The 'faithful' Republic and its representations in Indian literary and public discourses: A Study of the changing natures of secularism in post-Independence India.

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

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Certified that the Thesis entitled

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submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of ----------------------

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And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere / elsewhere.

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The 'faithful' Republic and its representations in Indian literary and public discourses: A Study of the changing natures of secularism in post-Independence India. DISSERTATION

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THE FACULTY OF ARTS BY RAJARSHI ROY REGISTRATION NUMBER: A00EN1100221 UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PROFESSOR MANOJIT MANDAL PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA-700032. 2024 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT This dissertation and the idea behind it would not have taken shape if not for the active mentorship and intellectual guidance of Prof. Manojit Mandal. He had been a source of constant motivation and incisive suggestions at every point while writing this dissertation, apart from that he had initiated me to the world of serious study of Indian political history. This dissertation is a tribute to his guidance throughout the years. The support from the Jadavpur University English Department has remained constant amidst my work. I must acknowledge the support and patience of the people at the Centre for Studies in Cultural Diversity and Well-being, Jadavpur University. I must also mention the senior librarians at the Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow for their assistance and kind hospitality during my research trips. To Soumalya and Moumita, I offer my sincere gratitude in lieu of their support. PREFACE INTRODUCTION: ARGUMENT AND CONTEXT The purpose of the proposed doctoral project is to embark on a historiographic study of the gradual changes to the

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INTRODUCTION

ARGUMENT AND CONTEXT

The purpose of the proposed doctoral project is to embark on a historiographic study of the gradual changes to the secularism discourse stemming from the Constitutional debates of 1946–49, right up to the landmark Babri Masjid judgement of the Supreme Court and the subsequent Ram Mandir Bhoomi Poojan in 2020. It is my contention that the idea of Nehruvian 'Progressive Secularism' has transmuted into a form of 'confrontational secularism' in contemporary times, that chooses to circumscribe itself into a bigger discourse of 'essential practices' rather than as something encouraged by the state. If 'Progressive Rationalism' was built on the Nehruvian idea of 'principled distance' of the state from all religions; 'confrontational secularism', in my argument, have a different origin and an even more distinct ultimatum.

It is my hypothesis that this move from Nehruvian Secular Consensus to the act of 'inducing political consent' is caused by the negotiation that goes on within the underbelly of populist politics. The secular movement, which should have remained a rational project of the civil society, almost becomes a form of a vulnerable declaration that appears today in the Preamble. Starting from an encouragement transforming into a forcible declaration, secularism in the contemporary times, arguably, remains firmly entrenched within the state policy, which privileges the cosmological against the rational. This phenomenon pits religion against the very freedom to 'essentially practise' religion. In my thesis, I shall consider Non-Anglophone Indian novels (emphasising on Bengali, Hindi and Urdu), party resolutions, electoral manifestoes and memoirs as primary texts to navigate the changes within the 'secularism discourse' in the Indian Republic.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS (and the RESEARCH GAP in Existing Scholarship)

Research Gap:

The original question that led me towards my doctoral project was my own interest in how non-Anglophone Indian writers dealt with the question of 'secularism' in their work. As I went on with my readings, I realized how inconspicuous these texts were in scholarship pertaining to the said subject.

Original Research Questions:

1) The shift caused to the secularism discourse in terms of mentioning of the world 'secular' in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution from the 1946 argument offered by the Constituent Assembly against the addition of the phrase.

2) Existing scholarship on the subject of the subject of secularism and Indian Literature, singularly deals with Anglophone Indian literature. The question here is how does non-Anglophone Indian literature in major Indian languages deal with the question of 'secularism' and if at all the mood of the discourse change vis-à-vis the shift identified in question (1)

3) The cultural dissension points on questions of syncretism and secularism.

4) How does (or if at all) the Non-Anglophone texts that deal with the subject of the secularism (and the shift), accommodate the question of Provincialism within their own literary discourse?

DETAILED SYNOPSIS AND CHAPTERISATION

At the time of the constituent assembly debates, discussions on the subject of Secularism and the state were divided on three ideological standpoints. The 'no-concern' standpoint which remained the primary mood in the assembly called for a complete separation between the state and the religious establishments in a bid to consider religious practices to be a private affair between 'the man and his god'. The proponents of the 'no-concern' position asked for removal of all references to the God and the divine from the Preamble and the Constitution. The second position too echoed the same 'no-concern' theory fearing that religion would in fact weaken the democratic functions of the state. The third standpoint that arose during this debate was the 'equal respect theory' which in some sense influenced Nehru's own position. This position included an equal respectable distance from all religions as long as its practices remained private. Curiously enough, this third position was considered as a form of 'Indian Secularism' in the debates by individuals like K.M. Munshi while discussing the Non-Establishment cause of the American Constitution.

However, soon enough this consensus was raptured when secularism appeared as a subtle subtext in two distinct discussions: namely that of langauages and that of minorities.

Cushioned between multiple positions which could effectively produce a severe problematic to the Union, Nehru's position in favour of the Ayyangar-Munshi formula (13th September, 1949, 1415) and Sardar Patel's earlier congratulatory note accepting the recommendations of the Minority sub-committee to surrender their

right to reservation (Constituent Assembly Debates, 27th August, 1947, Volume 5, 199; Tejani, 2007, p. 247; Shiva Rao, 423) exemplifies a form of secularism that the Constituent Assembly had hoped to present. In this rare historical moment when actions of both Socialist-leaning Nehru, and Hindu Traditionalist Patel coalesced, a form of governmental 'secularism' was achieved that was not simply a cosmetically applied Western political doctrine applied on religious Indians as Ashis Nandy argues. It is on the contrary, a style of secularism that tries to assign a definition of 'Progress' produced from the dialectic between the 'communal identity' and the 'National identity' of the citizen. This argumentative premise of a largely Nehruvian 'progressive secularism' that bases itself on a 'benevolent neutrality towards all religion' (Jaffrelot, 1993, p. 102) would be used in the first chapter of the thesis wherein it would be argued that such a form of secularism was something that ultimately aimed to significantly reduce ascendancy of religion in Indian public life. In this chapter, I shall deal with the Parliamentary debates relating to the Hindu Code Bills of 1950, national language debate, the minorities debate and three non-anglophone literary texts, two Bengali novels (Tarashankar Bandopadhyay's 'Saptapadi' and Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Trinabhumi'), one Hindi novel (Yashpal's "Jhootha Sach" translated to English as 'This is not the Dawn'), and one Urdu novel (Qurratulain Hyder's 'Aag Ka Darya') to amplify in detail how such a model of 'progressive secularism' had its long standing impact on non-Anglophone literature of the time and whether such affects had other implications for the provincial Indian literatures. This would primarily dispel essentialist notions that have erroneously over time contended that the notion of secularism had primarily remained a 'cosmopolitan phenomenon' (Neelam Srivastava, 2007) to be found primarily in Anglophone Indian literature(s). This chapter would mainly cover the period from 1950 (from the formal acceptance of the Indian Constitution) till the 1967 amendment to the Official Languages Act of 1963.

With the end of the 1967 border clashes with China, the 1967 General Elections were held and Indira Gandhi was sworn in as the elected Prime Minister. The start of her tenure is of considerable importance in relation to the myriad departures from the earlier 'universal benevolence towards all religions' discourse of secularism to a form of a bureaucratic top down form of secularism in the face of a rejuvenated Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS). For BJS as well, the 1967 elections held under the Presidency of

Deen Dayal Upadhyay, was a period of immense political churn and stronger religious mobilisation, aided in part by the establishment of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1964. The electoral manifesto of the BJS for the 1967 elections too shows an implicit turn towards the communalisation with an implicit intention of mobilisation of Hindus. The mention of the promulgation of an Uniform Civil Code, proposition of Sanskrit as the National Language of India (as opposed to the clamour for Hindi to receive the same honour in the earlier manifestos) and lastly the specific mention of Cow-Protection measures all indicate towards a specific direction of religious mobilisation that it hoped to achieve. With Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's demise in 1968, and subsequently Atal Behari Vajpayee's election as the BJS President, interesting changes were observed in its party resolutions on 'communalism'. This shift is conspicuous in the June 1968, Gauhati Central Working Committee Resolution 68.11 titled the 'Communal Threat' where BJS for the first time makes a mention of the 'One Nation, One People' ideal.

Both Indira Gandhi's insistence on bureaucratic secularism, and post-Upadhyay BJS's invocation of 'One Country, One People' is in fact a representation of the anxious attempt to arrive at a Pan-Indian (ethno-nationalist) model of citizenship. A model of citizenship, that could be mobilized in the name of the 'Nation' or in the case of the Indira government 'against Communalism'. In this chapter ranging from 1967 till 1977 (End of Emergency), when the 42nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution was made, which apart from making several sweeping changes to the legislature, also added the phrase 'secular' to the Preamble of the Indian constitution; we shall try to identify the populist invocations of faith as an ideology, and how through several iconographies, a rhetoric of populist secularism based on 'faith-based practises' was in popular currency. As representative texts of this chapter, we shall consider Bhisham Sahni's 'Tamas', Rahi Masoom Raza's 'Adha Gaon', 'Topi Shukla', Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Kingbadantir Nayak' and Tarashankar Bandopadhyay's 'Agradani'. We shall also consider the manifestos and the resolutions of the Jan Sangh during this period and also the text of the 1977 Amendment to make sense of the populist motives behind such a shift to the secularist discourse.

With the end of the National Emergency in India in 1977, the general elections unsurprisingly turned out to be a disaster for the Indira Gandhi led Congress.

Instead, this was the start of the Janata Party experiment, led by Morarji Desai, swept the elections, based on the popular disaffection with the Indira led-Congress. The prison diaries of K.R. Malkani, Jayprakash Narayan and L.K. Advani recount the solidarity-based, but often uncomfortable discussions relating to the creation of a single political entity based on the amalgamation of the four main political parties (Advani, 146). However, when the Janata Party cabinet was sworn into the cabinet in 1977, the Jana Sangh contingent within the same decided to play down the more aggressive Hindu Nationalist features of their doctrine, while emphasising more on their points of decentralisation at village level and other more socio-economic, welfare based elements. This shift within the policies of Jana Sangh (as a part of the Janata combine) is important for in my argument this was effectively the start of the mainstreaming of 'interest-group based' politics that would ultimately lead to a form of 'state-sponsored populist secularism' which would directly lead to the flash-point within the ethnic-nationalist circuits during several elections leading to the violent 90s.

The Janata Party, at the start of its office developed good relations with other minority based political outfits. In the words of Christophe Jaffrelot (p. 285), this was possible due to the fact that the Emergency had brought the imprisoned RSS in close contact with the members of the Jamaat-e-Islami, thus making a dialogue possible between the two groups (Jaffrelot 285; Tyabji 1977). Such a dialogue made it possible for even the Imam Bukhari of Jama Masjid to not only join the Janata Party but also campaign for the same at the behest of Hemavati Nandan Bahuguna, who left Indira Gandhi led-Congress for Babu Jagjivan Ram-led faction Congress for Democracy (who in turn had an electoral pact with the Janata Party for 1977). Bahuguna's significance lay in the fact that he remained strongly credited for popularising the 'iftar' as a political event as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1973, a cue that Indira Gandhi is stated to have followed during the National Emergency. (Ahmed,n.d., Milli Gazette, https://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15-1-2000/Art14.htm; Mohan Guruswamy, Deccan Chronicle, https://www.deccanchronicle.com/140701/commentary-op-ed/article/history-political-iftar-parties; Vardhan Singh 128)

Such mainstreaming of 'interest group politics' was in the nature of the Janata combine precisely due to its composition in which there were often strong flare-ups

of conflicting political resolves. These conflicts brought the combine to a standstill in the aftermath of 1980 general election reversal of the split factions of the Janata Party, the Jana Sangh members opted out of the combine and formed the Bharatiya Janata Party and elected Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its first President. Vajpayee in his first presidential address for the BJP underlined the party's allegiance to the visions of Jayprakash Narayan, while accepting that their walkout of the Janata coalition was mainly due to the issue of the dual membership of the party and the RSS. BJP's aspiration for the Janata Party's base was evident in the fact that it fought its first electoral campaign on the basis of the 1977 electoral manifesto of the Janata Party. The attempt to emulate Jayprakash Narayan's own ideological vision, was furthermore noted in Vajpayee's own Presidential address, where he mentions 'Gandhian Socialism' , 'Integral Humanism' and 'Positive Secularism' in the same breath. Of the above three, while 'Gandhian Socialism' was a homage to Jayprakash Narayan inspired Janata movement and 'Integral Humanism' was an insistence to Deen Dayal Upadhyay influenced credo of the Jana Sangh, 'Positive Secularism' was in fact an authentic enunciation which in my argument was again a mainstream political acceptance of the reality of 'state-sponsored populist secularism' that the Hindu Nationalist base of the party had to come to terms with. Vajpayee states:

'Democracy and secularism are inseparable. A state that discriminates between one citizen and another on grounds of faith, which does not treat them equally, cannot claim to be truly democratic because one of the cardinal principles on which democracy is based is equality of all citizens. Our commitment to secularism, therefore, is as fundamental as our commitment to Democracy…

It is a matter of regret that over the years Congress policies have distorted the concept of secularism. It has come to be identified simply with protection of interests of religious minorities. Indeed very often Secularism becomes only a respectable garb for appeasement of narrow communal or sectional interests…

In the Indian background, we can claim to have established a truly secular State only if we are able to instil in every citizen, irrespective of his religion, caste, region, or language, a sense of Indian-ness, which I believe exists in all our countrymen and which needs to be assiduously ruptured and strengthened' (Vajpayee, 1981, 10-11)

Vajpayee's linking of secularism with Democracy, uniform citizenry and the invocation of the political register of 'Indianness' is in essence a definitive call for a cultural Nationalism. So if Indira led-Congress of the period is to be criticised for practising secularism with communal intent, Vajpayee's expects the BJP to involve itself in a form of 'positive secularism' which is in actuality a basis of cultural Nationalism.

The decision of the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1986 to promulgate the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill is to be considered as one of the highlights of this period, which arguably sets in motion the era of religious polarisation in the country, from which point onwards the identity of the minority community in India becomes synonymous with the Muslim identity in terms of appeasement.

In this chapter, ranging from the End of Emergency in 1977 till the Demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, I seek to argue how the earlier forms of popular secularism, had largely transmuted into a form of 'state-sponsored populist secularism', and later into an 'state-controlled secularism' towards the end of the 80s notably during the Shah Bano affair, and ultimately culminating in the Babri Masjid flare-up of 1992. For the most part beyond 1980, in terms of the establishment of BJP, and Indian National Congress' own complicity in the Shah Bano affair and Anti-Sikh riots, it is my contention that the it was effectively the 'interest-group politics' (perhaps not explicitly communalism, as Rajni Kothari argues) that was fast becoming the norm within the Indian Parliamentary politics. As representative literary texts of this chapter, we shall consider Krishna Sobti's 'Zindaginama' (Hindi), Rahi Masoom Raza's "Katra Bi Aarzoo' (Hindi), Samaresh Basu's 'Jug Jug Jiye' (Bengali)and Abul Bashar's 'Phoolbou" (Bengali). We shall also refer to the texts of the Lok Sabha debates on Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Shah Bano case and also on the resurgence of Ram Janmabhoomi Movement which ultimately led to the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992.

