the steps below, the body of a man. He was lying face down. The man's limbs were in disarray, his clothes were soaked in blood and the sun had begun to darken his skin. Earlier in the day the man had sought shelter in our house. He was a Muslim trader who had been chased into our locality by violent men seeking revenge for blood spilled in Pakistan. The man had tried to reach our house, but he was killed before he could get at our door. I have never since forgiven that day. It taught me that a group of people—any people—in their religious passion or tribal pride can always go mad; and that after a time they can relapse into madness again. I became conscious of the fact that the world which most of us had chosen to create, and in which I would have to grow up, was neither safe nor brave. The partition had broken the covenant that men must make with men, castes with castes, religions with other tolerant religions, without which our survival is always precarious and our enslavement to some barbarian is certain. Over the years, I came to realize that my recollections of those days were not private obsessions with the horrific. Similar incidents, known to others, had become a part of their experiential world. My own memories acquired a density and detail from the narratives of a variety of different people. My aunts told me of properties burnt, my grandfather about friends lost, a massacre witnessed, about the public mutilations of women. I grew up trying to understand the problem of evil and to explore the possibilities of magnanimity in such a world as ours. (Bhalla 1994)

It is important to recognize the scope and depth of evil, its reach and what all it destroys. In barbaric societies, it is not public morality alone that is ruined. Evil here has a way of spilling over not only from the public into the private domain but of pervading even intimate realms. Friends, lovers and members of the family can all be complicit in crime. No one may be presumed innocent. The very distinction between friend and enemy, between those one loves and those one hates intensely is erased. The sociologist, Das (1990) reporting on victims of the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 talks of how the traumatic violence of the crowd suddenly revealed to one of its victims the fragility of her kinship universe. Shanti, the victim, disclosed, "It was my own mama (mother's brother) who had advised my husband to hide. He revealed the hiding places of the Siglikar Sikhs to the leaders of the mob. He bartered their lives for his own protection. Go and see his house. Not even a broken spoon has been looted" (Das 1990). Such personal betrayal is not uncommon in these times. The misfortune of a life without love, of complete friendlessness—surely one of the great evils that can befall human beings—as also rancor and bitterness among siblings was not uncommon, for instance, when India was partitioned.

More importantly, evil eventually ensnares the victim. Typically, in barbaric societies, the very distinction between victims and perpetrators is obliterated. In societies with prolonged phases of barbarism, everyone is trapped in an escalating cycle of revenge. It is true of course that even in ordinary situations, it is normal for the victim to experience the impulse to retaliate, to want to punish the perpetrator of the crime and get even. However, in barbaric situations, where a downward

spiral of violence is firmly set in motion, vengeance invariably leads people to excesses. The retaliatory impulse gets a momentum of its own and forces people to exact more than is necessary. Acting disproportionately, in a manner that is intrinsically hideous, victims too become hateful creatures who routinely create new victims.

The association of the concept of evil with the idea of original sin and more generally with theology is one reason why secular-minded western philosophers are reluctant to give it the attention it deserves. But its neglect is due also to post-war euphoria—a general sense of wellbeing throughout the industrialized world—and a motivated lack of interest in theorizing the great injustices of colonialism and its destructive consequences in the non-western world. Stuart Hampshire is among a handful of philosophers who has reflected on this issue and not surprisingly, the Second World War, in particular the horror of the Nazi regime compelled him to do so:

> I learnt how easy it had been to organize the vast enterprises of torture and of murder, and to enroll willing workers in this field once all moral barriers had been removed by the authorities. Unmitigated evil and nastiness are as natural, it seemed, in educated human beings as generosity and sympathy…. Once notions of fairness and justice are eliminated from public life and from people's minds and a 'bombed and flattened moral landscape' is created, there is nothing that is forbidden or off limits, and the way is fully open to natural violence and domination (1989, pp. 8, 69).

One now witnesses evil as: "a force not only contrary to all that is praiseworthy, admirable, and desirable in human lives but which is actively working against all that is praiseworthy and admirable" (Hampshire 1989, p. 67).

For Stuart Hampshire, such evil cannot be prevented by substantial conceptions of justice over which there may be little agreement in society. He argues that in such situations what is required is basic procedural justice. This procedural justice is part of "a bare minimum which is entirely negative and without this bare minimum as a foundation no morality directed towards the greater good can be applicable and can survive in practice" (1989, p. 72). Justice, in this view, involves fair procedures of negotiation, a sort of machinery of arbitration that forms the basis for the recognition of untidy and temporary compromises between incompatible visions of a better way of life (Hampshire 1989). It is a means of enabling different conceptions of the good life to co-exist and as far as possible to survive without any substantial reconciliation between them and without a search for a common ground. This coexistence is possible by virtue of a restraint accepted by everyone on unmeasured ambition, on limitless self-assertion and on the obsessive desire for an ever larger slice of the cake and because people involved in even the fiercest of disputes are prepared to recognize the need to balance argument against argument, concession against concession. Basic procedural justice makes possible a minimally decent life, which has a value independent of any wider conception of the good. Its principal objective, in Hampshire's memorable phrase, is to prevent "madness in the soul" (Hampshire 1989, p. 189).

It follows from what I have said above that barbaric societies are characterized by the breakdown not only of elementary moral injunctions but also of basic

procedural justice. (Indeed, basic procedural justice is part of what I have called minimal morality.) Conversely, a minimally decent society is one where basic moral injunctions and procedural justice prevail. How do societies recovering from barbarism arrive at a minimally decent order? In my view, they must do so in two distinct stages. In the first stage, violence ceases probably because people have had enough of evil. In the second stage, basic procedural justice is restored and thereby also the process of negotiation between groups previously at war with one another. This then is the first suggested modification to the Gandhian schema: in the immediate aftermath of evil, in the period of brief reprieve from violence, an institution to consolidate basic procedural justice is desperately required. The truth commission is an institution that performs this role. Its primary function is to help societies transit from barbaric to minimally decent societies, particularly by stabilizing a system of basic procedural justice. This it does by publicly establishing that grave wrongs have been committed in the past, and where this is already public knowledge, by showing why this was done. By responding to the needs of victims and by getting perpetrators to acknowledge responsibility for crimes, truth commissions build the trust and confidence crucial for restoring basic procedural justice and thereby reinstate a minimally decent society.

In a minimally decent society former victims are not reconciled with their former oppressors, nor are groups with inherited hostilities towards one another reunited. If so, the primary objective of a truth commission is not reconciliation but the institution of a minimally decent society. It does not rule out a future cancellation of estrangement, however. Indeed, a truth commission creates conditions for a third stage of future reconciliation. It may do this by (iii) fixing collective responsibility in the appropriate way, and in so doing, changing the ideological climate that facilitates, as far as possible, former oppressors to shed prejudice and for victims to regain their self-respect. (iv) Since victims experience retributive emotions, truth commissions may permit their controlled expression and help victims to eventually overcome them. When this happens, truth commissions may also be seen as facilitating mechanisms of forgiveness and reconciliation. So, my version of a modified Gandhian schema is this:

BARBARISM—truce (stage 1)—recall of grave injustice and expression of grievances, and restoration of basic procedural justice, i.e. a minimally decent society (stage 2),

(*The function of TRCs is to help societies move from stage 1 to stage 2, i.e. they must aim to help realize a minimally decent society*)

—acceptance of collective responsibility—forgiveness—RECONCILIATION (stage 3)

(*TRCs may facilitate conditions favourable to stage 3, that is, forgiveness and reconciliation*)

As is evident, my intention is not to reject the Gandhian schema. However, I do claim that no simple, linear movement exists from barbarism to a state of moral reconciliation, to fully decency. Rather, it is necessary to transit through a complex of three-stages. In stage 1, a highly frail and temporary truce prevails that may easily collapse generating a fresh burst of violence. With help from appropriate

institutions such as the truth commissions, we then move to stage 2, to a minimally decent society. A sufficiently prolonged period of minimal decency may eventually create facilitating conditions for stage 3, for forgiveness and reconciliation, and therefore, to a fully decent society.

10.3 The Transition to a Minimally Decent Society

A number of points still need clarification. First, the term "society" refers to a human collectivity that may be a small configuration within a community, a large community within a society, a large political order such as the nation state consisting of interacting communities or indeed the entire world order or a part thereof. So, as I have used the term "society", it is possible for there to exist a minimally decent social formation within a larger barbaric society and likewise for there to be a barbaric social formation within a larger minimally decent society. One of the cases I mentioned above, the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 is a barbaric social formation on a relatively small scale. Its existence did not imply that the whole of India had turned barbaric.