1992 is in most aspects to be considered as a watershed moment in the political history of Independent India. The issue of the Babri Masjid and its importance to the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement had remained important to the political order ever since the Indian Independence. In the aftermath of Advani's arrest, which ultimately

led to the collapse of the National Front government, BJP faced the strong paradox of being conceived effectively as religious leaders. However, the introduction of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Bill which in the Parliament by the central government, allowed BJP the opportunity to politicise the dissent during the Lok Sabha debate, even though the Babri Masjid/ Ramjanmabhoomi was excluded from the scope of the act, because it was a subject of litigation at that point. In the Parliamentary session, the BJP members took up their cudgels to attack the Congress-legacy secularism. Advani's comment exemplified BJP's position clearly:

'...I would not like to go into the details of this Bill. Most of my colleague have discussed its various aspects. My personal opinion is that there won't be any meaningful gain. But during the discussion it was also discussed that why have we not done anything about Ayodhya or Ram Janam Bhoomi while we were in the government which has now become a big issue and people are agitated over it throughout the country...I remember it vividly that except the last two elections of 1989 and 1991, the issue of Ram Janam Bhoomi and Ayodhya never became an issue for the elections...the fact is that nobody has ever made any reference to it till 1984 elections. Neither Hindu nor Muslims nor any political party had ever said that Ayodhya problem, which has assumed bigger dimension, should be solved.

...My submission is that if there is one norm for every citizen then Secularism would come to stay permanent in India. But there are two norms or standard in the country which we have observed this morning in this very House.' (Advani, Places of Worship, Matters Under Rule 377, September 10th 1991, 478-80)

In bringing up the reference to the 'Shahbano case in 1985' (p.479), Advani effectively legitimated the exclusion of Babri Masjid/ Ram Janam Bhoomi from the purview of the act as a decision of the central government while omitting to mention the legal status of the matter. As a result, the Ram Janam Bhoomi movement effectively became more than just a religious event and acquired the colours of an Anti-Congress, Hindu Nationalist political agenda.

 The Babri event of 1992 thus effectively brought the Hindu Nationalist movement to a flash point and effectively engineered the minority other to be primarily a Muslim.

Such problematic implications of secularism were again brought to the forefront by the BJP during the Lok Sabha debates on the 2001 Parliamentary Attacks in the face

of a transnational presence of the Muslim identity. The discourse of secularism had by then changed suitably keeping in sync with the neoliberal times. BJP leader L.K. Advani's speech at the Lok Sabha on 19th December, 2001, in the wake of the Parliament attack, notably concedes the consistency of the BJP's project of a cultural (read majoritarian) basis of citizenship:

…I want to assure those people who have expressed such apprehension that this is not a war between Hindu and Muslim. I wish that this should not be a war between India and Pakistan. It should be a war between a civilized community and a barbarian society. Terrorism is 'asabhyata'. Terrorism is barbarism. Civilization Vs barbarism is the kind of struggle, and if there can be another aspect of it then it can be Democracy Vs. Terrorism and this can be one aspect and one of the specific features of Democracy is that there are one hundred crore in India and all of them are equal. This is the specific feature of democracy. ("Discussion Under Rule 193: Terrorist Attack On Parliament House," 2001)

Advani's concession is important, for he proffers for a newer binary that of democracy and terrorism as the bases of Nationalist imagination in a neoliberal world. Advani's speech is also to be considered important for he effectively presented the issue of Islamic terrorism as a transnational menace, towards the end of speech where he states:

…I would like to say to my Muslim brethren that the way in which the incidents of 11th September, 2001 happened in America and Bin Laden turned out to be a symbol of terrorism for them—if somebody appreciates the actions of Bin Laden then by such actions he creates doubts in the mind of the people. ("Discussion Under Rule 193: Terrorist Attack On Parliament House," 2001)

In his speech we not only find a possible linkage of domestic terrorism with the international 'War on terror', but we also find a cognizance of the fact that the Indian Muslims must open themselves up to the neoliberal progressive forces, as opposed to pandering to the 'global image of Islam as an inherently regressive religion with a unique propensity for encouraging violence among its adherents' (Kaul, 2018). Likewise, the 'good Muslims'/ 'bad Muslims' binary as perpetuated by (then) political leadership of the antiterrorism alliance, notably Tony Blair and George Bush (Mamdani, 2002) is replaced by the right-leaning NDA alliance as progressive

Muslims/regressive Muslims with due support from the neoliberal climate of the period.

This trend noticeably continues effectively till 2006, when the UPA-I Government led by Manmohan Singh's Congress engaged the 7-member High Level Committee led by former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Rajinder Sachar to study the social, economic and educational condition of Muslims in India. The findings of this committee are of considerable importance in the light of the landmark T.M.A. Pai Foundation vs State of Karnataka Judgement.

As representative literary texts for this chapter ranging from 1992 (aftermath of Babri Masjid) till 2006 (publication of the Sachar report) we shall consider the following: Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Aleek Manush' (1994) (Bengali), Narayan Sanyal's 'Hindu Na Ora Muslim' (1995) (Bengali), Tasleema Nasrin's 'Lajja' (1993) (Bengali), Uday Prakash's "...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana' (1998) (Hindi), Kashinath Singh's 'Kashi Ke Assi' (2002) (Hindi) and Sheila Rohekar's 'Taaviz' (2005) (Hindi). We shall also refer to the debate around the Places of Worship Act, the debate surrounding the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance 2001 in the aftermath of the 2001 Parliament Attacks and the findings of the Sachar Committee report to navigate how that state-controlled secularism of the earlier period moves towards a form of confrontational secularism in the recently neoliberal period.

From the time of publication of the Sachar report to the Ram Mandir Bhoomi Poojan in 2020, the confrontational secularism policy of the successive government could be effectively understood as something that is both consensual yet confrontational at the same time. Both these events exemplify a model of confrontational secularism (with its origins lying in Vajpayee's own 1980 BJP Presidential Address mentioning Positive Secularism) that draws a consensus from the greater public life of the country. It is hard to argue whether this betrays a continuous erosion of the secular norm within the greater society, or if this marks the position of the Indian citizen in a post-secular polity, as opposed to the 'individuals' to whom Nehru guaranteed "freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion' in Article 25 of the 1950 Constitution (Mitra, 1989,p.113) towards the formation of a citizenry that is conscious and fiercely protective of their religious rights. (Vajpayee 1981, Advani 1991, Kothari 1998 and Advani 2001)

CHAPTERISATIONS IN BRIEF

I intend to divide my thesis into following chapters (yet untitled):

- **1950-1967**: In this chapter, I shall deal with the Parliamentary debates relating to the Hindu Code Bills of 1950, national language debate, the minorities debate and three non-anglophone literary texts, two Bengali novels (Tarashankar Bandopadhyay's 'Saptapadi' and Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Trinabhumi'), one Hindi novel (Yashpal's "Jhootha Sach" translated to English as 'This is not the Dawn'), and one Urdu novel (Qurratulain Hyder's 'Aag Ka Darya') to amplify in detail how the model of 'progressive secularism' had its long standing impact on non-Anglophone literature of the time and whether such affects had other implications for the provincial Indian literatures.

- **1967-1977**: In this chapter ranging from 1967 till 1977 (End of Emergency), when the 42nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution was made, which apart from making several sweeping changes to the legislature, also added the phrase 'secular' to the Preamble of the Indian constitution; we shall try to identify the populist invocations of faith as an ideology, As representative texts of this chapter, we shall consider Bhisham Sahni's 'Tamas', Rahi Masoom Raza's 'Adha Gaon', 'Topi Shukla', and Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Kingbadantir Nayak'. We shall also consider the manifestos and the resolutions of the Jan Sangh during this period and also the text of the 1977 Amendment to make sense of the populist motives behind such a shift to the secularist discourse.

- **1977-1992:** In this chapter, ranging from the End of Emergency in 1977 till the Demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, I seek to argue how the earlier forms of popular secularism, had largely transmuted into a form of 'state-sponsored populist secularism', and later into an 'state-controlled secularism' towards the end of the 80s notably during the Shah Bano affair, and ultimately culminating in the Babri Masjid flare-up of 1992. As representative literary texts of this chapter, we shall consider Krishna Sobti's 'Zindaginama' (Hindi), Rahi Masoom Raza's "Katra Bi Aarzoo' (Hindi), Samaresh Basu's 'Jug Jug Jiye' (Bengali), Abul Bashar's 'Phoolbou" (Bengali) and Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Aleek Manush' (1994). We shall also refer to the texts of the Lok Sabha

debates on Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Shah Bano case and also on the resurgence Ram Janmabhoomi Movement which ultimately led to the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992.

- **1992-2006:** As representative literary texts for this chapter ranging from 1992 (aftermath of Babri Masjid) till 2006 (publication of the Sachar report) we shall consider the following: (Bengali), Narayan Sanyal's 'Hindu Na Ora Muslim' (1995) (Bengali), Tasleema Nasrin's 'Lajja' (1993) (Bengali), Uday Prakash's "...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana' (1998) (Hindi), Kashinath Singh's 'Kashi Ke Assi' (2002) (Hindi) and Sheila Rohekar's 'Taaviz' (2005) (Hindi). We shall also refer to the debate around the Places of Worship Act, the debate surrounding the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance 2001 in the aftermath of the 2001 Parliament Attacks and the findings of the Sachar Committee report to navigate how that state-controlled secularism of the earlier period moves towards a form of confrontational secularism in the recently neoliberal period.

- **2006-2020:** From the time of publication of the Sachar report to the Ram Mandir Bhoomi Poojan in 2020, the confrontational secularism policy of the successive government could be effectively understood as something that is both consensual yet confrontational at the same time. Chandan Pandey's 'Keertigan' published in Hindi, would be the sole text representative literary text in the period concerned apart from in depth analysis of media phenomenon such as 'Love Jihad' and the greater discourse around the annulment of Instant Triple Talak.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of my project I wish to strictly adhere to discourse analysis especially within the larger ambit of Non-Anglophone Indian Novels (between 1950-2020). Electoral manifestoes, Party documents, records of parliamentary discussions and personal memoirs of certain political activists would also form a bulk of the primary materials along with the Novels considered. I have for the most part concentrated on Bengali, Hindi and Urdu novels to obtain a general historiographic basis of the secularism debate in multiple non-Anglophone Indian languages. I do not intend to add audio-visual texts (such as films, documentaries, serials and radio-

plays) for existing research on the subject has focused solely on the Anglophone novels produced by Indian authors. Considering the non-Anglophone novel primarily thus would afford a greater argumentation in favour of cultural 'Othering' of the non-Anglophone literary establishment and how the secularism discourse functions within it. Most of the non-literary primary texts considered have been digitised and it is for this reason I would not need to visit archives for accessing them.

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CHAPTER 1: 1950-1967 THE 'SECULAR CONSENSUS' OF NEHRU

The Discourse of Secularism in the period concerned

In the Constituent Assembly Debates starting from 1946 continuing till the 1950s when India finally became a Republic, the discussions pertaining to the discourse of Secularism had three distinct ideological standpoints. The first one, academically touted as the 'no-concern theory of secularism' called for a definite and a complete line of separation between the religion and the apparatuses of the state. The category of the 'believer' was considered to be contingent to the greater identity of the citizen of the nation, wherein religion and its 'practices' were a matter of freedom of expression and liberty. Likewise, not only was references to God were to be removed from the Constitution, but also religion was to be relegated to the private sphere of the citizen. It was argued that the need of the hour was to develop an inclusive identity for the Indian Citizens as opposed to being members of some religious denomination. Considering nationalism, not religion as the basis of the modern state, efforts were to be directed by the state to procure the Individual citizen from the divisive formation of religious community. In short, this particular line of ideological argument invoked nationalism and nationalist thought as the only political identity of the citizen. The challenge was to create a greater political body of 'nationalist citizens' as opposed to a divisive category of believer citizens who would form volatile and fractured religious-community centered political body. Simply put, this ideological standpoint cautiously attempted to remove the collective political element to religion and religious practice considering it to be a possible future threat to the democratic processes of the Nation.

The second position on secularism, as observed within the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly Debates called for an absolute separation between the state and the religion as a means to protect religion from the legislations of the changing inclinations of the democratically elected majority. In reality, thus effectively, the second position too echoed the first position from an absolutely different premise: that the democratic process must not have a say in matters of absolute belief such as religion.

The third position, and possibly the most nuanced one espoused during the Constituent Assembly Debates was the 'equal respect theory' of the secularism, which stated that in a multicultural polity such as India, it was not enough for the state stayed at equal distance alike from all religions; but respect all religions alike. As opposed to the theory of 'no-concern' which considered religion as a private whim of the citizen, to be indulged as long as it remained a private affair, the 'equal respect' theory which in term begot concepts like *sarva dharma sambhava* in case of the Indian political body, stated that a secular state must in keeping with the 'deeply religious moorings' encourage a spirit of tolerance towards established religious belief systems, and yet not have a state religion. Simply put, as opposed to the cult of 'no-concern' a political dictum of 'tolerance' was to be invoked and nurtured by the state in all matters of religion. Ultimately, in this debate between three ideological standpoints, the events leading up to the final coming into force of the Indian Constitution in 1950, we would find in detail, how it was the ambivalence between the 'no-concern' and the 'equal-respect' groups that would find a deeper consensus in several constitutional proceedings during the period. But before that we shall try to analyze in detail the implications and the earlier history of the secular discourse to make sense if there is indeed a possible cross-pollination between the two, and how does the iconoclastic Jawaharlal Nehru become significant in this.

Even though, during the period of colonial rule in India and beyond that, England was never a 'secular' country in terms of history or policy, it is a matter of significant contradiction that it opted on a complete separation of the religion and state in India. In a recent publication, Abhinav Chandrachud (a practicing advocate at the Bombay High Court) contends that this may have been primarily due to the fact that the colonial officials may have felt suitable discomfort in legislating on matters pertaining to the so called 'false religions' and likewise, in a notable shift from the East India Company governance period, it was left to the administration of the trustees[1]. This conception of the so-called Indian religions as false, is to be understood as a binary to the fact that England had considered Christianity to be the 'one true religion', which relegated all other established systems of belief to the category of 'heathen'. However, transposing Christianity as the state religion on India would have perhaps made it ungovernable.

Such a political decision percolated into three significant shifts in the colonial Indian political life. As mentioned earlier, the state would not be present in any act of active endorsement of local religions, and likewise administration of places of religious worship was handed over to the trustees. Secondly, the colonial state was to engage in a protectionist stance in relation to the religious minorities, and thus 'colonial officials decided against adopting a uniform civil code in family matters'[2]; gradually entertaining the minority fear of absence of imperial intervention. Simply put, the policy of secularism was invoked by the imperial administrative apparatus in colonial India to further, what was in essence, a state sponsored project of political communalization, or a gradual communalization of the polity. This was even more obvious, in the

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[1] Abhinav Chandrachud, introduction, in *Republic of Religion: The Rise and Fall of Colonial Secularism in India* (Gurgaon, Haryana, India: Penguin/Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2020), ix–xxiv, x.