Second, the phrase "minimally decent" implies that the best available ethical standards in a society, even by its own light, remain unrealized. A minimally decent society is not free of exploitation, injustice or demeaning behavior. It may not even embody political equality. Yet, it is a social order where almost every voice is heard, some visibility for everyone is ensured in the political domain and even the most marginalized and exploited are part of negotiation howsoever unequal the conditions under which it takes place. There remain asymmetries in such a society, but it is not asymmetrically (or symmetrically) *barbaric*. On the other hand, in a barbaric society, where basic procedural justice is dismembered, the entire mechanism of negotiation and arbitration has vanished. Usually, the violation of norms of procedural justice begins with the politically motivated deployment of excessive force. In the early stages of regression into barbarism, gross violation of basic rights, i.e. physical intimidation, torture, murder, even massacres occur on a fairly large scale. Active deliberation and opposition is brutally terminated. This initial use of massive force may eventually make physical coercion more or less redundant, as indifference and submissiveness are routinely generated in a de-politicized environment. The noteworthy point here is that in either case, the demise of basic procedural justice is a *political* evil, which creates political victims. If the collapse of basic procedural justice brings about what may be described as political death, then clearly its restoration marks the political re-birth of members of a society. This helps explain why, by making the restoration of basic procedural justice their primary objective, truth commissions focus primarily on the rehabilitation of political victims.

Third, in saying that minimally moral rules are universally endorsable, I deny relativism—the view that the validity of all moral rules is culture-relative—but not in the familiar way. The familiar strategy of denial is to abstract from all traditions,

cultures and social roles and reach an Archimedean point where universal moral rules are waiting to be discovered. I follow Walzer (1994) in holding the view that every contextually bound, thick morality has an in-built set of thin, universal moral norms because many terms within a moral tradition have both a maximal and a minimal moral content. If so, people do not have to abstract from their moral tradition in order to reach a universal, minimalist morality. Rather, access to it can be had from within. Nor is the idea of minimal morality tied to some version of cold, dry, proceduralist reason commonly in use within many liberal conceptions. On the contrary, as Walzer persuasively argues, thinness and intensity go together. Minimal morality is "close to the bone", which is why there is universal revulsion at the sight of evil; evil arouses our passion almost everywhere, in any context.

A final point worth making is this: when transiting from a barbaric to minimally decent condition, societies are beginning their ascent from hell, are taking the first faltering steps away from a situation of gross injustice on a massive scale probably brought about by people with profoundly deadened moral sensitivities. When it comes to a society standing precariously on the threshold of moral restoration, it is important that we look at it bottom-up rather than top-down. I mean that we must remain firmly anchored in low-level ground realities and begin our search for relevant moral principles from here. We must not first reach out for high, near perfect ethical standards only to subsequently judge ground realities with their help. And, in the ground reality of such societies, the only reasonably certain thing is a diffuse agreement that enough of evil has been wrought and that relief from it is urgently required.

It is important to fully understand the significance of this. It does not mean that enmity or estrangement has ceased between victims and perpetrators or between conflicting groups. Nor that they have begun to view each other with equal respect. However, it does mean that a space has opened up for a new order on terms not entirely unfavourable to all political actors, that a temporary reprieve from civil war or tyranny exists, as also the hope that this can be prevented in future. It also means that force has begun to give way to negotiation, and, although relations of force characteristic of barbaric societies are not totally dismantled, the process has begun to loosen their tenacious grip.

Normally, such transitional moments emerge out of a settlement in which former oppressors refuse to share power unless guaranteed that they will escape the criminal justice system characteristic of a minimally decent society. Alternatively, it typically arises because former victims do not fully control the new order they have set up and lack the power to implement their own conception of justice. However, such transitional moments can also come about by other routes. It is entirely possible that former oppressors are comprehensively vanquished but current victors, victims of the previously existing barbaric society refuse on moral grounds to avenge themselves, or fully implement the conventional criminal justice system. In short, former victims refuse on moral grounds to don the mantle of victors, something someone like Gandhi might well have done.

What I am trying to get at is this: at issue here are transitional situations of extreme complexity, replete with moral possibilities as well as with grave moral

danger. The danger is obvious: victims may forever remain victims and their society may never cease to be barbaric. But what is often missed is that seeds of moral progress are also present herein because former victims are saved the awesome responsibility of wielding absolute power and therefore may escape the devastating consequences of being corrupted by its use. As a result, the possibility is foreclosed that past wrongs will be annulled only by fresh acts of equally excessive wrongdoing. Instead, we are presented with the possibility of confronting past wrongs by means other than the use of force or the willful manipulation of the criminal justice system. So, what may begin as mere political constraint opens up moral possibilities and it is these possibilities that lend moral weight to mechanisms like the truth commission.

10.4   Breaking the Cycle of Revenge

I have claimed that basic procedural justice prevents limitless, negative self-assertion and gives everyone an effective voice in political negotiation. Therefore, in order to break the cycle of revenge, former victims must be inducted into a system of basic procedural justice equipped with a mechanism of arbitration. Persuading them back into the system is not easy, however. Understandably, victims experience deep resentment and hatred towards those responsible for their misery. Besides, a numbing of emotions is at once a symptom and a constituent of their general disengagement from the world. An effective voice in the political process is impossible unless former victims regain self-confidence and renew trust in beneficiaries, perhaps even direct perpetrators of past atrocities, now also part of the negotiations. In short, victims cannot do without confidence and trust-enhancing mechanisms. Now, without public recognition of wrong done to them in the past, former victims are hardly likely to regain confidence in themselves or trust in others. Unless they break their silence, narrate their version of events and contest public lies, they will not see procedures of negotiation as just. To have an effective political voice, they must recover their voice more generally. Truth commissions, I contend, are precisely such mechanisms by which the submerged voice of victims is retrieved. Given this connection between truth commissions and basic procedural justice, it is not difficult to see why they are necessary for the transition to stage 2.

This claim about the role and significance of truth commissions is not entirely uncontroversial. Even those who abjure revenge disagree on how a transition to a fully decent society must be made. Some, advocating a strategy of silence and forgetting, wish to skip stage 2. Others, disclaiming collective responsibility and forgiveness, reject stage 3. In what follows, I try to meet these objections. In this section, I try to rebut the claim that stage 2 is unnecessary. In the next section, I argue against the view that stage 3 is redundant.

Against the argument that truth commissions are necessary in societies transitioning from barbaric to minimally decent societies, one counter-argument

frequently levelled is that truth commissions inherently do more than is required in such situations. Those who hold this view inundate the victim with advice to check emotions. Rather than tell publicly and remember past injustice, victims are exhorted to forget. They are asked to contain hatred and overcome resentment, in short, to condone or immediately forgive. Revenge towards which resentment may lead them, they are told, is unbecoming of civilized people, full anyway of terrible consequences for society. These critics draw a distinction between the felt needs of the victim and the real needs of the entire community and suggest that the two often run against one another. Instead of focusing on the past, the victim is told to think of the future. In brief, in this view truth commissions are dangerous or at best, unnecessary. Is this view correct? Is it more appropriate in these circumstances to forget?

Among former perpetrators, a motivated forgetfulness of their own wrong doing, accompanied with the hope that former victims will quickly forget past suffering is not uncommon at a time when asymmetries of power are in the process of being dissolved. In this context, calls to let bygones be bygones, to wipe the slate clean or start afresh, work unabashedly in favour of perpetrators of crime. In any case, most calls to forget disguise the attempt to prevent victims from publicly remembering in the fear that "there is a dragon living on the patio and we had better not provoke it" (Rosenburg 1995). But it is doubtful if this is a good strategy for repairing wounds or achieving reconciliation. When a person is wronged, he is made not only to suffer physically but is also mentally scarred, the most injurious of which is the damage to his sense of self-respect, if he is left with any residue of it. As Murphy and Hampton (1990) point out, when a person is wronged he receives a message of his marginality and irrelevance. The wrong doer conveys that in his scheme of things the victim counts for nothing. Since self-esteem hinges upon the critical opinion of the other, the message sent by the wrongdoer significantly lowers the self-esteem of the wronged. In these circumstances, the insult and degradation inflicted constitutes a deeper moral injury. The demand that past injustices be forgotten does not address this loss of self-esteem. Indeed, it inflicts further damage. Asking victims to forget past evils is to treat them as if no great wrong has been done to them, as if they have nothing to feel resentful about. This can only diminish their self-worth further.