[2] Abhinav Chandrachud, introduction, in *Republic of Religion: The Rise and Fall of Colonial Secularism in India* (Gurgaon, Haryana, India: Penguin/Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2020), ix–xxiv, xi.

government's tacit encouragement to Christian missionaries to preach Christianity through Hindu or Muslim preachers and obtain converts.

This three-fold surreptitious fanning of communalization via an avowed secular policy, is further noticeable in matters relating to colonial education as well, wherein we see Macaulay in his 'Minute on Education, dated the 2nd of February, 1835' forcibly commenting:

'But to encourage the study of a literature, admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcated the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confined that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach *false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion*.'[3]

Even though Macaulay goes on record for his public hesitation of promoting the work of the Christian missionaries and the converts in the same minutes; one cannot ignore the particularly strong possibility (and public fear at that time) that such a model of education as enumerated would in fact produce irreversible damage to non-Christian, 'heathen' religions.

Colonial brand of *policy secularism*, would thus in historical reading should appear as an imperial act of encouraging a possible communalization of the Indian political life. A possible long running outcome of this would perhaps be identified in 1909, when in relation to elections to the legislative bodies in India, voters were segregated on the basis of their religion: in essence, the very electorates to the colonial legislative bodies were in effect communalized. However, the course of this chapter does not allow an in-depth consideration of

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[3] Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Macaulay's Minute of on Education*, version PDF, accessed July 28, 2023, https://archive.org/details/dli.csl.5518/page/n10/mode/1up , 8.

the communal implications of the colonial Indian political life. We shall instead consider this political trajectory as an argumentative basis on which Jawaharlal Nehru's model of secularism is in direct dialogue with.

Jawaharlal Nehru's cult as a nationalist thinker is distinctly based on his own historiography of India. His historiographic arc is dependent on a political hermeneutic of syncretism. In his much popular synthesized view of the Indian past, theorists note, an important dissension point with earlier and contemporary nationalist thinkers such as Gandhi, Savarkar or even Vivekananda: where established religion and its own cultural history is thought of as to be separate from the religion's own political identity.[4] Such a political methodology has two distinct functional dispensations: firstly, it tries to resolve the multiple, conflicting identities available to the State into a singular identity of the national citizen; secondly, it tries to undo the very basis of colonial historiography, as a consistent basis of identity and culture formation in lieu of an original and self-sustained historiography of Nationalism for the post-colonial state. It is therefore not of much surprise to scholars of Nehru when one encounters a spirited supporter of a synthesized view of Indian history in which Hindu-Muslim unity and cross-pollination remains the norm with episodes of communal skirmish which were denounced largely to be more of political import than of cultural(and thus religious). His vocal support for a national culture of India, as opposed to a nationalism-as-the-culture of India (as espoused by other pronounced by other contemporary thinkers) encapsulates a significant shift from the British imperial government in terms of a definition of the 'secular'. While debate still rages in academic circuits as to whether Nehru's narration of Indian history, qualifies as that of a professional historian or that of

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[4] Amalendu Misra, "Nehru--The Sceptical Secularist ," essay, in *Identity and Religion: Foundations of Anti-Islamism in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), 110–47, 110-111.

a humanist[5] , one cannot disregard the significance of the shift in imagining any established religion in terms of a two-pronged combination of the political and the cultural. Even then, as scholars, we must not lose sight of the fact that in Nehruvian historiography, religious identity is still resolved into the binary of Hindu and Muslim, which is essentially in assonance with other contemporary Nationalists such as Gandhi and Vivekananda, even a radical Nationalist like Damodar Savarkar acknowledges a more multicultural reality of the Indian polity albeit in a far staunchly Nativist context. He identifies that the problematic of communalism vis-à-vis the Indian political life (colonized and beyond) rests on a possible amity between the adherents of the two religions in question; a proposition that was complicated and mostly ignored by the British colonial historiographers motivated by various colonial considerations. In Nehruvian terminology, 'synthesis' was the correction offered to such imperially motivated imagination of the Indian political body: thus, in his works we find how:

'…by accepting Muslims and at the same time, maintaining their own identity, the Hindus created a situation where Islam could not be victorious. Consequently, the new religion and the accompanying religious systems were Indianised…because neither the conqueror repatriated their original identity but nevertheless learned to exist as equals in a larger whole.'[6]

Therefore, as a part of this historiographic project, we see Nehru correcting the colonial myth-formation behind Islam's arrival in India through barbarism, which ultimately led to the demise of the Hindu culture. He offered instead that Islam arriving in India and invasions of India by Muslims were separate historical events with the invasions being perpetrated with political-commercial

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[5] K. M. Panikkar, "Nehru as a Historian," essay, in *A Study of Nehru*, ed. Rafik Zakaria (Mumbai: Times of India, 1959), 404–7, https://archive.org/details/ASTUDYOFNEHRUED.RAFIQZAKARIA/page/n1/mode/2up , 405.

[6] Amalendu Misra, "Nehru--The Sceptical Secularist ," essay, in *Identity and Religion: Foundations of Anti-Islamism in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), 110–47, 115.

intentions and were enterprises of a political Islam which had precious little connection with classical Islam of the Arab regions. He even goes on to declare that:

'The Muslims who came to India from outside brought no new technique or political economic structure. In spite of a religious brotherhood of Islam, they were class bound and feudal in outlook. In techniques and the methods of production and industrial organization, they were inferior to what prevailed in India. Thus their influence on the economic life of India and the social structure was very little. Thus life continued as of old and all the people Hindu or Muslim or other fitted into it.'[7]

It helps to note here that in this section that, while Nehru downplays the contributions of these invasions to the political and commercial life of 'India', it is quite difficult to the miss the tone of reconciliation here. This essence of reconciliation is representative of a definitive shift from the colonial British talked about earlier. Furthermore, by separating political Islam from that of classical Islam, Nehru exhibits the fallacy available in earlier Nationalist and Hindu Reformist theorists such as Vivekananda and others that Islam in itself remains an ideology that demands cultural and religious unanimity (read consensus); on the contrary the violence emanating from these Turko-Mongol, Turko-Afghan invasions were indicative of a political exigency and not a religious aggressiveness. Every act of invasion, and each act of a Hindu killed was thus, according to the Nehruvian formulation, a political killing, and not a communal genocide.

Having conceded this distinctive line in Nehruvian thought, we must still realize that his formulations on the subject of Indian history are still in fact in some ways no more than a 'political re-reading' of some of the significant historical

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[7] Jawaharlal Nehru, "New Problems," essay, in Discovery of India: Centennial Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 227–88, https://archive.org/details/DiscoveryOfIndia , 267.

events, and thus his postulations on cultural synthesis on which his nation-building formulation of secularism is based, is still largely nebulous. It's only claim to a position of linkage between colonial imperial secularism and post-Independence secularism is that of providing a non-communal alternative to the Imperial British historiographic project. It is this shift that arguably renders Nehru's secularism discourse to be 'progressive'. Thus post-independence legislation on matters pertaining to interaction of the political life of the citizen with that of the communal 'practices' of religion, too could be deemed as 'progressive secularist' by nature. To an extent this further clarifies what Nehru, and the larger Congress government, in post-Independent India deemed to be communal: an attempt by people of religion (be it Muslims or Hindu) to refute the multicultural reality of Indianness by refusing to dilute their original ideals. Such a definition of the term relieved it from the rather ominous colonial political associations particularly relating to the Muslim League and that of the Partition of India in 1947. In some ways, for the longest period of time the term 'communal' was popularly associated with the politics of the Muslim League and their demand for Pakistan. In the aftermath of the creation of India and Pakistan, it was thus the need of the hour to identify all forms of communalism regardless of the religious denominations from which they were emanating from.

Within the ambit of the personal, Nehru's universalization of the concept of secularism was in line with what he had called for years earlier in the 1931 Karachi Session of the Congress. Without mentioning of the phrase 'secular', he had contended:

'…(2) Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to public order and morality.' [8]

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[8] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Karachi Resolution (1931) Archives," Constitution of India, accessed July 30, 2023, https://www.constitutionofindia.net/historical-constitution/karachi-resolution-1931/ , n.p..

While it is absolutely true that at the time of the drafting of the Constitution, the phrase secularism did not occur in the Preamble, but it remained an invisible hand within the Parliament during discussions on government legislations which in some overt or covert ways impacted the established religions of the country.

Going back, to the discussion with which we had started this discussion, it becomes fairly obvious that the Nehruvian cult of implied equi-distance of the state from all forms of established religion , whether it be the 'no-concern' theory or the 'equal respect' theory, was the tone that had ultimately set the day for the proceedings in the house. However, more often than not, the thorny crown of secularism would come back to haunt Nehru's first Prime Ministerial tenure. In this chapter, we shall discuss two of them, namely: the National Language issue and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 issue. We shall also study how the internecine secularism discourse surrounding these two political events ultimately found its way into the selected non-Anglophone literatures of the time.

The National Language Debate and the culmination of the Hindi-Urdu Controversy

On 18th April, 1900 Sir Anthony MacDonnell had issued an order that would prove to be one of the most divisive ordains in Indian history. The order allowed permissive-but not exclusive use of Devanagari script in the courts of the Province.[9] Declared after the fateful 1884 Hunter Commission for reforms in Education, the equivalence of Hindi to Urdu would effectively foment an unexpectedly communal scenario in which Hindi in its ascendancy would go on to become the lingua franca of Indian Nationalism. So much so, that some

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[9] Lucknow, III Guide to Records in the U.P. State Archives § (2002), https://uparchives.up.nic.in/pdf/2022/UPSA/Guide_to_the_records_in_the_U.P._State_Archives_Vol.III_new.pdf , 5.

scholars and Historians would effectively term it to as Hindi Nationalism.[10] This too was a momentous formation, because prior to the phenomenon of the Hindi Nationalist discourse (whose base remained primarily the Hindu upper-class North Indians), Hindu Nationalism in Indian context would primarily be traced to the rise of Shivaji during the reign of Aurangzeb. With the acceptance of Hindi within the courtly circuits, the Hindu Nationalist sentiment spread like a wildfire in the whole of north India. The largely communal element in the Hindi-Urdu skirmish is evident from one of the testimony offered before 1884 Hunter Commission, by the eminent Hindi literatteur Bhartendu Harischandra:

'…if Urdu ceases to be court language, the Mussulmans will not easily secure the numerous offices of the government…of which at present they have a sort of monopoly…a secret motive which induces the worshippers of Urdu to devote themselves to its cause. It is the language of the dancing girls and prostitutes. The depraved sons of wealthy Hindis and youths of substance and loose character, when in society of harlots, concubines, and pimps, speak urdu…' [11](Alok Rai, 2021, 41-42)

The aggressive tone employed in the testimony could in fact help us to note that while the confusion and the difference between Hindi and Urdu was primarily centered on the subject of the use of the Arabic script, its identity within the greater Indian society was noteworthy for being communal and often elitist. But apart from the communalist charge, we must also consider how often Urdu and Hindi was confused for one another in popular parlance.

In Post-Independence India, the communal charge behind the question of Hindi-Urdu would come back to haunt the nascent republic during the drafting of the Para-XIV-A (Language) of the Indian Constitution. Only this time, it would not

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[10] Alok Rai, "Hindi Nationalism," essay, in *Hindi Nationalism* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2021), 93–105, 93.
[11] Alok Rai, "The MacDonnell Moment," essay, in *Hindi Nationalism* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2021), 17–49, 41-42.

only be a conflict between a skirmish between Hindi and Urdu, but it would be joined by other Indian regional languages and even English.

During, the Constituent Assembly Debates, the issue of language (or the Part XIV-A of the Constitution), was stringently deliberated upon between 12th September, 1949 till 14th September, 1949. Inviting in excess of almost three hundred amendments from the members of the Constituent Assembly, the episode proved to be one of the most divisive periods in the functioning of the constituent assembly.

Speaking on the importance of reaching an unanimity on selecting an Indian languages as a link language for the rest of India, N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar speaking on the matter of the 'Language of the Union', proffered a possibility that while Hindi should be adopted as the language for all official purposes of the nation under the new Constitution. However, he was quite serious in adding that the new Republic could not be expected to give up English at once. A proposition was presented wherein English was preserved as the language of the union for 'about fifteen years', till Hindi established itself to be as efficient as English in conducting matters of the state. English, according to Ayyangar, was also to continue as the language of legislation and the language of interpretation in the judgments of the High Court. The rationale given in favor of such a policy was no Indian language (with Hindi included) had been sufficiently developed for the purposes of being utilized in a precise fashion for legislation and interpretation of laws. Ayyangar provides a very interesting anecdote in his defense which precisely identifies and tries to provide precedence to his proposition;

'I can tell you a story within my own experience. Ten years ago, I was making a Constitution for the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The language of the Legislature had to be described in a section and those who were drafting it,

those officers had simply copied out the language in the Government of India Act, that is to say, English should be the language, but if any member was unacquainted with it or was not sufficiently acquainted with the English language he might be allowed to speak in any language with which he was familiar. Well, it so happened that the late Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru happened to be in Srinagar when I was considering this draft, and I thought that I might take advantage of his presence there for advice and sent this draft to him. The only portion to which he objected initially was this section about the language of the legislature. He said, "What, in an Indian state where Urdu is the language of courts and schools, and so on, could you really put in English Language as the language of your Legislature?" I had a long discussion with him; I told him, "I quite see your point. I am willing to agree that the language of the Legislature should be Urdu to the extent that those people who are not acquainted with English should be permitted to speak in Urdu. But you are a great lawyer and supposing tomorrow I want you to appear before either the High Court here of the Privy Council argue and interpret a section of the Constitution, if it is framed in Urdu would you feel happy?" He appreciated my point I told him as a compromise: "I will put in Urdu as the language of the Legislature for debates with a proviso that the authoritative texts of Bills and Acts should be in English language." He instantly agreed to my suggestion and thought that this was the most sensible solution of the problem that confronted us both.' [12]

The above excerpt highlighted three realities of the Indian state pertaining to language of the Union, during the framing of its Constitution. Firstly, Urdu for the longest had remained the language of courts in several states of North India, a distinction that was equated by the Hindi in the aftermath of the MacDonnell declaration of the 1900. Secondly, at the time of the Constitution framing, no Indian language (including Hindi) could possibly rival the efficiency afforded

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[12] New Delhi, IX: *30th July to 18th September 1949 Constituent Assembly Debates*, Book 4 § (2014), https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/760460?view_type=browse , p. 1323

by English language in matters of Court proceedings and Legislation. Third, and most importantly, given the intensely communal backdrop to the conflict between Hindi and Urdu, the Assembly chose to foreclose the communal or the religious nationalist claim in making a decision on the language of union, it is for this reason perhaps that any reference to majoritarian aspiration remain conspicuously absent in the initial draft of the Part XIV-A.