Forgetting specific instances of past wrongs does not appear to achieve the desired objective anyway—a point to which Waldron (1992 p. 6) has drawn our attention:

> When we are told to let bygones be bygones, we need to bear in mind also that the forgetfulness being urged on us is seldom the blank state of historical oblivion. Thinking quickly fills up the vacuum with plausible tales of self-satisfaction on the one side, and self-deprecation on the other.

Beneficiaries of injustice then come to believe that gains accrue to them due to the virtue of their race or culture, and victims too easily accept that their misfortune as caused by inherent inferiority. Waldron is on to something important here. The call to forget reinforces loss of self-esteem in the victim. Furthermore, moral

injuries that are neglected putrefy demoralization in the victim. Under these conditions, past perpetrators feel that they can get away with murder and grow in confidence; they think that such injuries can be inflicted without resistance even in the future. Therefore, rather than prevent, forgetting ends up facilitating wrong acts. If so, it is difficult not to conclude that proper remembrance alone restores dignity and self-respect to the victim.

A proper remembrance is critical if wounds of the victim are to be healed. It is also necessary to fulfill the collective need of a badly damaged society. This view comes up against a pervasive social condition as well as against a famous argument by Hobbes. It is an uncomfortable fact that while societies remember their heroic deeds, they suppress memories of collective injustice. Recall Ernest Renan's remark that nations are constituted by a great deal of forgetting. In a perceptive essay, Wolin (1989) wonders if collective memory is an accomplice of injustice and whether, by its silence on collective wrongs, it does not signify the very limits of justice. He also asks if a society can ever afford to remember events in which members feel tainted by a "kind of corporate complicity in an act of injustice done in their name" Can France remember the Saint Bartholomew massacre, America, its civil war, or India, its partition? Can these horrific events be remembered by being represented in civic rituals? One philosopher who thought collective forgetting necessary was Thomas Hobbes. Suppression of memories of past wrongs was essential because if society is treated as a building made of stones then some stones that have an "irregularity of figure take more room from others" and so must be discarded (as cited in Wolin 1989, p. 37). Hobbes's covenant was a device to incorporate social amnesia into the foundation of society. Commenting on this, Wolin remarks that, for Hobbes, a necessary condition of social amnesia is the de-historization of human beings.

Is de-historicization possible? I think not. "Muslims" invaded India in the Twelfth century but for many Hindus, Muslims still continue to be invaders who may kill, destroy and convert them. The conquest of Quebec by the English happened more than two centuries ago but for Quebec nationalists their nationalist project "involves a reconquest of the conquest". A large part of nationalist agenda all over the world, Ignatieff (1994) rightly reminds us, is about settling old scores. In so many countries people remarkably similar in essential respects appear to go at each other's throat simply because once upon a time one ruled over the other. A simple strategy of forgetting has simply not worked. Only an appropriate engagement with the past makes for a livable common future. It is true of course that one must guard against cosmetic remembrance. An engagement with the past must take place simultaneously at the level of gut, reason and emotion. If not properly addressed grievances and resentments resurface. Oddly, animosity between groups is sustained even when it goes against their current interests. This happens because emotional reactions ingrained in the human mind remain insensitive to altered circumstances and are bequeathed from generation to generation (Hume 1994). Like property, animosities are inherited too!

Nonetheless, former victims and fragmented societies eventually need to get on with their lives rather than be consumed by their suffering. Perhaps victims need

to forget just about as much as they need to remember. People who carry deep resentment and grievance against one another are hardly likely to build a society together. Therefore, to ask people to forget is not entirely unreasonable. I believe timing is the essence of the issue here. Forgetting too quickly or without redressal, by failing to heal adequately, inevitably brings with it a society haunted by its past. One can't forget entirely, too soon and without a modicum of justice. Clearly, while some forgetting at an appropriate time is necessary, a complete erasure is neither sufficient nor desirable for healing or for the consolidation of a minimally decent society. Moreover, while specific acts of wrongdoing need to be forgotten eventually, a general sense of the wrong and of the horror of evil acts must never be allowed to recede from collective memory. Such remembering is crucial to the prevention of wrongdoing in the future. I conclude that without a proper engagement with the past and the institutionalization of remembrance, societies are condemned to repeat, re-enact and relieve the horror. Forgetting is not a good strategy for societies recovering from prolonged barbarism. The recognition of this is the *raison d'etre* of truth commissions and also one of the virtues of the Gandhian schema.

10.5 Toward Reconciliation and Forgiveness

What is the relation of truth commissions to the rest of the Gandhian schema? Can they realize the structure in full? My view is that though they may facilitate the realization of stage 3, they must not aim to do so. However, critics find flaws in the very idea of a passage through stage 3. Two criticisms are fairly common. First, that the notion of collective responsibility is incoherent. Second, that forgiveness is morally inappropriate.

To begin with, my use of the word responsibility is less to do with strict legal or moral liability and linked more with what men and women decide to do. Our decision to perform this or that action is connected by a loose, not always explicit or fully conscious, practical reasoning, to our beliefs and desires. I avoid discussing the vexing question of whether or not beliefs and desires are mental states or occurrences. Even if this is so, an important question remains about how their content is to be individuated, their meaning fixed. For me, what these beliefs and desires are about, their meaning, is determined by social practice, by collective actions rather than individual mental acts of people (Bhargava 1992). If this is so, and if our decision to act is constitutively linked to these irreducibly social beliefs and desires, then it follows that, in part, our decisions are social too and so therefore is responsibility. I share Larry May's view that most of our responsibilities are shared rather than uniquely our own (May 1992). When such a social view on conceptions of self and agency is taken, the domain of moral responsibility expands beyond what a person directly causes. Moreover, just as social beliefs cause individual action, just so they cause an interlocking set of actions involving several individuals. If that is so, groups, indeed entire collectivities, can be held

responsible for various harms. I also agree with May that guilt and blame must be seen to lie on a continuum which also contains shame, remorse, regret and the feeling of being tainted (May 1992). From this brief account if follows that for me, groups can be held morally responsible for wrongs and individuals should partake that responsibility.

It is possible though not necessary that when individuals as members of a group publicly acknowledge their crime, they also admit to their role in a collective wrong. This is not something they always know before matters are brought to the public. An individual may not have a sense of responsibility for wrongdoing when in reality he should. Alternatively, he may feel exclusive responsibility and therefore excessive guilt for a wrong of which he has only shared responsibility. The act of making something public is not merely to reveal what is known already to each person in private. It is to come to the realization of a fact about ourselves that was not properly known at all. Normally, the recognition of such collective responsibility is accompanied by feelings of shame, regret or remorse. People qua members of a group may also feel morally tainted. Ignatieff makes the telling Freudian point that something may be confronted in one's head without it being confronted in one's heart or guts. This self-confrontation which takes place at the level of feelings is critical for a deeper change in one's attitudes. Since such encounters with the self are painful, they may be referred to as punishment of the soul, a form of deeper punishment neither noticed by the penal system nor by standard conceptions of retributive justice. Punishment of the soul is critical, affective self-confrontation before radical conversions in identity occur; an acknowledgement not of the wrong one has done but the wicked person one is. It is only when such changes take place on a large scale, and the moral climate of a whole society is altered, that people, particularly former oppressors, shed their prejudices, and former victims being to regain a deeper, more stable sense of self-respect. Surely this is necessary for reconciliation.

Under altered circumstances, when evil and suffering are publicly revealed, remembered and even acknowledged by the perpetrator, should the victim respond with forgiveness? Is forgiveness morally appropriate? If so, what justifies it? Is acknowledgement of responsibility of the crime sufficient for forgiveness? What is it anyway to forgive? It is a fact that victims experience deep, enduring hatred and resentment towards the wrongdoer as well as feelings of revenge towards him. Commonly viewed, forgiveness is the forswearing of these resentments, a determined overcoming of hatred and anger towards a person who has inflicted moral injury (Murphy and Hampton 1990). One frequently cited reason in favour of forgiveness points towards the negative qualities that inhere in the very emotions of hatred and resentment. A decent, morally upright person, it is said, simply shouldn't have such emotions, in part because by holding persons rather than being held by them, these emotions inhibit proper judgment and undermine autonomy and, by virtue of their raw motivational power, are likely to drive a person to commit an equally immoral act. For instance, one may be swept, it is argued, by feelings of revenge inconsonant with moral systems in the modern world.

However, reasons that require forgiveness because of its productive role in eliminating such emotions are unconvincing. For a start, there is nothing inherently wrong in feelings of hatred and resentment. "Proper self-respect", observe Murphy and Hampton (1990), "is essentially tied to the passion of resentment. A person who does not resent moral injuries done to him is almost necessarily lacking in self-respect" (p. 16). It follows that resentment is valuable by virtue of its link with something we all value, namely self-respect. It is terribly odd for a self-respecting person not to resent violation of rights or the seizure of unfair advantage of his labour. Likewise, there is nothing wrong in hatred towards those wholly identified with an immoral cause or responsible for an immoral practice. Distinguishing it from simple hatred—an intense dislike for a strongly unpleasant object, accompanied by an equally strong desire to eliminate it, Hampton and Murphy call this moral hatred. Hatred is moral when moved by moral indignation, conjoined with the desire to defeat the ideology of the offending person in the name of a fundamental moral principle. Such moral hatred may be experienced towards neo-Nazis or towards those South African whites who perpetrate or justify violence against blacks. These retributive emotions (Mackie 1985) are essential not only for the preservation of self-respect but also for the stability of the moral order in society. If the only ground for forgiveness is that retributive emotions are intrinsically wrong or harmful, then surely forgiveness is unjustified.

If victims who experience moral hatred and resentment must not feel in the wrong then why in the first place overcome these emotions and forgive? The answer is that a refusal to forgive often betrays insensitivity to altered circumstances, to a change in the condition or character of the wrongdoer. Murphy and Hampton list five grounds for forgiveness, three of which are relevant for our purposes. When the perpetrator repents, undergoes humiliation or has in turn suffered enough, it may well be appropriate to forgive him, especially since such forgiveness does not diminish the self-esteem of the victim. Indeed, under these circumstances, the act of forgiveness may enhance the self-respect of the victim and contribute towards precisely the kind of healing required in such circumstances. When a person acknowledges the wrongness in his act and the role it played in causing harm to the victim and when, in admitting its immorality he ceases to endorse it, indicating thereby that he is with the victim in condemning all acts of this kind, he initiates the process of restoring parity with the victim. It may become morally appropriate now to forsake hatred for the person and resentment towards his past actions. Likewise, subsequent to punishment and suffering the perpetrator may be sufficiently humbled to cause the victim to alter his view of the wrongdoer. Much the same is true for someone who admits guilt through an apology. In short, if restoration of a moral parity between self-respecting individuals is desirable and if forgiveness contributes to its realization, then it is morally appropriate to forgive.

If forgiveness is to result from the repentance of the perpetrator, to flow from the punishment of his soul, and if this is conditional upon the recognition of collective responsibility, then it follows that a truth commission cannot aim to bring about forgiveness. Nor must reconciliation, dependent upon a deeper change in

people's identity, be part of its stated objectives. It is of course true that such fundamental changes can eventually occur as a by-product of the activities of a truth commission and therefore it may certainly be seen to create conditions for future reconciliation. Nonetheless, given the time frame of truth commissions, it is too much to expect them to bear the burden of getting people to forgive or to reconcile with one another.

However, this is not usually the reason why truth commissions are criticized. It is sometimes accepted that a truth commission can get people to forgive but then pointed out that this is morally questionable. Critics frequently attack the very idea of forgiveness. One well-known argument against forgiveness is that it is deeply tied to Christian morality, and that it takes us beyond ordinary morality into the domain of high religion. Victims in South Africa have complained bitterly that the justification of forgiveness derives from a particular moral vision with which they do not identify and therefore it is not incumbent upon them to heed the plea to forgive. Others object that forgiveness must come from within and only the victim has the proper standing to do so. One can't forgive under the effect of erasing wrongdoing, that it is an invitation to reconcile with rather than conquer evil (Mamdani 1996). Finally, it is also argued that the plea for general amnesty with which it is linked can only lead to enraged victims opting for personal acts of vengeance. The demand for forgiveness in this view can only exacerbate the setting of scores outside the rule of law.

Within Christianity, it is widely recognized that since the propensity to wrongdoing is pervasive, forgiveness should be generally available too. As original sinners, we seek forgiveness from God. As sinners in our day-to-day existence, we must seek forgiveness from each other. It is therefore undeniable that Christianity provides an important source for the justification of forgiveness. However from the availability of a virtue in one religious tradition, it hardly follows it is unavailable in others (Gandhi 1982). More importantly, atheistic humanism must have place for forgiveness too. Even unbelievers can and should admit that in the course of living our lives we wrong others, particularly those about whom we care deeply. If we care about people we have wronged we would certainly want them to forgive us. Indeed, a humanist must accept that at the heart of the human condition lies a radical fallibility that is futile to try to totally overcome. We need forgiveness from each other because without God-like features we often commit wrongdoings and because there may be no God to forgive us. As Murphy and Hampton note "we do all need and desire forgiveness and would not want to live in a world where forgiveness was not regarded as a healing and restoring virtue" (1990, pp. 30–31). Furthermore, the domain where this virtue is exercised needn't only be private. We need and accept forgiveness even within the wider public domain. Therefore, I am not entirely convinced with the view that forgiveness is exclusively tied to one religious tradition or that unbelievers have no need for it.

The criticism that forgiveness bypasses the act of wrongdoing is not justified either. To forgive is not to convert a wrong into right. It is not to justify the wrong done. Nor is it identical with excusing the wrong done, as when one excuses a child for causing some harm on the grounds that he can't really be held

responsible for it. The process of forgiveness begins only after proper recognition of wrongdoing and is conditional upon it. Since the wrong did not simply get white washed, to forgive is not to compromise with evil. Nor does forgiveness entail amnesty. Forgiveness is not to be confused with mercy (Murphy and Hampton 1990). This confusion may well have lain at the heart of the earliest formulation of the objectives of the South African Truth Commission. Reasons for forgiveness are not automatically reasons for mercy. A victim may forgive the perpetrator but not thereby free him of legal accountability. Conversely, he may, out of compassion, reduce punishment for the wrongdoer but not forgive him. Finally, forgiveness is not a virtue in all contexts and is appropriate only when it is consistent with the dignity and self-respect of the victim. The good of the community cannot provide reasons for unconditional forgiveness. A perpetrator cannot be forgiven if he does not repent, for without proper repentance, he may repeat his crime. Nor can the evidence of repentance be a mere expression of regret or remorse. It must also be expressed in deed, by reparative actions directed at victims. This is what Gandhi meant when he insisted that Hindus, who only the other day were crying for the blood of Muslims, must offer protection to them. Furthermore, the victim may not forgive if he retains the feeling that his suffering is not properly acknowledged. If there is no forgiveness from within, "then the door is open to private acts of vengeance and retribution" (Rosenburg 1995). Given these qualifications, in principle there appears nothing inappropriate or wrong in the Gandhian strategy of reconciliation via acknowledgement of collective responsibility and forgiveness. The basic idea that animates it is correct, even though as I have argued, truth commissions must modify the schema and aim to achieve much less than what is envisaged by it.

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Chapter 11
Transcending Boundaries: Fundamentalism, Secularism and Social Capital in Multi-faith Societies

Ragini Sen, Wolfgang Wagner and Caroline Howarth

11.1 Introduction

Fundamentalism is an iridescent concept; everybody thinks they understand it, but being a contextual phenomenon, it escapes easy definition (Sen and Wagner 2009a, b). Some assert that religious fundamentalism is a psychological phenomenon related to personality differences or a form of psychopathology (Ellens 2006; Hood et al. 2005; Rock 2004). Such an approach may indeed help in understanding the very individual aspects of why some people become extremists and commit terrorist acts and the dynamics of, membership of sects and relatively stable fundamentalist groups (Altemeyer 2003; Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992; Ellens and Ellens 2004; Rowatt and Franklin 2004). In this case, generally, the focus is on identity politics (Bhatt and Mukta 2000) which constructs clear symbolic boundaries that firmly exclude the other and shows an active engagement against secularists who instead of subscribing to radical dualism, relativize the good and bad in the world (Nagata 2001). Further, in contrast to the relativistic secularist, the fundamentalist mindset is seen to draw on a distinct religious and ethnic identity which erects strict borders towards other groups and justifies violence. However, what we see in many studies is the fact that fundamentalism is embedded within

R. Sen (✉)
Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, India
e-mail: raginisen2011@gmail.com

W. Wagner
Johannes Kepler University, Linz, Austria

C. Howarth
London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

particular historical and political contexts (Appadurai 2000; Giddens 2000; Marty and Appleby 1993) and is also subject to change and transformation. Because of these characteristics of fundamentalism, our focus is more on social and political psychology than on individual traits (Sen and Wagner 2009a, b). We maintain that for analyzing socially meaningful phenomena, it is necessary to depart from the individualization of psychological processes in general (Farr 1996; Valsiner 2001) and of fundamentalist politics in particular and so include an analysis of the historical, social representational and collective dimensions of fundamentalism.[1]