At the very outset of this, the Constituent Assembly was divided into three subgroups. These included a group that supported Hindi as the National language, supported by the likes of Purushottamdas Tandon, Seth Govind Das, R.V. Dhulekar and others; a group that sought Hindi as the national language of the union, 'written in both scripts—Devanagri and Urdu'[13] represented by Mohd. Hifzur Rahman, Qazi Syed Karimuddin and others; and another group that largely dissented against the acceptance of Hindi and urged that it is kept for the future parliaments to legislate upon; this was mostly represented by individuals from South of India and the erstwhile Bombay region. The line of argument that the ideologues representing the cause of Hindi offer an interesting communal angle to the language debate, Seth Govind Das' following testimony, exemplifies it precisely:

'I do not say that Urdu is used here only by Muslims. I do agree that many Hindu poets and scholars have also created outstanding literature in Urdu. Despite this, I cannot help saying that Urdu has mostly drawn inspiration from outside the country…In Urdu literature nowhere do you find any description of the Himalayas. Instead you find description of the Koh Kaf. You will never find your favorite Koyal in Urdu literature but, of course, Bulbul is there. In place of

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[13] New Delhi, IX: 30th July to 18th September 1949 Constituent Assembly Debates, Book 4 § (2014), https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/760460?view_type=browse , p. 1341

Bhima and Arjuna, you will find there Rustom who is completely alien to us…'[14] (Constituent Assembly Debates, Book 4, Official Report, p. 1330)

In the nearly seven decades that separate Bhartendu Harishchandra's deposition before the Hunter Commission and Seth Govind Das's testimonial on Urdu;s foreignness at the Constituent Assembly, we must note that the very essence of popular support behind Hindi had essence become avowedly communal. From the alleged urban decadence of the 'society of harlots' to being 'mostly drawn from outside the country', the supporters of Hindi evidently lost the plot at the Constituent Assembly, where instead of arguing in favor of Hindi's possible preciseness in dealing with Legislation the contours of North Indian communal politics were dredged up to counter the rather feeble claim of Urdu script and impose only the Devanagari script throughout the nation. Seth Govind Das's rhetoric found an academic rationale too in the testimony of Dr. Raghu Vira, at the Constituent Assembly:

"…The writers of Urdu in the 19th Century made it a law or an article of faith that not a single literary word shall be derived from Indian sources. While they took the grammar and construction of the language from India, the literary inspiration and other factors were taken from Arabic and Persian. In the 19th Century it was felt that the loss which people had sustained from the disappearance of the Persian had to be made up by rearing up, Urdu. There are quotations without number from European writers in the 19th Century who had made it clear beyond a shadow of doubt that the loss of Persian was a loss to the Muslim conquerors, a loss to the language of the Emperors. So that loss had to be made up. It was said that the streets of Lucknow should be transformed into the streets of Ispahan in Persia.

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[14] New Delhi, *IX: 30th July to 18th September 1949 Constituent Assembly Debates*, Book 4 § (2014), https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/760460?view_type=browse , p. 1330

So, the tradition was developed in the 19th century whereby Urdu became the repository of Persian and Arabic words and culture. There was a reaction in the same 19th Century and hence developed the Hindi Literature which had for its basis and structure the same language which was the basis of Urdu but whose literary tradition was native to the soil. This difference kept on developing and developing until today we find two literatures, which though they gad the same basis have developed differently.'[15] ((Constituent Assembly Debates, Book 4, Official Report, p. 1462)

In retrospect it is quite possible that the communal tenor of the Hindi group ultimately wrote off not only Urdu, but also Hindi's political future in the long run. This splintering could be attributed to the fact that while the initial recommendations of the Language sub-committee were discussed as early as 14th July 1947, prior to the Partition, the Constituent Assembly came around to debating it in September, 1949, by when communalism was not the only issue that needed addressing, to this was also added the challenge to drafting a Constitution that was inclusive of all the regional identities. The crucial nature of the *rashtrabhasha Hindi* issue makes one political historian comment: "At first, the general sentiment in favor of an Indian national language blinded all concerned to the problem involved. But as the members framed the language provisions, they became aware of the difficulties of their disagreements. Then the split began to grow slowly and steadily. The Hindi-wallahs, unremittingly militant, pressed their demands. The moderates retreated in an attempt to preserve national unity and peace within the Assembly.'[16]

Curiously enough, Urdu did still find a place in the Eighth schedule of Language under the Chapter 17 of the Constitution. While, in the Constituent

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[15] New Delhi, *IX: 30th July to 18th September 1949 Constituent Assembly Debates*, Book 4 § (2014), https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/760460?view_type=browse , p. 1462

[16] Granville Austin, "Language and the Constitution: The Half-Hearted Compromise," essay, in *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), https://archive.org/details/indianconstituti0000aust/page/n5/mode/2up , p. 267.

Assembly Debates, a compromise known as the Ayyangar-Munshi formula was arrived at which deemed Hindi as the official language but English was to continue for the next fifteen years for official business, thus effectively burying the split. However, in 1963, the language issue took a wildly different turn as had not been anticipated earlier. In keeping with the promise presented by the Ayyangar-Munshi formula, clamor from the Hindi supporters to accept the Official Languages Act of 1963, which would have made Hindi the sole official language with English retained as the associate additional official language, reached to a crescendo. While Nehru assured that Hindi would not be imposed upon the non-Hindi regions of the country, it was only after Nehru's death in 1964, in response to violent Anti-Hindi clashes, in 1967, an amendment was made to the Official Languages Act of 1963 which stated that: 'Notwithstanding the expiration of the period of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution, the English language may, as from the appointed day, continue to be used in addition to Hindi.'[17]Thereby foreclosing Hindi's claim of exclusivity as the National Language was lost for good.

In retrospect, this controversial language episode and its final outcome attests naturally to the Nehruvian ideal of 'progressive secularism' in the post-Independence Indian Republic. The largely communal nature of Hindi's claim and its constant berating of 'Urdu' as the Other, espoused in some senses the naturalness of the communal tenor within the Indian Nationalist movement in the aftermath of failure of the Khilafat movement. Such an act of Otherization on the part of the Hindi-enthusiasts effectively alienated the regional retinue of representatives within the Constituent Assembly. Dubbing Urdu to be of primarily foreign import, as a language steeped in Arabic-Persian influences, it exposed the larger perception of the political ethno-Nationalists how foreign Muslims appeared to be within the Indian polity, how it is quite possible that

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[17] New Delhi, *THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT, 1963 (AS AMENDED, 1967) (Act No. 19 of 1963)* §, accessed July 30, 2023, https://rajbhasha.gov.in/sites/default/files/olact1963eng.pdf

Muslims would always harbor their primary loyalty to their faith and not their country. An excerpt from an article by Bipin Chandra Pal, written in the aftermath of the failed Khilafat movement, thus contends;

'They are Mohamedans first and Indians next. Their patriotism is not territorial but extra-territorial…the aim and intention of this movement of extra-territorial patriotism, otherwise called Pan-Islamism, is to protect what little remains to the Muslims of their once splendid empire against further encroachments. This is only possible by a combination of the Muslim peoples all the world over…The logic of this extra-territorial patriotism is distinctly anti-national.' [18]

The culmination of the 1967 Amendment to the Official Languages Act of 1963, distinctly identifies the nature of political 'consensus' applied to the Nehruvian ideal of 'progressive secularism'. To Nehru, for whom religiosity never had much use apart from a symbolic perspective, where one would find references to Sir Mohamed Iqbal's Urdu poetry in reference to the spirituality that one found in the Ganges or in the Himalayas.[19]

In the next segment of the chapter we shall analyse how the discussions pertaining to the Hindu Code Bills of 1950s (especially the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955) developed a cult of tolerance as a political consensus emanating from the Nehruvian idea of 'progressive secularism'.

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[18] Mohamed Ali, "An Unpleasant Correspondence," *The Comrade*, September 4, 1925, https://ia801707.us.archive.org/8/items/dli.ernet.20459/20459-The%20Comrade%20Vol-ii%20No.-xxvi.pdf , 112.

[19] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Letter to Edward Thompson, 7th April, 1940," letter, in *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958), 428–30, https://ia601507.us.archive.org/23/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.65426/2015.65426.A-Bunch-Of-Old-Letters.pdf , 429.

The cult of tolerance as a political consensus: The progressive secularism discourse and the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955

'In this context with your permission I should like to quote an ancient passage which, I hope, represents the real spirit of Indian culture, the real spirit of that old samskriti, that is talked about by some people who, sometimes, do not exhibit it. I am going to quote from the famous rock Edict of Asoka, 2300 years ago, Rock Edict No. XII:

"The beloved of the Gods does not value either gifts or reverential offerings so much as that of an increase if the spiritual strength of the followers of all religions.

This increase of spiritual strength is of many forms.

But the one root is the guarding of one's speech so as to avoid the exfoiling of one's own religion to the decrying of the religion of another, or speaking lightly of it without occasion or relevance.

As proper occasions arise, persons of other religions should also be honoured suitably. Acting in this manner, one certainly exalts one's own religionist and also helps persons of other religions. Acting in a contrary manner, one injures one's own religion and also does disservice to the religions of others.

One who reverences one's own religion and disparages that of another from devotion to one's own religion and to glorify it over all other religions does injure one's own religion more certainly.

It is verily concord of all religions that is meritorious as persons of other ways of thinking may thereby hear the dharma and serve its cause."

Now, the word religion is used. I take it the word in the original was "dharma", which of course has a wider significance, and it not only applies to the question

of decrying or praising religion, but ways of life, ways of people…that represents the essence and the soul of the Indian approach which has made India strong, which has given strength to Indian culture in the past, and to the extent it survives today, it gives us strength today." [20]

If the debates on the subject of the 'National Language' remained intrinsically polarizing during the Constituent Assembly Debates, the promulgation of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 disclosed how the 'progressive secularist' attitude of the first Congress government under Nehru opted to build a political rhetoric of tolerance through reform of personal laws of the country.

The proposed bill was a metaphoric shift from that of the colonial era when personal laws were largely kept unchanged owing to the Declaration Act of 1780. While there had indeed been attempts in the colonial period to codify Hindu laws, it had no reflection on the erstwhile civil laws.

The Hindu Code Bills, of which the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 forms a part had an originated from the findings of the B.N. Rau committee of 1941 which was initially created to deal with Hindu intestate succession and Hindu marriage. Subsequently the Bill, drafted from the recommendations of the committee were introduced twice for legislation, once in 1946 in the old legislature and in 1947 in the Constituent Assembly. Each time it lapsed in the face of strong opposition from Hindu traditionalists. However, in 1955, when it was indeed passed, it is to be noted that the Bill incurred strong wrath from Hindu traditionalist elements in the Parliament on account of being only relevant to the progressive and the elite classes (and castes) of the Hindu society and that it would in turn provoke a spate of divorces as allegedly in Western Societies. In this segment of the chapter, we shall focus primarily on the communalist criticisms leveled against

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[20] New Delhi, *III(5th May, 1955) Lok Sabha Debates , Ninth Session 1955* § (1955), https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/56104?view_type=search , p. 7961.

the act, and how it effectively championed a form of tolerance as espoused by the Nehruvian project.

The charge against 'progressive secularism' in case of this act starts primarily from the clause 7 of the act which states that:

"*Ceremonies for a Hindu marriage*—(1) A Hindu marriage shall be solemnized in accordance with sacramental rites and customary ceremonies." [21]

Nirmal C. Chatterjee, then an elected member of the Hindu Mahasabha moved for an amendment that would ask for the inclusion of the Saptapadi rite in this clause which would have effectively that all forms of marriage should be in the sacramental form thereby casting a question on the legal efficacy of divorce in case of sacramental marriages as opposed to that of in case of civil marriages. As a commentator notes that under the pre-Hindu Marriage Act 1955 laws, a sacramental marriage was considered indissoluble, 'but the Bill provides that a marriage may be terminated by any of three procedures: it may be declared null and void; it may be declared invalid; or it may be dissolved' [22]

It may have been the surreptitious intention of the Hindu Mahasabha member to pervert the intention of the Bill in discussion, by attaching the clause about a specific sacramental rite of marriage which could mean legislative difficulties during the promulgation of the segments of the Bill pertaining to divorce.

In the every same discussion, the member and several other elements from Hindu-Right political entities allege that it is the secular intentions of the Congress government which precipitates through its tinkering of and sudden interest in codifying Hindu personal laws:

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[21] New Delhi, *III(3rd May, 1955) Lok Sabha Debates Ninth Session 1955* § (1955), https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/56178?view_type=search , p. 7497.
[22] John A. Banningan, "The Hindu Code Bill," *Far Eastern Survey* 21, no. 17 (1952): 173–76, https://doi.org/10.2307/3024109 , p.175.

"They have their own secular notions. They are making secularism a religion. Dr. Radhakrishnan has said in one of his great books on Hindu civilization that the worst menace of the world today is secularism. And secularism is being made a religion. In totalitarian countries and the so called progressive— aggressively progressive—countries they have made it a religion…"[23]

The obvious barb here being the policy of secularism that was being followed not only particularly in case of this act in particular but centrally in case of governance. The rather convoluted line of argument that the opposition political parties seek to follow was that the act in question was in fact communal because it not only did not apply to some particular classes of Hindus (with some exceptions of scheduled castes and others), furthermore it was a step back from the Directive Principles of the state wherein a territorial system of law for all Indian citizens (Uniform Civil Code) was the aspired end. Further, in clauses of divorce where conversion of one of the spouses remains a tenable ground, it is to be noticed that the Hindu traditionalist group sought an amendment to add an extra clause of automatic separation whereby the personal choice of the individual to file for a divorce proceeding is removed in effectively rendered to be a legal obligation. Even though the amendment was duly rejected, it reflects how the communalist elements time and again tried to pervert the bill either by means of jurisprudence or by legal intervention.

Going back again to the quotation at the start of this segment of the paper, it helps to note, that Nehru in his valedictory speech on the passing of the said Bill speaks neither of communalist tendencies that opted to derail the bill, nor of the possible progressive secular future that the bill intended to bring in. Instead, perhaps in retaliation of the barb of the bill being pandered as 'Hindu Divorce Bill, 1955', he invokes tolerance towards different faiths and ways of lives as

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[23] New Delhi*, III(3rd May, 1955) Lok Sabha Debates Ninth Session 1955* § (1955), https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/56178?view_type=search , p. 7500.

dharma that chiefly carries a distinctly Brahminic/Brahmin hegemonic subtext in the Indian context (unacknowledged). He criticizes his Hindu traditionalist opposition for utilizing religious dogma to aid in a form of insular identity for the spirit of man (5th May 1955, p.7965). He chides orthodoxy, and tries to raise the question of tolerance thereby presenting a possibility of future to his synthesis theory of Indian history.

So far, we have established a duality that of 'progress' and 'tolerance' to the Nehruvian idea of secularism, it shall aid us strongly in the next segment of the chapter where we shall try to identify the possibilities of cross pollination between the political discourses of secularism and that of non-anglophone novels produced during this period.