Our research shows that religion can be a central issue in political identity formation and othering but this is not often recognized in some social debates in the West, which sometimes underestimate the force of religious belief and the connections between religious beliefs and political views (Sen et al. 2014). In fact in many geo political contexts, fundamentalism can be construed as a religious movement, a theological and philosophical stand and as a political and social force which clearly demarcates "us and them" social relations. In most cases, the attributes defining such groups are not accidental but result from an attempt to distinguish members of the in-group from others on the basis of social positioning and identity construction (Harre and van Langenhove 1999; Reicher 2004). These groups will exist as long as they have members who are willing to engage in the labour of identity construction and identity confirmation which frequently takes the form of an ideological foundation and becomes the main motive for the group's reason for existence (Raudsepp and Wagner 2012). Given this, an examination of lay beliefs about the Hindu Muslim conflict in India (Sen and Wagner 2005, 2009a, b; Khan and Sen 2009; Tripathi 2005) provides an illuminating example of how to understand cultural encounters with reference to ethnic conflicts, religious politics and secularism. As religion becomes more and more prevalent in the processes of othering and stigma, we see the rise of religious fundamentalism. This research calls for a political psychology of secularism.

In this chapter, we attempt to reveal a shift from the representation of religion as faith (and compatible with a secular politics) to a representation of religion as ideology (and incompatible with secular politics). This shift also highlights a precipitous demarcation of "us" and "them", the increasingly religious nature of intergroup relations and conflicts, and an intensification of religious hostilities as well as religious identities and loyalties.

The present chapter is divided into two significant parts: the first half deals with othering and draws upon data from research on violence conducted in 2003 and the second half, focuses on transcending boundaries. This is substantiated by data collected in 2010 and makes use of the concepts of social capital and moral maturation.

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[1]Parts of this material have been used in Sen and Wagner (2009b). *Gandhi, Secularism and Social Capital in Modern India*; Sen et al. (2014). *Religion and Secularism in Modern Society*.

11.2 Research Objectives

Our interview material suggests that there is a connection between secularism and social capital and that the processes whereby religious out-groups and in-groups are demarcated are actually produced, in part, through political interventions. Further, we show that in contexts of cultural and religious diversity, a social and political commitment to secularism can lead to enhanced religious tolerance, moral maturation and political change through opening up of communicative spaces. These are some of the political psychological preconditions for solidarity, positive intergroup exchange and democracy in multi-cultural and multi-faith contexts today.

11.3 Method and Context

11.3.1 Sample and Procedure

Study 1

Twenty interviews, ten each, were carried out with Hindu and Muslim men between 25 and 35 years old, all living in the slums in Mumbai, India. They were semi-literate with less than 9 years of education and belonged to the lower socio-economic strata, as indicated by their slum residence. For the study, literacy was used as a principal basis of stratification. In the extracts below, quotes are marked with "M" for Muslim and "H" for Hindu.

The fieldwork was conducted in the summer of 2003 when the atmosphere in India was charged with communal tension and the hawkish Hindu ideologues were still in power. Given the politically sensitive nature of the research, we made use of combined visual and narrative methods (Mamali 2006; Reavey 2011). In order to elicit the participants' views on politics and religion, we showed them images (see Fig. 11.1) and encouraged a narrative to emerge. This method helped to build rapport with the respondents who were otherwise reluctant to talk on such controversial issues as other research on socially sensitive topics has also found (e.g., Howarth 2011).

Study 2

The data were collected between 2010 and 2011. In the original study, 120 interviews were conducted amidst the marginalized/middle class, Hindu/Muslim, men and women. But for the present analysis, in order to compare this material with study 1, we will be using a segment of the data, which constitutes 30 interviews conducted amongst Hindu/Muslim men aged 25–35 years all residing in the slums in Mumbai and with less then 9 years of education.

11.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Study 1 and 2

We assumed, "just like the offbeat makes music captivating, the verbal raw material in qualitative research is discourse in action and everyday life. Through this tune, researchers need to feel and extract the "beat", which, when done properly, may be called the underlying representation" (Wagner 2011). This research is a journey undertaken to discover such "offbeats". Given this methodological viewpoint, the interviews were conducted in Hindi/Hindustani (a mix of Hindi and Urdu) amongst Hindu and Muslim males and lasted between 45 and 60 min. In order to establish a social network, help was taken from contact persons, i.e. people familiar with the milieu, social class and religion (De Araujo Günther 1998). We used the unstructured interview technique as suggested by Fontana and Frey (2005) to elicit discourses about people's life realities and perceptions.

Then the interview data was translated, transcribed and analysed on the first level to delineate the meta themes related to violence (study 1), secularism, social capital and moral maturation (study 2). They were then subjected to a finer second-level analysis to sub-categorize the meta themes which were then interpreted to understand the subordinate associations related to the above-mentioned concepts in study 1 and 2.

11.3.3 Research Context

Study 1 and 2

In deprived communities such as the slums in Mumbai, social capital is of vital importance to every dweller. Coping with everyday chores in a context of endemic misery and extreme poverty means that the inhabitants must rely heavily on solidarity and good neighbourliness. Extended networks of friends and associates enable people to achieve what seems the impossible in this context: earning a living, providing for their family, managing childcare, organizing a water supply, caring for the sick and sustaining a sense of community. Any disruption in such interpersonal relationships brought about by social unrest and religious division threatens this finely tuned web of day-to-day survival.

11.3.4 Cultural Encounters and Secularism in India

Since the partition struggles in India, secularism has been a salient but highly contested principle. Experiencing the disastrous consequences of religious conflict, the Indian government at this time focused on the difficult task of redefining the role of religion, particularly transforming its relationship with politics. On the basis of the political debates in the constituent assembly, secular principles were enshrined in the Indian constitution. However, the process of secularization progressed at a slow pace since, the state apparatus was infiltrated by many leaders who were influenced by Hindu communal ideology. This resulted in a social-political system, which was contradictory; on one hand, secularism and cultural tolerance thrived but on the other ethnic and religious separatism remained just beneath the surface.

Progressives saw that traditional religious strictures and doctrines were a major obstacle to the building of modern secular India against a history of religious conflict, fractured communities, cultural intolerance and limited social capital. Hence, the concept of secularism was imported from the West and became a political metaphor for containing the influence of Hindu nationalism. However, its western interpretation, which separates state politics from religion, was not taken up and a uniform civil code was not imposed (Chopra 1994; Singh 1961).

The most well-known advocate of secularism in the Indian context was of course Gandhi who argued that the separation of religion from the state would not work in this context as religion is extremely powerful in Indian society and for the Indian psyche generally. Rather, he believed that all religions are equal and that a politics that does not accommodate diverse religions is in a way imposing one faith over others:

> To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is

conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. (Young India, 5-3-1925 as quoted in http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_truth_truthisgod.htm).

But, in their passion for discovering truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God–from their own point of view, rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that, rather than say that God is Truth, I should say that Truth is God. (Speech at the meeting in Lausanne, 8-12-1931 as quoted in http://www.gandhimanibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_truth_truthisgod.htm).

In this way, Gandhi developed a simple but commanding logic: people live by a set of beliefs whether they are rooted in atheism, secularism or religion and these need to be accommodated in a secular polity. Although Gandhi believed in the fundamental truth and equality of all religions, he repeatedly told his followers that one must accept that an individual's own religion is the most valid to that person irrespective of where it stands on others' scales of philosophical comparison.

11.4 Results and Interpretation

11.4.1 Divisive Politics and Religious Fundamentalism

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, ethnic tensions erupted and were quickly exploited by Hindu ideologues using communal rhetoric. They openly declared their agenda of a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation; Jhingran 1995) and used this to launch an ideological and social assault on secularism (e.g. Punyani 2003; Varshney 2000). These representations of secularism stoked an extreme process of othering, a crucial part of identity formation and group solidification (Howarth 2002). India was once again divided on religious lines. The other had been clearly demarcated.