Dialectics of Secularism in Select Non-Anglophone Novels of the Period

'The novels' engagement with the secularism issue is at one with their concern with history as a 'secular genre', and the novels each revisit, in their own way, the historical novel. They all represent an allegoresis of the Indian nation by recuperating different versions of their national past; in the sense that they present different configurations, or emplotments, of specific historical events in India's colonial and postcolonial history.'[24]

Talking about the Indian Anglophone novel and its reformulations of the post-Independent Indian secular condition of Nationalism, Neelam Srivastava cannot help but posit them in the tradition of the historical novel. What appears inauthentic in this analysis is the impossibility of identifying post-Independent Indian political history, as that of a distinct 'political imaginary' and not simply a dramatic re-rendering of some episodes from the colonial history on to the post-colonial polity.

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[24] Neelam Srivastava, "Introduction," introduction, in *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English*, Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1–17, p. 3.

This disjunction between the two is strongly visible when one is to consider examples from the Non-Anglophone novels to understand the myriad and distinct formulations of the minority community and its implications for the Nehruvian secularist praxis of Post-Independent nation-building process of India. We would find in such circumstances that even the politically subversive majority-minority dialectic does not appear to provide consistent fidelity to the idea of democratic secularism as a given, rather we see a split in terms of how distinct minority groups appear to align themselves differently to the differential claims of democracy in order to further their class interest. It is thus far more complex and situational than what happens in the Anglophone Indian novel, and often produces rather contrapuntal possibilities which amplify and affirm the strongly multicultural spirit of Indian identity.

In the context of this argument we shall consider four four non-anglophone literary texts, two Bengali novels Tarashankar Bandopadhyay's 'Saptapadi' (1960) and Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Trinabhumi'(1958), one Hindi novel Yashpal's "Jhootha Sach" (1960) translated to English as 'This is not the Dawn'), and one Urdu novel Qurratulain Hyder's 'Aag Ka Darya' (1959) (translated as 'River of Fire'). We shall consider the texts mentioned in terms of historical chronology of their publication.

Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Trinabhumi' (1958) is set in the district of Murshidabad, as a prose narrative that explores the implications of politico-religious solidification on the rhetoric of ownership of arable land by the rural communities and its continual erosion in the face of the cooperative farming by an alien cosmopolitan class of corporates.

Nishanath, an unemployed well-to-do graduate, from an impoverished Zamindar family, learns to farm on his property land in the wake of sudden demise of his father. He achieves limited success, only to realize from Hamid,

his college friend that individuals from city were turning up in the district with the express interest in cooperative farming. Cosmopolitan corporate interest would not only mean better agricultural technology and superior yield, but it would also incur possible loss of land from the rural and financially strapped agricultural workers to these cosmopolitan 'jotedars'. As the novel develops we see Hamid, who is possibly a Congress worker, realizing that his party was effectively selling it out to the richer Muslim agricultural class, become a member of the Communist Party. Similar option is opted for by converted Christian Adivasi doctor Phillip Tudu, who does not believe in the possibilities of electoral democracy. Elsewhere in Nishanath's world we see a different reality where urban cooperative agriculturist buying out segments of his village's arable lands (বাথান) which for the longest time provided the rural impoverished agrarian workers a space to rear their livestock. Loss of such a land would mean capitulation of the class sooner or later to the whims of the alien agriculturists. Nishanath considers becoming a Communist himself, estimating the seething popular support amongst the croppers, but instead separates from his inherited estate to develop his own independent farm, which would in due time bring him in close association with the urban agriculturalist Subhendu Palit, who by then owns a majority of the arable lands of his village with their earlier peasant-owners working under him as share-croppers and farm hands. Even though, the novel ends rather abruptly without any possible closure to the impending Assembly elections which form an explosive subtext to the narrative, we see that it ultimately culminates in Subhendu's murder by Nishanath from a point-blank range with Subhendu's rifle.

Written within effectively a decade of the Tebhaga Andolan, the slogan 'land to the tiller' had by then become significantly mainstream enough to feature even in the 1954, 1957 and 1958 electoral manifestos of conservative Hindu right wing political parties like the Jan Sangh. Importantly enough the slogan from

the Tebhaga Andolan finds an explicit mention in the 1958 electoral manifesto under the segment of 'Land Reforms':

'In order to make the country self-sufficient in food and for the rejuvenation of village life Jana Sangh will make revolutionary changes in land tenure. Land shall belong to the tiller of the soil and there will be no intermediary between the Kisan and the State. Persons displaced by abolition of Zamindari and Jagirdari will be rehabilitated'[25] (Manifesto 1958, Bhartiya Jan Sangh, Party Documents 1951-1972, Volume 1: Principles and Policies, Manifesto, Constitution, 1973, p. 112)

The political mainstream acceptance of the land ownership and farm produce issues is of primary significance for this novel for it renders the narrative to be chiefly political in nature, rather than historical. The political nature of this novel is further rendered a multicultural imperative when we notice that the characters with minority identities do not in fact solidify on the basis of their religious identities but in terms to their personal reading of the phenomenon of cooperative farming. Thus while Hamid attests:

'Nishanath felt like he had a lot to say. But he could not. He smiled wryly. "Hamid?", he asks, "You belong to a family of a line of wealthy farmers. Why did you suddenly become a communist?"

Hamid did not flinch. He answered, I have no illusions left. I wish to teach Nazirchacha (the Congress nominated candidate) a lesson. In this attempt, if my party says that I must distribute my wealth to the public—I stand ready. This is my only political aspiration'[26] (Siraj, Trinabhumi, 1958, p. 255)

We see converted Christian doctor Philip Tudu vouch for the following:

[25] "Manifestos: 1958," essay, in *Party Documents 1951-1972*, vol. Volume 1: Principles and Policies, Manifesto, Constitution, 1973 (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1973), 100–121, https://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/195 , p. 112.
[26] Syed Mustsafa Siraj, *Trinabahumi*, version PDF (Kolkata: Karuna Prakashani, 1958), https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.455927 , p.255.

'Philip was cautious, there is a catastrophic flood on cards Nishababu. These have nots shall be the first ones to embrace communism. For decades no one thought of listening to their plight for once. Except during elections. But Nishababu—I am terribly frank in these matters—I do not believe I election politics. This is nothing but absolute forgery to the proletariat. Philip was a cad, Nishanath knew so. He went on, I shall give you a book to read. It would decimate your outlook about people and their world.'[27]

While it is hard to determine conclusively whether Phillip was involved in some far-left radical communist outfit or was just presenting an independent reason from that of the strongly anti-Congress wave of incumbency, based on which the communist sentiment in the district was growing. One has to understand that both Hamid's insistent and Phillip's incendiary disbelief in electoral democracy underscore the multicultural reality of Nehru's progressive secularism. Indeed, the political stance of class-struggle features precious little in Nehruvian formulation of Indian history, but it would not be incorrect to state that the progressive element of governance had largely unfettered Hamid and Phillip from any question of unrelenting loyalty their greater religious community. It is not in the scope of this reading to analyse whether or not their aspirations from the party are in line with that of the Party's during that period, or if their readings of class conflict were correct. But we cannot definitively write off these subjectivities as driven by the goal of furthering a faith-based subnationalist interest. Instead such subnationalist aspirations were possibly mitigated by the progressive secular tenor of post-Independent Indian polity.

The fact that this phenomenon of 'progress' was endemic to only the youth of the post-Independent generation is understood, when we study the

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[27] Syed Mustsafa Siraj, *Trinabahumi*, version PDF (Kolkata: Karuna Prakashani, 1958), https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.455927 , p.223.

characterizations of the elderly of Hamid's community. The following description explicitly raises the contrast:

'There are two bathans on either side of the Harinmara stream. In the words of peasant Jonabali—India and Pakistan on either side. One belonged to the Haji of Shurkhali and the other to Uddhab Ghosh of Hizrole.

Haji sahab's actual name being Belowar Hossain—Belowari Haji in popular circles. He remained a shepherd through and through. He had just arrived from his pilgrimage to the Hajj. Even religion would not take way his shepherd-like itchy-feet. He wrapped the black Kashmiri shawl around himself, which he bought during his return from the pilgrimage, he looked much like a badshah walking towards his throne. He was always around with his four sons-each of them had the mien of Attila's henchmen."[28]

This might, on the surface, appear to be a rather superficial description of a devout Muslim. But when it becomes apparent later in the novel that Haji's plot of arable land was secured from Subhendu Palit because his youngest son Farid would be married to Hamid's sister, it is clarified that even though politically, communalism may be still remote; in terms of property and ownership, greater communal interest retained a subtle presence.

In the climax, when Nishanath surprisingly assassinates Subhendu, with the impending election yet to be held, we are left without a closure as to whether the complex unity between the agrarian workers of all faiths were reinstated their land holdings. But this does not take away the basic truth of the fact that the narrative effectively, even if it is vaguely circumstantial, did talk about a progressive rather than a communal way out of corporate agriculture as espoused by certain sections of the political-commercial clique.

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[28] Syed Mustsafa Siraj, *Trinabahumi*, version PDF (Kolkata: Karuna Prakashani, 1958), https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.455927 , p.27.

Tarasankar Bandopadhyay's 'Saptapadi' (1958) remains an intriguing example of how the question of religiosity could be co-opted within the greater discourse of liberal humanism. However, it is rather a curious phenomenon that the novel till this point has attracted little serious scholarship, if not only as a companion piece to the film adaptation by Ajoy Kar (1961). The problematic of such a form of scholarship remains the fact that there remain significant plot differences between the novel and that of the filmic narrative.[29] For the purposes of this chapter, we shall consider only the novel as the primary text.

The novel is primarily based on a doomed romantic relationship between a Bengali Hindu medical student Krishnendu Gupta and the adopted daughter of an English nurse, Rina Brown. In what appears to be a violent and alienating trajectory, Krishnendu and Rina fall for each other irrespective of their disparate religious-cultural background, during rehearsal sessions of a performance of Shakespeare's Othello, a plot point that has been extensively developed in the film and has subsequently received stronger scholarly introspection.[30] However their romance remains ill-fated, for it received strong criticism from Krishnendu's father and Rina's biological father James Brown. James offers a cunning condition in which Krishnendu's marriage to his daughter would only be accepted and duly acknowledged if he chose to convert to Christianity, a proposition that appeared dubious even to a progressive atheist like Krishnendu himself. Krishnendu ultimately converts to Christianity only to be spurned by Rina for he had chosen to forsake his own religion for a woman. Subsequently Krishnendu became 'Reverend' Krishnaswami, who starts living in Bankura district and becomes a charitable doctor for the rural impoverished. Even though he is referred to as a 'Reverend' often within the course of the novel, it is

[29] Paromita Chakravarti, "'Framing Femininities: Desdemona and Indian Modernities,'" essay, in *Women and Indian Shakespeares*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett et al., The Arden Shakespeare (S.l.: BLOOMSBURY ARDEN, 2022), 43–64, p.50-51.

[30] Manojit Mandal, "And the Bard Raj Continues … Nationalism, Shakespeare, and Postcolonial India," essay, in *Shakespeare and Indian Nationalism The Bard and the Raj*, Routledge Studies in Shakespeare (New York: Routledge, 2023), 183–218, p. 201-202..

noticeable that that Bandopadhyay goes to great extent to present him as a non-religious individual:

'He wears the cassock of the Father, but the cassock is stained with saffron, symbolic of spiritual renunciation in Indian culture. He is not a member of the local church, neither does he preach religion. He is a doctor, on an oath to heal people. The mad Father is a good doctor. He cycles through the villages daily in search of patients…' (Bandopadhyay, 1960, p.1)[31]

In one of his excursions he runs into Rina, who by then had become an alcoholic camp-follower of the American soldiers stationed in the district for the Second World War. He treats her, and much to the chagrin of Rina refuses to leave the district. In time it is known that Rina herself had not been Baptized as a Christian for she was born of a tribal woman. Effectively this renders Rina to be un-Christian/non-Christian, at least in terms of Christian theology. Subsequently, we see her disappear in the North East where, the final skirmishes of the Second World War were being fought. Krishnendu follows her there and returns unsuccessfully to Bankura and realizes that he had contracted leprosy which had limited treatment then. He ultimately shifts to the Kumbhkonam in Tamil Nadu for better treatment where he is in time visited by Rina and his married husband, Clayton, who happened to be Krishnendu's classmate at the medical college. The novel ends on a note of reconciliation between Rina and Krishnendu.

There is a strong undertone of racialization of the Indian identity that is evident throughout the narrative of the novel. Bandopadhyay concentrates on providing almost a documentary description of the rural culture and tribal classes living in the Bankura districts' thickly forested regions. It is rather difficult to make sense of the authorial intent here: whether it is to create an ambience of

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[31] Tarasankar Bandopadhyay, "Saptapadi," novel, in *Tin Kahini: Chapadangar Bou, Saptapadi, Dakharkara* (Kolkata: Granthaprakash, 1960), 1–86, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.266466/mode/2up , p.1.

prehistory or whether it intends to evoke an empathic stance in the reader's mind about Reverend Krishnaswami. However, Bandopadhyay's racialization does not simply end here, he goes on to describe the inspiration behind Rina's characterization as thus:

'I saw her on the Puri sea beach back in 1944. A plump woman, with heavy black eyelids, that looked like petals of a flower. Her long flowing hair carried a testimony of her European lineage. She wore a pair of slacks, full sleeved blouse and a crimson handkerchief on her forehead…she was always chaperoned by a European man…'[32]

On contrasting with the author's description of the inspiration behind Rina Brown and that of Krishnendu/ Reverend Krishnaswami, it becomes evident that Bandopadhyay opts to provide a distinction of racial features between that of a converted Hindu and that of a non-Baptized Anglo-Indian. A racial basis of difference, that aims to present Christians minorities and Anglo-Indians as people with roots in a foreign non-Indian lineage. Such a rendition appears immediately to the readers as explosively communal given that Tarashankar Bandopadhyay himself had been a part of the Congress since the 1920s Non-Cooperation Movement, had been a member of the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly from 1952-60 and also been nominated to the Rajya Sabha, serving in the upper house from 1960-66.

So it becomes evident that Bandopadhyay's stylized rural nativism did not find much of a credible political basis in Congress' philosophy but was instead more influenced by the largely racially biased British colonial historiography that remained dependent on a form of ethnography. But does this necessarily bode that Tarashankar's subtext in this novel was more or less informed by a kind of communalism? It is my opinion, that as an organizing principle of the novelistic

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[32] Tarasankar Bandopadhyay, "Saptapadi," novel, in *Tin Kahini: Chapadangar Bou, Saptapadi, Dakharkara* (Kolkata: Granthaprakash, 1960), 1–86, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.266466/mode/2up , p.84.

narrative, the author tries to underscore a discourse of cultural, ethnographic 'purity' and how the implications of such a discourse was curiously limited in that of the modern post-Independence Nation. Bandopadhyay's mention of the Sanskrit phrase 'Varna-shankara', originally from Bhagvadgita, in a radically different context in the novel presents a possibility of this trajectory of argument. The phrase in its original traces its origin to the shloka 40 of the first chapter of the Bhagvadgita that effectively presents the blame of unwanted progeny, or of progenies born with mixed lineages between warring clans, onto women.[33] In a radical secularization of this phrase, which also effectively removes the same from the blame of women, Bandopadhyay transposes the blame onto the European white men, who according to the author have fathered several such 'varna-shankara' individuals, worldwide to fulfill their sexual needs and have subsequently rejected and meted out disgust to their own blood due to the absence of racial purity in them (Bandopadhyay, 1960, p. 86).[34] The episode that he wishes to refer with this is obviously Rina's own lineage and her own experiences with her biological father James, who refuses to Baptize her and effectively disclosed the fact that she was in fact born of an abusive non-consensual relationship:

'My philandering biological father had said that I had no right to religion—no right to a God—to divinity. In colony after colonies they have shown the same coercion—that you lack the right—that you do not deserve the right. You, we …believed in it. I believed in it as well, and hence into the abyss I am today…' (Bandopadhyay, 1960, p.64)[35]

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[33] "Gita: Chapter 1, Verse 40," Bhagavad, accessed August 1, 2023, https://www.bhagavad-gita.org/Gita/verse-01-33.html, n.p.

[34] Tarasankar Bandopadhyay, "Saptapadi," novel, in *Tin Kahini: Chapadangar Bou, Saptapadi, Dakharkara* (Kolkata: Granthaprakash, 1960), 1–86, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.266466/mode/2up , p.86.

[35] Tarasankar Bandopadhyay, "Saptapadi," novel, in *Tin Kahini: Chapadangar Bou, Saptapadi, Dakharkara* (Kolkata: Granthaprakash, 1960), 1–86, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.266466/mode/2up , p.64.

It is interesting to note that while the mythological definition of 'varna-shankara' effectively applies to that of clans and race, in Saptapadi it applies to religion. However, the cultural paranoia pertaining to the phenomenon arguably remains consistent. In a strongly progressive reading of sexual mores and racial purity during the vedic age, Sukumari Bhattacharya identifies multiple reasons of this fear. She contends that in the wake of several foreign invasions during the four centuries, the consequently produced plural society due to marriages extant boded a trouble of classification of the varna system. This made the social commentators of the era fearful of the Kalyuga where 'varna-shankara' progenies would be the norm and the Shudras would profess the occupations of the higher castes without any form of respect and any awareness of its consequences.[36] Bhattacharya's reading of this phenomenon and Tarasankar Bandopadhyay's rhetoric curiously enough find an unlikely but significant presence in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 where it is stated that:

'Any marriage solemnized, whether before or after the commencement of this Act,may, on a petition presented by either the husband or the wife, be dissolved by a decree of divorce on the ground that the other party—

…

(ii) has ceased to be a Hindu by conversion to another religion"[37]

Tarasankar, who had been a nominated member of the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly between 1952-60, must have been aware of the passing of the bill and its larger political implications being a part of the administrative apparatus. Thus, historically the question of marriage and its contiguity to

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[36] Sukumari Bhattacharya, "Ramcharitrer Punormulyayan," essay, in *Hindu Sampradayikta* (Kolkata: Deep Prakashan, 2018), 70–100, p. 92-93. (A different version of the essay is available in an English translation by the author herself at https://www.jstor.org/stable/3518243)

[37] "Section Details," India Code, accessed August 1, 2023, https://www.indiacode.nic.in/show-data?actid=AC_CEN_3_20_00004_195525_1517807318992&orderno=12 , n.p.

religious practices is to be read into Saptapadi, in its rather modernist re-rendering of the concept of 'varna-sankara'.

Albeit the larger rhetoric of religious purity in the novel is to be understood as a form of pre-modern devoutness and exclusivity of culture that is at odds with Tarashankar's own perception of religion. This is to be read into the description of Krishnendu's and Rina's own interaction to their fathers in matters of religious faith. Krishnendu's father, who had anticipated a romantic relationship between his son and Rina, calls his son deranged and shameless for proposing marriage to Rina, a Christian (whose truth about being not Baptized was not known until then), but he does not prohibit his son, knowing well that either he or she may be required to convert as a result of this, thereby fulfilling the criterion of a 'varna-shankara' marriage. On the contrary, Rina's biological father James, denies her the basic Christian ritual of Baptization on the basis of her 'heathen' biological mother's identity. A dialectic possible between both these lines of behavior effectively encapsulates the foreignness of Christianity and the normativity of the Hindu way of life within the colonial modernity of India (India becomes independent only in the later part of the novel). The author's extolling of Hindu catholicity is to be largely interpreted as a rhetoric that favors inclusivity and tolerance as primal features of the progressive secular state and is contingent to its intended future possibilities.

While some critics, note the intensely Brahminic undertone in Saptapadi as symptomatic a misplaced authorial naivete that repudiates all that is modern, all that is Western and all that is Godless[38], the tone of tolerance and inclusivity (even if it is under the so called munificence of the majority) is something that is not to be ignored. For even 'Father' Krishnaswami's most personal exclamations present Buddha, Christ, The Son of God and Chaitanya in the

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[38] Mahasweta Devi and Radha Chakravarty, "Literary Criticism: Tarasankar Badnopadhyay," essay, in *MAHASWETA DEVI Writer, Activist, Visionary*, ed. Radha Chakravarty (New York: WRITER IN CONTEXT, 2023), 47–54, p.52.

same breath and his rural clinic bears images of the Christ, Vivekananda and Ramkrishna Paramhansa thus embodying the 'sarva dharma sambhava' ethos of the new polity.

The third novel in contention, Qurratulain Hyder's 'River of Fire' (originally 'Aag Ka Darya', 1959) effectively remains closer to the Nehruvian vision than that of the earlier novels in terms of a syncretic imagination of a composite Indian culture. The novel, widely hailed as the Indian subcontinent's answer to Gabriel Garcia Marquez's 'A Hundred Years of Solitude', considers 'India-as a site, and Indianness as the presentational matrix to reveal the diversity and depth of Indian culture'.[39] Ostentatiously enough, for the purposes of continuity the author invokes a cyclical view of life, as is implicit in the epigraph itself. But, concurring with a scholar, I feel that to consider this as a reference to 'the concept of reincarnation as per Hindu mythology'[40] would effectively subdue the cultural allegory of the text. This is found in the fact that the recurrence of different characters are not resultant of their acts of previous life, but different people who participate in the cultural reality of the epoch. Thus, in a novel divided across the following historic epochs: the Buddhist period, time of Kabir, The Period of British Rule and The period of Freedom Struggle, characters with similar names would appear and play as protagonists to that particular historic milieu. As an example, Gautam Nilambar of the first segment becomes Gautam Nilamber Dutt, 'Head Baboo' of the second segment and in the final segment he appears as the artist illustrator Nilamber who is to visit Visvabharati for higher studies but ends up in the States instead studying journalism. Hyder's 2500-years long narrative is almost a credible piece of microhistory to Nehru's own much theorized synthetic view of history. The only pitfall being that Hyder's

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[39] Nikhat Taj, "A Study of the Organising Principle(s) in Qurratulain Hyder's 'River of Fire,'" *Indian Literature* 53, no. 4 (2009): 195–213,https://www.jstor.org/stable/23340171 , p. 198.
[40] 1. Arif Hussain Reshi, "From Aag Ka Darya to the River of Fire," *European Academic Research* II, no. 6 (September 2014): 8273–81, https://www.academia.edu/9597007/From_Aag_ka_Darya_to_the_River_of_Fire , p.8277.

free-flowing narrative does not accede to any particular brand of nationalism, a luxury which she could afford in 1959, where she would effectively foretell the exploitative rule of the West Pakistanis in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) without incurring much criticism, historical or otherwise.

Hyder takes the Nehruvian path in steering clear of the racial historiography that was perpetuated in the colonial British era, and opted for a style of 'syncretism' as opposed to the 'synthesis' of history thesis as mooted by Nehru. The much written about 'Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb' or culture finds an enduring place in Hyder's understanding of the nation as that of a river: 'as we see Champak becoming Champavati, the Brahmin girl, then Champa Jan, the courtesan in Oudh and then Champa Ahmed in the final segment of the novel.[41] In the same period, when Urdu was being castigated in the Constituent Assembly Debate for not being Indian enough and for chiefly surviving on crumbs of Arabic and Persianate (hence foreign) cultures, the imagination of the author could find the same language sufficiently developed enough to narrate 2500- years of composite culture in the Indian subcontinent.

In the opinion of a literary scholar, the novel could be definitively divided into two parts constitutive of the development of the composite culture and that of the gradual erosion of the same in the wake of Indian independence and its subsequent Partition.[42] The four central characters Gautam, Hari, Kamal and Champa appear and reappear under different names and different historical contexts underscore the theme of 'human condition' and its contingency to time. The rhetoric of composite culture, as espoused, by the author, in my opinion is divisible into four discrete historic contexts: pre-Islam, Islam, Colonial and Post-Partition. While Mohammed Asaduddin contends that such a narrative

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[41] Rakhshanda Jalil, ed., "Imagining India: In and As the River of Fire."," essay, in *Qurratulain Hyder and the River of Fire: The Meaning Scope and Significance of Her Legacy* (New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2011), p.178.
[42] Mohd. Asaduddin, "The Novels of Qurratulain Hyder," *Indian Literature* 34, no. 2(142) (1991): 82–108, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23336883 , p.88.

strategy is constitutive of the argument that the 'Muslim era is only a part' of this whole trajectory, that calls for a basis of the Muslim individuals in pre-Islamic Indian past, I believe it aids in understanding of the progressive secular, albeit in compartmentalized form. Thus we could come past an excerpt as brilliantly syncretic as this when the novel narrative talks of partition:

'So, how was this country to be defined? India was Qadeer's old mother, clad in a yellow sari of rough cotton. She was a career woman, as it were, warder of the district jail's female wing. She had come to the railway station at Mirzapur once and given Kamal clay toys. The quiet avenues of Civil Lines where the do-boys of the Angrez Sahebs took out their pets, were also India. In rural areas chicken pox and small pox were simply called 'Mata' and considered a manifestation of the wrath of the goddess Sitala. Their old cook, Basharat Hussain, belonged to a village in the district of Ghazipur. He looked like Ali Baba with a long white beard.

As a small boy Kamal had once come down with chicken-pox, and one fine morning old Basharat Hussain tiptoed into the sick-room. He put on his old muslin skull cap, stood on one leg, folded his hands and implored the folk 'spirit': "Sitala Mata, leave Kamman bhaiya alone and go away. I beg of you, I fold my hands before you!"

This khansama was also India.'[43]

This fervent invocation of Sitala mata, the folk goddess of pox, by the rural Muslim cook accentuates the strong semiotic signification of a mélange between the both the Hindu and Muslim cultures within the greater composite discourses pertaining to Indianness. The author hesitates to make this pre-condition of a composite culture contingent to the discourse of the nation. What could be more cathartic than to utilize Kamal's own character to hint at the

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[43] Qurratulain Hyder, *River of Fire* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2022), p.226.

same? Kamal, a believer in such a version of Indianness, would later fall prey to strong cynicism which would carry him to East Pakistan and subsequently to Pakistan itself after receiving continual rejection from employment positions in Independent India on grounds of being a Muslim. This, however, appears as an eventuality in the novelistic narrative, and not as something effectively envisaged by the author herself. The author herself identifies an origin of this sentiment as early as in the Pre-Quit India Movement period, when the much hallowed Oudhi belief in 'Ganga –Jamuni culture' was beginning to crumble in the face of a popular sentiment that talked primarily of the 'Ancient Hindu Culture' and the 'Glory-that-was-Islam'. There was a strong disbelief in such a form of historiography, for it nurtured an ethnonationalist origin to national culture: where perhaps only Hindus were a part of the Indian republic, and all Islamicate influences, references and individuals were either to be expelled or to be sanitized. As opposed to the discourse of *tehzeeb*, where Hindu-Muslim harmony and friendship was to be compared to the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna and underscored religious plurality and interdependence[44]; the new discourse was one of 'historical revenge'[45] that sought to establish the foreignness of Islam. Examples of this shift were strongly evident within the political current of the time on both sides: that of Hindu-Right and Muslim-League politics: while Damodar Savarkar's co-terminality of the *punyabhu* (the holy land) and the *pitrubhu* (the father land) roughly left adherents of Abrahamic religions (conspicuously Muslims and Christians) from their claim to India[46], Liaqat Ali's denunciation of Muslims being perceived as a community in India, as opposed to a nation and his subsequent statement that

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[44] Priyankar Upadhyay, "Communal Peace in India Lessons from Multicultural Banaras," essay, in *Religion and Security in South and Central Asia*, ed. Kulbhushan Warikoo, Central Asia Research Forum (New York: Routledge, 2011), 83–95, p.86.

[45] Achin Vanaik, "The Parivar Project: Creating Hatred to Mould Hindu Unity," *The Indian Express*, January 4, 1993,
https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=P9oYG7HA76QC&dat=19930104&printsec=frontpage&hl=en , p.8.

[46] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu (Poona: S.Savarkar, 1942), p.97.

'Muslims do not favor the pseudo-nationalism that the Hindus have borrowed from Europe'[47]made sure that the schisms deepened instead of healing.

Nehru's 'synthesis' theory of history, offered a much needed retrenchment of such fanciful historical imaginary, and this is evident from Hyder's somewhat resounding rejection of western ideas of 'nation', instead the imagery of the river in various ways throughout the fictional narrative, at the start and at the end of every historical epoch provides an alternative the alternative of secularist imagination as opposed to the ethno-nationalist Nation.

Yashpal's 'Jhootha Sach' (1960) translated as 'This is not that Dawn' by Anand, is by far considered to be one of the most critically successful renditions of social realism in an Indian language novel. In what can easily be considered a tome of a novel, there are two parts: 'Homeland and Nation' (Vatan aur Desh) and 'The Future of the Nation' (Desh Ka Bhavishya) which deals with the Pre-Partition and Post-Partition India respectively. While the first volume ends with the Partition the second volume effectively unpacks the 'reactionary forces responsible for the moral, social and political degeneration of the country'.[48] The author having previously been designated as a 'terrorist' by the colonial administration for his involvement with Bhagat Singh's Hindustan Socialist Republican Association/Army(HRSA) and later identifying himself as a self-vouched communist (without formally joining the Party), the novel effectively resonates his own ideological differences with Gandhiji. Their differences are to be understood, in the broader context of Gandhiji's feud with the communists in the aftermath of the Quit India movement.[49] His critical disenchantment with Gandhianism formed a sullen meta-criticism of the Post-Independence Congress

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[47] Waheed Ahmad, ed., *The Nation's Voice* (Speeches and Statements of M.A. Jinnah, 1935-40), vol. I (Karachi: Government Press, 1992), p. 354-355.

[48] Madhuresh, "The Social Purpose of Yashpal," *Indian Literature* 11, no. 3 (1968): 61–68, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23329593, p.66.

[49] Harish Trivedi and Yashpal, "Introduction," introduction, in *This Is Not That Dawn :Jhootha Sach*, trans. Anand, Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2010), xi–xxiv, xxiii.

hegemony, and is established in the novel through continuous descriptions of the corrupt party activists like Jaidev Puri who ultimately veer away from the party line. The principal protagonists of the novel are the brother-sister sibling Jaidev and Tara who being a part of the political intellectual circuit drift into two significantly contrasting lifestyles with one becoming a Congress activist and journalist and the other ending up in the Indian Civil Service, in spite of both starting primarily from an anarchist, far-left political ecosystem. The second volume, which provides a culmination of the intricately detailed political micro-history of its characters, shall be of greater context to the present analysis.