As with all political actors, the Hindu ideologues operated at multiple levels. They de-legitimized the concept of secularism through asserting that its origins are in the "Christian West". They created the idea that "*Hindutva*" (the essence of Hinduism) was under threat and so made in-group allegiances "psychologically primary" (Allport 1954). "*Hindutva*" was adopted as a shared common sense reality, became part of a divisive political culture and thereby created critical divisions between Hindus and Muslims. These political psychological strategies were successful, as we see in these two Hindu extracts, which depict the symbolic violence contained in identity constructions and representations of the other (van Dijk (1998):

Hindutva is being used as a magnet to pull Hindus together and kill others. *Hindutva* means fighting for Hindus. Give your life for Hindus.

Everyone is burning inside. They are watching, asking … why are the Muslims fighting, attacking our people, blasting bombs? Even if we gave them Kashmir they will continue with their terrorist attacks.

Simultaneously, as a consequence of the rise in Hindu fundamentalism, "threatened identities" (Breakwell 1986) were created amidst the Muslims:

Any individual can get anything done against us provided they have money. Hence, riots, fights, violence are NORMAL things and this is largely directed at us. Today Hindutva dominates (*bolbaala hai*). In Hindustan the rule (*hukumat*) is of Hindus. Islam has no say. (M)

The accounts reveal ideological and discursive construction of group divisions, where although secularism is accepted as a state principle, political culture and struggles are nonetheless well rooted in religion. This situation has led to increased intergroup prejudice. Our Muslim respondents believed that their own reference group was losing economic and/or political ground relative to the well defined other, the Hindus, and they had begun to consider their persecution as "normal". Consequently, it cannot be surprising that the Muslim respondents felt minoritized, persecuted, and isolated.

Broad generalizations based on a stigmatizing representations of Muslims as irrational and dangerous was observed in Hindu accounts. Most evidently, because they, the Muslims, considered Islam sacred, the Hindu respondents regarded almost all Muslims as fundamentalists and in league with Pakistan and Islamic brotherhood. It is on the basis of such a divide that the right wing ideologues were able to equate Islam with fundamentalism and the effect of this rhetoric and indoctrination had a distinct and desired effect on social and political polarization:

Muslims are ready to give up their life for their religion. Basically you should keep the Muslims separately. (H)

11.4.2 Religious Identity and Representations of the Other

The combined effect of this political rhetoric, historical metaphors and representations of secularism was far reaching. Once elaborated, these representations and the psychological consequences of such—heightened prejudice towards the out-group and intensified in-group identification—become real in the practices and interaction of the people sharing them. They begin to structure and define objects populating their local worlds and this in turn became the pivot for determining and directing their cultural identities (Wagner et al. 1999).

For instance, in order to consolidate in-group feelings *Hindutva* loyalists spread the idea that Muslims were being privileged through the political acceptance of secularism. In fact the reality was quite different: the social and economic condition of the Muslim community was dismal (Sachar Committee 2006). This rhetoric created feelings of insecurity within both communities, as is evident from our respondents—"Muslims are a vote bank hence they are pampered and not put in their place and we are neglected in our own country" (H) or "Hindus have the say and we were better off during the British *Raj* (rule)" (M). The feelings of relative deprivation, in comparison to another group, whether real or imagined, lead to an intense conflict situation (Boehnke et al. 1998; Finchilescu and Dawes 1998). Further, through the use of media, rhetoric and rallies, the ideologues, propagated the view that India is a "really" Hindu society—"India is Bharat, Muslims have

Pakistan, secularists have India" (H). Thus they created an "imagined community" of Hindu nationhood-Bharat (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Kohl and Fawcett 1996; Reicher and Hopkins 2001) and this representation became a powerful social force. Hence, we can see Hindu and Muslim identities in India as political reconstructions in colonial and postcolonial periods in the context of rise of nationalism. The narratives indicate that religious identities are not primordial or unchanging structures, but are artefacts of changing forms of religious organization and communication (Van der Veer 1994). They are constructed in ritual discourse and practice.

This political environment shared by Hindus and Muslims anchors their sense of identity, belonging and self-esteem within their own distinct cultural-religious group, "everyone now relies on their own community; trans-religious brotherhood (*bhaichaara*) has finished. Stick with your own" (M). The message given by ideologues belonging to both groups relied heavily on exaggerating the "greatness" of their respective culture and rich heritage. This gave both communities the dual sense of security and pride, which was encouraged to help sustain political agendas. This in turn strengthened each group's sense of identity, and not only promoted a negative perception of the other group (Shankar and Gerstein 2007; Sen 2005; Kakar 2000, 1996) but also created hetero-referential identities; that is, an identity that is primarily defined in juxtaposition to the out-group (Sen 2011a; Sen and Wagner 2005; Howarth 2002).

For instance, the Muslim respondents who viewed an image of a child with the placard (Fig. 11.1), which said, "punish those who destroyed *Babri Masjid*", acclaimed:

> Look at this, even a small child understands the situation, then the adults should also respond.

> In contrast, Hindu respondents viewed this as indoctrination:

> What does a child understand? Why should we involve children? This is a problem for adults to handle. All this is drama. This is all propaganda. Does a child know what is *Babri Masjid*? He is 3-4 years old, can he read?

Through such processes, religious identities became focused, stereotypes heightened and a perception of each other in terms of generalized social characteristics was formed. Consequently, each involved group became more homogeneous, entitative and their members depersonalized as expressed by a Hindu and a Muslim respondent:

> We worship the sun, east. The others (Muslims) worship the moon, west. We worship idols, the others do not; we believe in many Gods (*devi-devtaa*), they do not; we are proud Indians, they put their religion first. (H)

> Islam is a clean religion. No idol or stone worship, peaceful. No noisy, *aarti* (chants sung by Hindus). With true feelings, clean heart, pray and ask for forgiveness. … Prophet Mohammed is great. (M)

Such representations also raise questions regarding social identities. Social identity theory suggests that our evaluation of out-groups is determined by intergroup differentiation (Tajfel 1974). However, our study shows, the representation

of the other is a far more complex process (Liu and Sibley 2006) since attitudes are not only anchored in an intrapersonal cognitive and emotional structure of concepts—what people believe to be the essentialised characteristics of the "other" community, but also to an interpersonal, institutionalized and political structure (Howarth 2006; Moscovici 1988; Andreouli and Howarth 2012). Once formed, these representations begin to guide everyday sense-making at subordinate levels: the sun, the moon, idols and chants are all co-opted, to organize people's concrete encounters with the world (Valsiner 2003). Hence, the image of a child becomes ideologically decoded as indoctrination and propaganda *or* as a matter of identification and support, depending on where one stands in this religious divide. Events became socially meaningful, a part of culture, when they were *anchored* in the field of representations (Duveen 2007). In this way, social representations live within a symbolic and political context and therefore are employed in bringing about social change (Wagner et al. 2012).

Overall on the basis of the analysis of ethnic conflict which saw its peak in the 1990s in India it would not be wrong to conclude that even in a secular and democratic set up when social capital becomes scarce, and conflict and tension take the front seat, symbols can be redeployed to produce a different signification promoting social change. That this situation of extreme conflict was managed and intergroup conflicts reduced can also be seen, somewhat bizarrely, as a result of India's secularism, which rests on a long history of multi-culturalism and integration.

11.4.3 Secularism and Moral Maturation

Cultural diversity and religious pluralism in India have been subjects of unending debate. In fact, when India adopted a secular constitution, some observers predicted the disintegration of the secular model itself. However, secularism has assumed new meanings difficult to capture in the occidental experience but which none-the-less ascribe in varying degrees to the view: government has to be placed on a non-religious footing in a secular state. Given the global atmosphere of intolerance and in the absence of any genuine efforts by any party to reconcile or at least get the different faiths to inter–communicate, as reflected not only in West Asia, Africa, Southeast Asia, the sub continent but also in countries such as the USA and increasingly in Europe, especially post 9/11, it is perhaps worthwhile to re-consider what Gandhi and Habermas—post his theological turn (Harrington 2007)—thought and wrote on the subject of role of religion in public sphere.

In the Indian context the understanding of religion has been slightly different and much more fluid than in western cultures. In traditional India religion is not something that is part of life, but something that gives meaning to all of life (Baird 1993) and this is reflected in our respondents' discourse irrespective of religion. In the entire discourse none of the respondents, Hindu or Muslim, were critical of religion (*dharam, mazhab*) per se. However this tendency was particularly evident amidst the Muslim respondents and in the discussions with them it appeared that

to talk against Islam was almost forbidden. This can of course work as an obstacle to secularism. When a communicative space is limited and some things "cannot" be said, ghettoisation and persecution become dominant. However, as we see, both groups of respondents criticized the other's religion and in the case of Hindu respondents some have criticized religion as it is practiced: "nobody is *dharmic* (religious) these days, and you will not find a single person, here, who can be called religious" (H), or given a different interpretation—"*dharma* (religion) is to follow the course of justice" (H), or "*Hindutva* does not belong to any party and is part of the broad philosophy of Hinduism" (H). Overall, the general consensus amidst the respondents was cynical and the feeling was that religion had lost its "true" meaning and had become a ploy for political expediency—"d*een* (God) and *aman* (peace) are together but *siyasat* (politics) spoils everything" (M), "Ram mandir and Babri Masjid have been exploited and we the common person (*aam aadmi*) have become their (the politicians) playfield" (M), "politics (*rajniti*) should remain far away from religion (*dharma*)" (H). None-the-less, all of them have stood by religion. The regret was that trust had been lost: "this was not so before. We used to do things together and be always there for the other. A Rajput *Rani* (Queen) had sent a *rakhi* (sacred thread tied by the sister on the brother's wrist to seek protection on *Raksha Bandhan*—a Hindu festival) to Emperor Humayun. This was the level of trust" (M). This being the case, maybe it is time to consider that secularism does not simply mean being agnostic and religiously illiterate or indifferent.

Habermas (2005) suggests that a "reflective form" of communicative action is essential. By default, this requires a communicative space that is free from diktats and leaves scope for one's own interpretations. This is nicely exemplified by Gandhi, who though a staunch Hindu, believed that he need not accept that every word in the Vedas is divinely inspired. On the contrary Gandhi insisted that he would decline to be bound by any genealogy of reason, however learned or sacred it may be if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense and he was open to the idea of accepting doctrines from other religious texts such as the Quran or the Bible. Gandhi subscribed to the Vedic view of unity in multiplicity and following the spirit of thousands of years of old Indian scripture enshrined in the Rig Veda, emphasized –"Let noble thoughts come to us from every side" (*Aa No Bhadrah Kratavo Santu Vishvatah*) which when applied in the context of secularism pointed to the dictum that a secular polity accepts even the intolerants. One of his 11 "*Vratas*" (a code of rules and observances) was *Sarvadharma Sambhav* (peaceful co-existence of all religions; Radhakrishnan 1939).

This is what Habermas (1990) called moral maturation: the developing ability to integrate interpersonal perspectives. Habermas argued that the "encrypted semantic potentialities" of religion, can "yield up their content of truth for profane thinking". The proviso being that, "religion's cognitive contents are liberated from their original dogmatic encapsulation in the melting pot of argumentative speech" (Harrington 2007, p. 47). The endpoint of this process coincides with the capacity to engage in the mutual perspective taking required by the other. This

anthropological line of argument focuses on identity formation, drawing on the social psychology of George H. Mead who argued that the individual's development of a stable sense of self was only possible through processes of interaction, socialization and dialogue that are dependent on taking the perspective of the other in relationships of mutual recognition. This is a departure and an alternative representation of morality; which in everyday life is often associated with being judgemental and passing verdict.

In India during the rise of *Hindutva*, instead of interaction and possibilities for reflexive communicative action, the exact opposite was encouraged. Religious identifications, prejudices and passions created a social representation of the "other" which led to the rapid shutting down of communicative spaces and possibilities.

> What Hindus say is RIGHT, what minorities think will be controlled. Do things according to the will of the Hindus. (M)

> The truth is that basically Hindu people do not like Muslims. It's a wrong thing but that's the truth. There are too many issues, *Ram mandir*, *Babri masjid, fatwas*. They all divide us. (H)

The extracts show that religion has become a central issue in identity formation but also that this social change is not being accepted by many. Such social debates still appear blind to the fact that religion and secularism may not be an antithesis of one another, as we see in Gandhi's logic.

Indeed, some of our respondents demonstrated the ways in which secularism and religion can and do sit side by side in everyday discourses:

> Terrorists and people who kill in the name of religion believe they are religious, but they are not. Although I am religious, I condemn them. (M)

> We do need a religion but not this kind. To be religious you don't have to do anything different. These rules are useless. (H)

In fact in a most lucid way showing the flexibility of religion a Hindu respondent philosophically commented, "fish live in water, if you drink this water are you not religious?" A rigid Hindu is supposed to be vegetarian and hence this cryptic query reflects the flexibility inherent in religious beliefs. The significant point is that such feelings existed in an atmosphere fuelled by divisive politics. These reflect important connections between representations of religion and secularism and exemplify the spirit of an Indian public sphere that remains religious but largely secular. The emergent categories may lead to the creation of icons, which could be used to create social solidarity. Over centuries, such generated symbols can be, and have been, used for both constructive and divisive purposes (Sen 2011b) since they tend to have strong evocative power due to their iconic form and affective charge (Fernandez 1991). Given this understanding, we conducted a follow up research, 2010–2011, to understand the mechanisms, which could lead to resolution of such religious conflicts. In the following sections, we will use this data to transcend the boundaries of "us and them".

11.4.4 Communicative Spaces, Moral Maturation and the "other"

The concept of moral maturation had a strong resonance amidst the respondents who apart from a few felt that this was mandatory for peace processes: "I think if we are wrong then it is better to look at us from other person's angle then only we would be able to realize our mistakes. If you see a situation from another's point of view this will help" (H); "instead of sitting at home people should sit together and talk and discuss their views" (H); "definitely if we talk appropriately then we will seek solution for our problems and there won't be any conflicts. However, if anybody doesn't want to come down to earth and stress on their own ideology without consideration for others then it may enhance violence. Thus it is necessary that each party must be willing to listen to each other and respect each other's opinion instead of being egoistic" (M); "if such a situation persists then I will try to resolve the misunderstandings instead of remaining quiet, which would be dangerous for peace processes" (M) and an emotional outburst:

Interviewee: "If Hindu people had seen through the eyes of Muslims then they would not have broken the Masjid. Nobody saw the temple. The big killings in Gujarat (…) if those who killed had seen the people as human beings, not brought religion to the forefront then they would not have set people on fire. If they had seen that the Muslim community will become wanderers then they would not have done this".

Question: "Is it good to talk with each other and solve a problem or should we just keep quiet and let it pass?"

Interviewee: "Dialogue will help solve the problems. If you talk then problems get sorted out. If you fight then the situation worsens. People with different views can sit together and discuss. In the Parliament people have different views and discuss issues. The Parliament is not stopped although they abuse each other. The dialogue goes on. Through talking and discussing a resolution of the problem takes place. We should try and understand the situation through talking. But if somebody is a rogue, bad mannered (*jahil*) and uncouth then it is better to keep quiet in front of such a person. If someone is wise we should immediately take their advice and listen to them or we should tell him our point of view because a wise person understands" (M).

Our respondents were in support of mutual understanding and creation of communicative spaces, which could lead to change in perspective and endorse the view that collective punishment for the mistakes of a few is anathema to modern concept of justice (Doise 2001), "it is we people who create these differences. Now if one person does wrong we blame the entire community or country for it. We are at fault. We need to stop discriminating on basis of religion or caste" (H). The respondents unanimously endorsed mutual understanding, "sometimes one has to kill one's emotions and feelings for the sake of the other. In order to retain a relationship one has to sacrifice. Hence this will help in solving the problem" (H) "it's worth a try, something like live and let live (*jeeyo aur jeene do*)" (H).

The data show that great emphasis was being placed on interaction and "reflective form" of communicative action. The desire was that the "other" be accommodated and boundaries be transcended. It was felt that although this was difficult and no single process could solve the situation but there was definite hope that a multi-faith, collective, networked society was a possibility in a morally mature culture.

However, in some cases, the discourse and the transition is ambivalent: on the one hand, the subjects declare their discontent, sadness, and disappointment about the fate of the country: "there is no possibility of a village or locality in which Muslims can live together peacefully with others. This is a dream, which will never be realized in India. Just do not start pestering me with this question. There is no possibility for this even in distant future" (H). Nonetheless, they always refer to the need to exit from this unfavourable situation. To resolve the conflict, dialogue was considered essential, "one should have a dialogue. No point in setting aside the issue. If you keep on trying there will be a break through and you might succeed. You might fail once but later on you might be successful and reach a consensus" (H).

11.4.5 Secularism and Social Capital

Indian secularism was based on the idea that the state would maintain a principled distance from religion but would address itself to matters rising out of religious concerns when the need arises. However, the cardinal rule would be that the considerations for both keeping away and for interfering would always be non-sectarian. The problem with the Indian state's practice of secularism has been that it has become increasingly sectarian. The constitutional provisions suggest very clearly the framework of a secular state; however, the politics, the nature and the functioning of the Indian state seem to drift away from this framework such as in Gujarat where state power was used against minorities (Sen and Wagner 2005). This definitely is a major challenge to the secular framework of the Indian state. In order to fight this challenge, the struggle for secularism has to become part of the struggle of the ordinary people of India for their right to a life that is dignified and politically, economically and culturally free.