The post-Independence confusion in India pertaining to the state policy of secularism finds a categorical criticism in the second volume of the novel. In Post-Partition Delhi, where most of the refugees find themselves suddenly at the mercy of the Nation, Yashpal prudently offers us a social realist reading of cultural pluralism which is largely cosmopolitan as opposed to the rural background of the prequel. As the capital city of the new republic, Delhi to Yashpal becomes a critical site of interaction between the political establishment and the newly engendered class of partition refugees with their fresh wounds of religious persecution. Leaving Lahore, for India, the experiences of these refugees while in transit and their ultimate ending up at the 'camps' of Delhi is largely reflective of the importance of the 'fragmentary' point of view, that tries to resist the drive for a superficial homogenization and struggles for contrarian definitions of political community.[50] In Yashpal's imagination of the 'future of the nation', Tara Puri's Delhi in all its cosmopolitan allure and its proximity to government's power-corridor remains estranged and foreign as ever from Jaidev Puri's Jalandhar, where he runs the

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[50] Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defence of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 11/12 (March 1991): 559–72, https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/4397413 ,p.559.

Congress-leaning Urdu daily *Nazir* and is shown to lead an uncomplicated life with a widow, in spite of being married himself prior to the Partition. The progressive writerly instincts of Yashpal thus is able to contradict the Nation and the Homeland by means of a contradiction wherein the characters lose their families, and gain a nation in the process. This proposition finds credence in several distinctly varied political moments within the novel. The author's description of the language agitation in Punjab (post-Partition) could be considered the best example of this:

'Under the British Raj, Urdu written in Arabic script had been imposed on Punjab as the official language of administration and as the medium of language and learning. Knowledge of Urdu thus became essential for finding a government job and necessary for literary pursuits. The Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Punjab conversed in many dialects of Punjabi in their homes and in social situations, but used urdu only in education and official business. Although Urdu had served as the language and the script for their literary creations, neither Hindus nor Sikhs accepted it as the first language of their culture. With the newly acquired right of self-determination after Partition neither group was willing to tolerate the continued dominance of Urdu.

The supporters of Hindi and Punjabi argued intensely in public as to which language should replace Urdu. At the root of their disagreement was their natural preference for one's own first language as well as the fear of irreversible dominance by the favored community. Master Tara Singh, who had once pulled out his sword and challenged the Muslim League supporter to make demands for a Pakistan, had voiced along with his co-religionists their claim for a separate homeland for Sikhs. The Hindus regarded this as an unreasonable demand by a minority group. The Hindus continued to speak Punjabi and argue

in Punjabi against what they regarded as the unwarranted imposition of Punjabi…'[51]

The curiously political nature of this discourse finds a mention in the Party Resolutions of the Jana Sangh, where it is stated that:

'Bilingual Punjab—The truncated Punjab is a bilingual state in which Punjabi and Hindi speaking people are so much intermixed at all levels that any further division of the state on the basis of language is undesirable and politically expedient. This is a factual position and this standoff Bharatiya Jana Sangh which was also supported by the SRC'[52]

In the very same resolution itself the political outfit effectively deemed this struggle on the part of the Sikhs as communal, by declaring Master Tara Singh's fast for the Akali demand of a separate Punjabi Suba as coercive. Even within the narrative of the novel we find that Jaidev Puri, who runs *Nazir* as a Congress mouthpiece in Urdu, does not find it contradictory to canvas in favor of Hindi as the sole official language of the state, in spite of the government compromise formula of considering both Hindi and Punjabi as the official language of the state.

As opposed to this, Delhi was mired in its own difficulties, with Muslims leaving for Pakistan in the wake of the Partition. In a rare attempt of trying to portray the importance of Mahatma Gandhi in the nascent days of the Republic, the author provides a journalistic description of Gandhi's public meetings. His disappointment at the murder of Muslims in Delhi, finds an expression in his apparently secular invocation of 'hymns from Bhagawad Gita, bani from Guru

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[51] Yashpal and Anand, "The Future of The Nation," novel, in *This Is Not That Dawn: Jhootha Sach*, Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2010), 485–1119, p.851.

[52] Central Working Committee Jammu, "Problems of Unity, Resolution 61.14: Master Tara Singh's Fast," essay, in *Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party Documents 1951-1972*, vol. 4 (Resolutions on Internal Afairs) (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1973), 120–21, https://library.bjp.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/198/1/VOL%204-%20RESOLUTIONS%20%20ON%20%20INTERNAL%20%20AFFAIRS.pdf , p.120.

Granth Sahib and verses from Quran'. The implications here are fairly obvious, the author hints at Gandhi's saintly stature, while determining him as a largely recalcitrant presence within the larger populace; merely working as a safety-valve for discontent against the Congress government. Within the larger sections of the populace, such developments went to find lesser hold, as the characters started understanding the secular state as founded effectively on a contradiction. A quote by a character goes like this: 'If India is to be a secular state, the policy of not interfering between Hindus and Muslims, while not extending tolerance towards Muslims on the whole, is a contradiction in principle, one should not forgive traitors, but to brand someone a traitor on the basis of religion alone is morally wrong. Does history have no record of Hindu traitors?'[53]

In my opinion, this contradiction in principle is effectively one of possible simultaneous existences of established religions in a nation, as one of faith and as one of a political community that affirms coevality between the nation and the religious community. A classification clearly enumerated and dealt with in the Nehruvian synthesis theory of Indian history.

Yashpal's refashioning of Gandhi within the novel establishes this contradiction in a curiously different light. While we are absolutely aware of the feud relating to political methodology between the two in reality, Yashpal invokes Gandhi in his description of his assassination and subsequent death as that of a saintly individual, who will probably be appropriated by only the rich in future. But the truth is, here Yashpal contradicts himself, his own descriptions of the kind of company Gandhi kept after Independence. Similarly, on Gandhi's death it is described that:

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[53] Yashpal and Anand, "The Future of The Nation," novel, in *This Is Not That Dawn: Jhootha Sach*, Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2010), 485–1119, p.564.

'Mournful music was being played on the radio. There were readings from the Bhagavad Gita, the Koran, the Bible, the Granth Sahib, and the Zend Avesta at regular intervals, and news about the route and about Gandhiji's final rites was also broadcast.'[54]

'This is not that Dawn' potentially unhinges the popular geopolitical imaginary from the actual 'the localised socio-spatialities that punctuated what was normatively a geopolitical event'.[55] Simply put, it offers an alternative account of the Partition that in effect has a micro-historical quality, in terms of its numerous protagonists across separate cosmopolitan and rural Indian cities. Subsequently, its reading of progressive secularism thus, too would have its own popularly understood pitfalls of being subject to the manipulation by the majority. As an avowed state path, progressive secularism thus is more often than not critiqued by the refugee population, while they continue to enjoy the fruits of such a secular policy: Kanak and Jaidev Puri successfully secure a divorce towards the end of the novel on the basis of the 'new divorce laws', which obviously points to the importance of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1954 in cases of unsuccessful Hindu marriages. Likewise in the same narrative communalist feelings seep in to even the smaller minority groups where the nurse Mercy, who happens to be a Christian, considers Hindus to 'insufferably sanctimonious' in spite of being 'held down and conquered for thousands of years'[56]; or even of Giridharilal, who as an Arya Samajist had seen 'Arya Samajis and Sanatanis smashing each other's heads' in Punjab. A recent scholarly essay on the novel also studies how the critical perception of the migrant women walking about all decked in fineries in Post-Partition Delhi is

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[54] Yashpal and Anand, "The Future of The Nation," novel, in *This Is Not That Dawn: Jhootha Sach*, Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2010), 485–1119, p.684.

[55] Chayanika Saxena, "Out of Motherland, in to(Wards) Homeland: Partition and the Everyday(Ness) of Dis-Placement in This Is Not That Dawn (2015)," *Geoforum* 131 (2022): 196–205, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.03.011 , p.198.

[56] Yashpal and Anand, "The Future of The Nation," essay, in *This Is Not That Dawn: Jhootha Sach*, Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2010), 485–1119, p.767.

structured on the notion of 'indecency' as espoused by Hindu reformist groups in Punjab of the period.[57] Simply put, Yashpal's concerns about the limitations of such a progressive secularism, cannot be wholly dubbed as communalist wholly, but should be credited to a social realist reading of the implications of the same. For after all, the novel has continually endured its categorization as 'a progressive prose-epic'[58]

Conclusion

'Trinabhumi', 'Saptapadi', 'Aag Ka Darya' and 'Jhootha Sach' delineates the impossibility of constituting a singular 'secular' canon in the Non-Anglophone literary establishment. If Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Trinabhumi' and Quratulain Hyder's 'Aag Ka Darya' deal with the element of progress within post-Independence Indian secularist discourse in literature. Then the other two texts, namely Tarashankar Bandopadhyay's 'Saptapadi' and Yashpal's 'Jhootha Sach' (Translated as 'This is Not that Dawn') express the underlying currents of tolerance that notionally is to be found originating in the Nehruvian discourse of secularism in Post-Independence India.

As established earlier, these novels intriguingly find an origin with the dominant rhetoric of progressive secularism of the period in question. To consider the secularist discourse to have been applied willy-nilly in a western fashion on the Indian polity, effectively denigrates the democratic context of the zeitgeist. Nehru's rejection of the colonialist racial historiographic mode retains an element of decoloniality in it, insofar as to motivate a form of progressive inclusivist nation-building project. 'Jhootha Sach' offers a criticism of the bureaucratic hegemony, and how often partisanship sustained the communal sentiment within itself, but this is not necessarily a contradiction to the state

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[57] Anshu Malhotra, "The Moral Woman and the Urban Punjabi Society of the Late Nineteenth Century," *Social Scientist* 20, no. 5/6 (1992): 34–63, https://doi.org/10.2307/3517931 , p.144.

[58] Ramesh Chandra Dhussa, "Images of Delhi in Indo-Anglian and Hindi Literary Works," essay, in *Images of Delhi A Literary and Humanistic Geography of Post-Independence India* (Cham: Springer, 2023), 27–38, p.33.

project, but a social realists' implication of its insufficiencies. The cardinal point that Rajeev Dhavan raises on the unique nature of secularism in India is true, wherein 'these constitutional endeavours was an accommodating secular compromise at a time when—in the aftermath of partition—such a compromise seemed improbable'.[59] To consider it to be a compromise would be to disregard the radical nature of the shift involved in Nehru's own synthesis theory. To consider it improbable would be to forget the fact that Nehru's demand for a secular state goes back to the Karachi Session of the Congress in 1931, when even though Muslim League was functional the demand for Pakistan was to come a lot later. To consider Nehru's progressive secularist discourse thus reactionary to the Partition would be incorrect. But I do agree that even though in the constitution ratified in 1950, secularism was never mentioned the state had remained constitutionally secular, in terms of its legislations (or at least its aspirations). Scholarships on Indian Anglophone novels on the other hand (notably Srivastava, 2008) finds complimentarity between secularism and cosmopolitanism in the South Asia, an assumption that renders the concept elite, Western and something new in the 1980s-90s. While, the present thesis, considers only fictions from the non-Anglophone, asserts that the discourse in question, originates chiefly from the Constitution, or from the shift envisaged in the Nehruvian reading of Indian history, and it is not something that stagnates simply as 'progressive secularism' or becomes an idiomatic of statecraft. The forthcoming chapters shall present the ways in which this shall change.

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[59] Rajeev Dhavan, "The Road to Xanadu: India's Quest for Secularism," essay, in *Religion and Personal Law in Secular India: A Call to Judgment,* ed. Gerald James Larson *(Bloomington: Indiana University Press*, 2001), 301–29, p.310. < https://archive.org/details/the-road-to-xanadu-indias-quest-for-secularism-rajeev-dhavan>

CHAPTER 2: 1966-1977 FROM 'POPULIST' IMAGINATION TO THE 'PREAMBLE', THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE SECULARIST DISCOURSES.

Changes to the secularism discourse in the period concerned

The progressive secularist discourse of the Indian polity, effectively came to a standstill with the death of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964. In next three odd years, the secularist discourse would face, if not erosion, then almost a calculative appropriation by the other political institutions. Even though, in my opinion, 1966 would be that watershed year when such appropriation would be expressly manifested through the workings of Right political organisations like the Jan Sangh where Hindu sentiments would be put to instrumentalist usage to secure greater electoral mileage; this shift needs to be studied from 1964 itself, with the creation of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (1964). Added to this, one must also consider Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (henceforth referred to as RSS) organizer Deen Dayal Upadhyay's lectures on 'Integral Humanism' (1965) as a key moment when the Jan Sangh was making a shift from the earlier organicist approach of Golwalkar, to a far more centrist, and instrumentalist approach to woo the anxieties and to gradually solidify the Hindu identity within the Indian political system. In my opinion thus, the secularist discourse, during this period considered effectively becomes a part of the greater populist identity. However, it is of much interest to note here that the phrase secularism would continue to remain an anathema till the end of the National Emergency in 1977, at which point this chapter would end. So it becomes clear to the scholars of political history, that in the period intervening Nehru's death in 1964, and the addition of the phrase 'Secular' in 1977, even though the premise of the secular remained an aspirational norm within the Indian body politic, religion/ faith continued to be utilised with an instrumentalist intent by the right-wing political organisations and often (though rarely) by other organisations and the administration as well. It is thus a clear testament that the secularism discourse had

achieved during this period a sense of populist acceptance even though it was to become a political idiom (more on this in chapter three) almost a decade later.

The creation of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Deen Dayal Upadhyay's 'Integral Humanism': The shift in political discourse of the Right.

The creation of Vishwa Hindu Parishad in 1964, as a 'consistory for Hinduism'[60] could perhaps have not come at a more politically potent time for it was roughly constituted within the same month when the Pope Paul VI had announced the convening of the International Eucharist Congress in Bombay. The announcement had brought several latent issues to the fore. For the institutions on the right, this was a referent to the pathology of the Hindu traditionalist view (and Hindutva) that '…Hinduism, (is to be seen) as inferior to the Semitic creeds—monolithic, well-organized, and capable of being a sustainable ideology for an imperious state…'.[61] A form of this pathology is clearly visible in an article authored by S.S. Apte, the first General Secretary of the VHP, as published in the RSS mouthpiece *Organizer*:

"The declared object of Christianity is to turn the whole world into Christendom—and that of Islam is to make it 'Pak'. Besides these two dogmatic and proselytizing religions, there has risen a third religion, communism, […] The world has been divided into Christian, Islamic and Communist, and all these three consider the Hindu society as a very fine rich food on which to feast and fatten themselves. It is therefore necessary in this age of competition and conflict to think of, and organize, the Hindu world to save itself from the evil eyes of all the three."[62]

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[60] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Mixed Strategy: Hindu Mobilization and Electoral Alliances," essay, in *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925-1990* (London: Hurst & Company, 1993), 193–221, 196.

[61] Ashis Nandy, "The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Hindu Nationalism, and Other Masks of Deculturation," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 22, no. 2 (April 1997): 157–76, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40644885 , 171.