Social capital is a useful way of entering into debates about religious politics and secularism in civil society—following the arguments of Robert Putnam and others who claim that there is increasing evidence that social cohesion is necessary for societies to prosper (Putnam 1993; Coleman 1988; Hopkins 2011). The fundamental point to emphasize is: a society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not rich in social capital and suffers from a lack of social cohesion. For Putnam (2000), social capital refers to connections among individuals and connections across social groups: it is the social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. The need to reflect on this definition of social capital is further accentuated by the observation that for the regulation of intergroup conflicts and conciliation

(e.g. Fisher 1990) most processes are directed towards establishing conditions that create open dialogue which attempt to foster reciprocal trust (Markova et al. 2008). Hence secularism becomes an important part of social capital across communities, particularly multi-faith communities; for secularism to exist, in India or elsewhere, norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness across religious communities must be established and followed. If secularism is challenged, social capital will diminish as boundaries of the "other" become demarcated and norms of mutual respect and tolerance are undermined. Through religious categorizations and self-definitions, group boundaries are strengthened and "non-believers" are excluded from personal and social networks. Objects, events and histories become represented to rationalize suspicion and distrust and this often leads to a discourse that exaggerates and essentialises the "other" as well as one's own group (Hallam and Street 2000; Howarth 2009; Wagner et al. 2009). Rather contentiously, one could argue therefore that assaults on secularism are assaults on social capital, social cohesion and even modern democracy.

Leaders and Networks

In our present research most respondents, except for a few endorsed trust, reciprocity and a democratic set up which was networked in lieu of one with a leader/ leaders. It is interesting to note that leaders became synonymous with politicians who symbolize corruption. That a leader can be positive appears to be an empty category and this space lies vacant, which is indicative of a troubled global society. However, amidst this chaos many are hopeful and in search of trust and reciprocity which emanates from the common people's collective. Some of the sentiments related to this amidst the Hindu men were—"there is no point in having politicians if they can't keep the citizens happy and united. We are only democratic in name not practically"; "politicians always want something wrong to happen or they purposely create something so they can profit. Although we are democratic, it is only in name. In reality, we are still slaves"; "if people are not happy and don't trust each other then there is no use of politicians. Anyway politicians don't help the people they only fill their pockets"; "what is the use if a politician is good but people don't trust each other?". One of them philosophically stated:

> When clothes get dirty we wash them; when minds and beliefs get dirty, what does one do? If people have clean minds, not like our politicians, then the country will prosper.

Similar feelings were present amongst the Muslim respondents—"(…) where people trust each other. It is not necessary to have good leaders as they are not reliable and do not work for the welfare of people. People can prosper on the basis of their efforts"; "real supportive people are needed and not influential politicians"; "a place where people trust each other instead of influential politicians because the latter are not trust worthy"; "I think people are more important than leaders. If leaders are very influential but people don't trust each other then what is the use of it?"; "no, it is not necessary to have influential leaders to prosper. Faith and active co-operation amongst the people is needed"

As the extracts show, the respondents had great faith in a leaderless society, which was democratic and high on trust and reciprocity. Emphasizing the importance of common people, they said, "its from and because of politics that there are fights and divisions. That village in which everyone helps each other will also have greater economic prosperity. In unity there is power/indestructibility (*Ekta mein Akhandata*)" (H).

However, a few believed that there should be a leader because without them society would be directionless:

Interviewee: "A village with one leader will be happier. A herd of animals also has a leader. This village will be prosperous".

Question: "In terms of economics which one will be better off?".

Interviewee: "A one leader village will be economically well off. One leader is necessary. The one, who tells the right things, gives directions and can decide between right and wrong. The one who can stop people from doing wrong is the right leader" (M).

Hermeneutics of Trust and Reciprocity

Contemporary liberal democracies contain multiple cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions. Within these societies, different communities provide divergent models for understanding secularism and religious, humane and moral obligations. In multi-faith and divided societies, often the assumption is that visions and dreams would be different. However our data related to the issue of homogenous versus multi-faith societies shows a remarkably clear and shared vision of an ideal society. It is truly hegemonic and underscores the uniformity of moral reasoning. However, religious and cultural differences challenge assumptions about common modes of moral deliberation. These need to be critiqued and call for a nuanced analysis in order to effectively resolve conflicts and social policy disputes.

The representation of an ideal society, barring a few exceptions was unanimous. It was described as a multi-faith society, which based itself on trust and reciprocity and was high on social capital i.e. networked,

> Yes its necessary to have secularism. If we are secular then we can trust. In a communal atmosphere this is not possible. Someone will have to start this process and then others will join. In such a situation the country will automatically prosper. That is my dream world. (H)

> I really wish that there should not be any riots in our society. We have witnessed 92–93 Bombay riots and we don't want a repeat. We must live peacefully and with brotherhood. There should be unity and a secular society. Then religion won't create any disharmony. Let's hope for this. (M)

> Where the different religious groups live together that is a good place instead of one, which has people of one religious community living together. Brotherhood (*bhaichara*) will be there. Honestly speaking a communal environment can be turned into a peaceful one if people work to achieve this. (M)

Although a few professed a desire for a homogenous theocratic society, most emphasized the centrality of religion although the preferred degree of religiosity differed. It is evident that people aspire to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric, much along the lines social psychological research has shown, albeit on a more complicated level (e.g. Sherif et al. 1988). This still appears a distinct possibility. These linkages both disambiguate the world for a group and enable straightforward communication among its members: we can see this as a form of social capital and a form of conflict resolution. Throughout history, it is small powerful groups that have changed the course of history and who have with their ingenuous ways altered the age-old practice, which has generally been witness to the victory of monetary capital over social capital. This still appears a distinct possibility (Sen et al. 2014).

11.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, we show that in contexts of cultural and religious difference a social and political commitment to secularism can lead to enhanced religious tolerance, increased social capital and political change. Interview data from the Indian context with Muslim and Hindu young men shows that a non-western interpretation of secularism, drawn from Gandhi and also Habermas, has important social, political and psychological consequences. Here state politics is not separated from religion per se, but rather that state politics is separated from affiliation with *one* religion. Hence religious politics in a secular context helps to overcome inter-ethnic and religious divides and thereby discourages religious fundamentalism.

To move a little closer to the resolution of this conflict, besides "moral maturation", operationalised by Gandhi and Habermas, there is a need to evolve a shared trajectory and a sensible identification of points of anchoring. This may in the long run catalyze an integrative process and constrain violence since blurred lines are not drawn on a *chiaroscuro* scale but accommodate a host of "greys" and by default reduce the demarcation between, us and them. New meanings can be produced, not only, through messages coming from outside a group (e.g. other cultures, experts and active minorities), but can also be created by innovative use of social tools which already exist in a society. Through discourse, representations can be schematized within a context, in such a way that both the representation and the context are transformed (Wagoner 2008; Howarth 2009). For instance, Gandhi defied the logic of the divide between religion and secularism and used a diverse collection of referential points, symbols and myths to unify Indians against British imperialism. He broke through historic boundaries and astutely perceived that people live by a set of beliefs, which maybe embedded in atheism, secularism, environment, disarmament or a host of other issues.

This insight needs to be remembered. Further, his views regarding religion still remain largely relevant in contemporary times since schisms based on religious

differences—sometimes addressed as cultural—have become the bane of modern societies and these need to be accommodated within the framework of secularism as defined in modern constitutions. It would be perhaps prudent to accept that the Western concept of secularism does not make much sense in different geo-cultural contexts and that for common sense to prevail "holy" texts need to be situated within their contemporary socio-political contexts—whether these "holy" texts are enshrined in sacred books or constitutions.

Whether we choose to keep our distance or not, in a democracy people will bring their social, cultural and religious baggage—myths, beliefs, values and common sense into the political arena. There is no sense in ignoring the fact that this is a fundamental reality in many Asian societies, particularly so in the Indian context and to an increasingly evident degree in Western societies. It will be worthwhile to also accept that when cultural encounters take place then recognition of new social categories such as religious/spiritual-secular combined with moral maturation, capitalizing on social capital and opening up of communicative spaces may help in the promotion of social solidarity and mature democracy.

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