[62] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Mixed Strategy: Hindu Mobilization and Electoral Alliances," in *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925-1990* (London: Hurst & Company, 1993), 193–221, 197.

Even though the VHP was in consideration by clerics such as Swami Chinmayanand in 1963, the timing of its establishment and the election of RSS pracharaks like S.S. Apte as its general secretary effectively renders it as one of the significant members of the Sangh Parivar and its mould of Hindutva political-schooling. Also worth noting here, is the geopolitical imaginary applied in which all Semitic religions (and interestingly Communism, as an ideology) are represented as threats to the Hindu society. The phraseology is appears to be replete with a Savarkarist subtext: wherein, Hindu society is willy-nilly conflated with Indian territorial sovereignty.

Parallel to the launching of the VHP, on the same day, the Bharat Gosevak Samaj was established in the presence of VHP members like Golwalkar and Prabhu Datt Brahmachari alongwith a keynote lecture by Deen Dayal Upadhyay.[63] This effectively consummated the relations of the RSS and the VHP to the cow-protection agitation outside the Parliament in 1966. In my reading, this event would symbolically consolidate the radical Hindu right support and garner a volte-face for the Jan Sangh in the face of a standstill credo of progressive secularism of the Nehruvian era. The implications of this would be explained at a later point.

While the VHP was involved in furthering the organicist thought of Golwalkar and others with the motive of solidifying and mobilizing the Hindu identity; the Jan Sangh, which at the time could be identified as a centre-right party, still needed a counter discourse to present itself as an authentic alternative to the Congress. Deen Dayal Upadhyay, in a series of four lectures in Bombay, as the convenor of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh, presented his conceptualisation of 'Integral Humanism' which aspired to be a premise of a counter discourse that the party wanted to critique Congress with. As opposed to the organicist and the significantly Eurocentric aspirations of RSS luminaries like Golwalkar, Savarkar and Apte; Upadhyay shrewdly chose to premise himself on the instrumentalist approach instead,

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[63] Bruce Desmond Graham, "Th Jan Sangh as a Hindu Nationalist Rally," in *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 94–157, 148-149.

wherein his invocations had much to appropriate from the Gandhian discourse in order to neutralise the colonialist premise extant in his predecessors. In what appears to be an instrumentalist tract aimed critically at the phantoms of Western modernity within the postcolonial polity, a scholar correctly identifies an attempt to sanitise the Sangh of its communal associations in order to fit its newly found relevance amongst the middle classes of North India.[64] Upadhyay's lectures accepts the reality of the Jan Sangh as to primarily having a Hindu Nationalist base; yet, in order to be a serious alternative to the perceived secular of the Congress, the Jan Sangh must too be perceived as non-communal. It is for this reason, *dharma* as a concept finds too much presence in the lecture that is deemed to present an economic alternative to both Capitalism and Communism. Curiously enough, Upadhyay does not even once mention or even acknowledge secularism as extant in the Indian political populism at the time. Rather, he chooses to exemplify *dharma* and the *dharmik* way of life as the possible sustaining ideology of the society. Such a mode of argumentation effectively could be argued to serve a two-fold purpose. Primarily, it helps to decouple the definition of *dharma* or the *dharmik* way of life from that of religion and religiosity, thereby qualifying *dharma* and the *dharmik* way of life as something that is non-institutional, personal and hence inapplicable to critique the existing idea of secularism. Simply put, the *dharma* remains personal, and is hence non-communal as far as the state is concerned, *yet*, it could perform suitably as the sustaining ideology of the state. Secondly, Upadhyay's lack of acknowledgment of the secular, could also be a manifestation of the fact that he intended to represent secularism (as it existed in the Indian polity of the time) to be a grossly misunderstood product of Western modernity that had little utility within the postcolonial state, thereby identifying the same to be an alien concept being perpetuated as a 'white-man's burden'. It helps to note in this context, that Upadhyay's formulation of dharma, is quite close to that of Kautilya's perception of dharma (even though Upadhyay does not mention him). Kautilya understands dharma as that of a sort of social duty and

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[64] Thomas Blom Hansen, "Imagining the Hindu Nation," in *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 60–89, 85.

allegiance to the sacred laws of the land; as a set of laws that not only dictated the rights of the citizens and most importantly as a set of 'amorphous and supreme laws'[65] which included even the monarch. This unmentioned pre-colonial inheritance in Upadhyay's lectures is at best an attempt to revoke and decontextualize the colonial history of the nation, and is at worst, an attempt to create a non-communal defence in the face of a progressive secularist project. Upadhyay writes the following pertaining to conceptualisation of the society and dharma:

'No one will dispute that the State must have some specific aim, some ideal. Then this aim or ideal must be considered of highest importance, rather than the State which is created to fulfil this ideal. As a watchman is not deemed greater than the treasure he is supposed to protect, so is the case with the treasurer. The State is brought into existence to protect the Nation, and to produce and maintain conditions in which the ideals of the Nation can be translated into reality. The ideals of the Nation constitute *Chiti*, which is analogous to the soul of an individual. It requires some effort to comprehend *Chiti*. The laws that help manifest and maintain *Chiti* of a Nation are termed Dharma of that Nation. Hence, it is this 'Dharma' that is supreme.

Dharma is the repository of the Nation's soul. If Dharma is destroyed, the Nation perishes. Anyone who abandons Dharma, betrays the Nation.'[66]

Simply put, Upadhyay effectively presents dharma as primarily a set of non-communal laws that circumvents the conceptual grammar of earlier Hindu Nationalist discourse and tries to enunciate a form of citizenship that is lenient than the earlier, yet still considers territorial allegiance (allegiance to the sacred laws of the land) as that of Dharma, thus rendering it non-communal. In 1967, Upadhyay would go on to be the President of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the Jana Sangh would in 1965 itself adopt it as a part of its 'Principles and

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[65] Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Kumar Pandey, "Introduction," introduction, in *Modern Indian Political Thought: Text and Context*, Sage Texts (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009), xv–xxxix, xviii.

[66] Deendayal Upadhyay, "Lecture 3 (25th April 1965)," essay, in *Integral Humanism* (n/a: Deendayal Research Institute, 2002), 22–55, https://deendayalupadhyay.org/images/book/Booklet%20on%20IntegralHumanism.pdf , 31.

Resolutions'.[67] This effectively rendered 'Integral Humanism' to be one of the core principles of the political outfit, being continued even when it rebranded itself as the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980.

Both these cultural formations, that of the VHP and that of Upadhyay on the other hand allows us to formulate dialectic on the populist nature of secularism that remained in vogue at the time. Such dialectic encapsulates popular secularism of the age as a symbolic formation that proved effectively toothless in the face of the rapidly communalizing public life. This would be represented by the violence and the political discourse surrounding the cow protection movement of 1966. We would discuss that in the following segment.

Populist Secularism and its Communal Limitations

1966 proved to be a watershed year for populist secularism, with several Sangh Parivar bodies coming together to force the government to place a blanket ban on cow slaughter nationally. It is debatable that whether this was an effort in good faith or whether it was a calculated electoral gimmick, because by 1966 most Indian states of the time had some form of regulation or the other on slaughter of cows (Choudhary, 2022, p. 206).[68] On the contrary, it could be successfully argued that the event was effectively orchestrated with the intention of collating the organicist lines of political action (represented by the VHP) and the instrumentalist lines of political action (as represented by Deen Dayal Upadhyay's Jan Sangh functioning under the principle of Integral Humanism) against that of the secularist Congress. The cow as a symbol had formed a political umbilicus for Hindu Traditionalists within the Congress as well other Right Wing Hindu organisations. The status of the cow as a political discourse and that of as a Hindu identity had been manipulated several times by different political outfits, partially due to its sacrality in Hindu scriptures where it enjoys the

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[67] John Abraham, "In Search of Dharma: Integral Humanism and the Political Economy of Hindu Nationalism," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2019): 16–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2019.1557362 , 17.

[68] Abhishek Choudhary, "Between the Alleged Assassinations (1953-68)," in *Vajpayee: The Ascent of the Hindu Right 1924-1977* (New Delhi: Picador India (Pan Macmillan), 2023), 113–228, 206.

equal status of a Brahmin (Batra, 19, 163-75/Manusmriti/ Jaffrelot, 1993, p. 204).[69] Historical scholarships also exist on how Arya Samaj exploited the issue in an effort to penetrate the countryside, banking on its ability to mobilize Hindus.[70]

The incident started inside the Parliament when Jan Sangh tried to test its ground on the subject of cow slaughter through its MPs, which included individuals like Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Swami Rameshwaranand, an Arya Samajist. The flash point was reached on 25th September, when the SGMS (Sarvdaliya Goraksha Maha Abhiyan Samiti) announced a satyagraha urging the government to undertake immediate legislation on the subject of cow slaughter, which ultimately led to an attempted assault on the Lok Sabha buildings at the behest of Swami Rameshwaranand, who was by then suspended from proceedings owing to disorder in the house. Even though the breach of vandalism was subverted strongly, it created a strong sense of political distrust against the Jana Sangh MPs inside the Parliament. Vajpayee, who was in fact noted to have been part of the congregation trying to pacify the members, had interestingly stated in the Rajya Sabha that the RSS-Jana Sangh members were not the ones to blame for the mishap[71], elsewhere he had issued a statement criticising the 'undesirable elements, who resorted to violent activities in the demonstration against cow slaughter, had done harm to a pious cause.[72] Simply put, while the purpose of the legislation did not receive much traction, the event established that the Jana Sangh as a non-communal alternative, painstakingly created by Upadhyay with principles borrowed from Gandhi and even M.N. Roy[73] had failed to unify the organicist and the instrumentalist elements within the Sangh Parivar. For Congress, weakened as it was in the shadow of

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[69] S.M. Batra, "The Sacredness of the Cow in India," *Social Compass* 33, no. 2–3 (1986): 163–75, https://doi.org/10.1177/003776868603300203, 167.

[70] Sandria B. Freitag, "Sacred Symbol as Mobilizing Ideology: The North Indian Search for a'Hindu' Community," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 4 (1980): 597–625, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417500009567 , 604.

[71] Abhishek Choudhary, "Between the Alleged Assassinations (1953-68)," in *Vajpayee: The Ascent of the Hindu Right 1924-1977* (New Delhi: Picador India (Pan Macmillan), 2023), 113–228, 209.

[72] Ramchandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New Delhi: Picador India, 2017), 413-14.

[73] John Abraham, "In Search of Dharma: Integral Humanism and the Political Economy of Hindu Nationalism," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2019): 16–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2019.1557362, 20.

Nehru's death and internal factionalism, this was an opportunity to discredit the political manoeuvrings of the Jana Sangh for its communal nature. Inside the Parliament, Vajpayee, would be attacked for his outfit's links with the RSS.[74] The entire episode marked two things very clearly: firstly, that populist secularism did not necessarily mean affirmative legislation it could very well be utilised as an ideology, wherein secularism could largely be utilised as a symbol declaring inheritance to a greater rhetoric. In this case populist secularism of the era considered, was in fact a tokenization of the earlier progressive secularist tradition of the Nehruvian era.

So when Indira Gandhi finally, added 'secularism' to the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, via the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution, in 1977; it was in fact a shrewd attempt to invoke the secular/ communal binary, wherein by invocation of popular secularism, all forms of democratic opposition could be dubbed as communal. But this textual turn of Secularism, was a far cry from the Nehruvian principled distance from all religions, or from Charles Taylor's classical notion '…of a kind of distancing…required by the very principle of equidistance and inclusion which is the essence of secularism'.[75] Instead, it was a compensatory act of legislation which would inadvertently deem the secular as a constitutional category, albeit as a symptom of statism and not as a product of active political life.

In the next segment of this chapter we shall consider four non-Anglophone novels namely: Rahi Masoom Raza's 'Adha Gaon' (1966), 'Topi Shukla' (1966); Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Kingbadantir Nayak' (1966) and Bhisham Sahni's 'Tamas" (1973) as representative of the literary discourse existing at the time pertaining to religious identity and populist secularism. Through such a mode of analysis we shall be able to estimate to what extent the political, populist discourses of the time had found a resonance in literary narratives of the period.

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[74] New Delhi, Rajya Sabha Debates 7th Nov 1966 §, accessed September 15, 2023, https://rsdebate.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/520113/1/PD_58_16111966_7_p1425_p1497_9.pdf , 1449-59.

[75] Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava, Themes in Politics (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2021), 31–53, 52.

References to Popular Secularism and signification of minority identity in select non-Anglophone novels of the period.

Originally intended to be published as an Urdu novel, Rahi Masoom Raza's 'Adha Gaon' was picked up by Akshar Publishers in 1966, to be published in Hindi, after rejection from all quarters. Curiously enough, it was even rejected by the popular Rumani Dunya series in Urdu that used to be published from Allahabad. As a prolific writer and a scholar in Urdu, Hindi and Sanskrit, Masoom Raza (Rahi being his pen name) deals with history in two forms within the margins of the novel: the national history unfolding itself as a backdrop to the author's personal history. The elegiac mood, coupled with a nostalgia for a period that passed by is strongly apparent within the description of places and the characterisations of the individuals living within the fast-eroding feudal matrix of rural India. Likewise, the erosion of the feudal way of life (sic the Zamindari system) is treated as a corollary to the passage of time from the final years of the Quit India movement to a decade and half later, in Independent India when the Zamindari system has been abolished. While, scholars find this to be a notable precursor to the statement of personification of time in B.R. Chopra's televised Mahabharat, whose scripts were written by Raza; he clearly de-links the novel Adha Gaon from the religious or political trajectory: "This story is neither religious nor political, because time is neither religious nor political and this story is actually about time. It is the story of time passing through Gangauli…it is the story of the ruins where houses stood and of the houses built on those ruins."[76] The text used for reference here is the 1993 translation of Adha Gaon by Gillian Wright, and published as 'A Village Deserted'.

The novel, curiously, does not employ a conventional plot that would follow the lives of any character to the conclusion. Divided into ten chapters, as a literary parallel to the ten days of mourning during Moharram, the novel describes the plight of a class of Shia Muslim Zamindars in the village of Gangauli, of Ghazipur district in Uttar Pradesh, over a period of

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[76] Gillian Wright, "The Making of Adha Gaon," *India International Centre Quarterly*, no. Monsoon 1993 (1993): 111–26, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23003975 , 115-16.

twenty five years.[77] Gangauli happens to be Raza's own origin, and over the duration narrated in the novel, he keeps going back and ends up perceiving the changes, leading scholars to identify Raza's own intended literary milieu to be primarily *anchalik* (provincial). The provincialist nature, as espoused by Raza in the novel, has not only deemed it to be an anchalik upanyas (a popular genre in post-Independent Hindi novel), but it has led historians of the genre to contend it as 'substitute ethnography' for North India:

'...just as in an anthropological monograph there is an element of 'construction', often guided by the theory of culture/society which the scholar works with, so also in the novel. In fact it would be wrong to treat a regional novel simply as a documentary source of data on particular customs and patterns of life in a region. The 'truth' contained in it has to be decoded, in the first place, in the context of the development of the Hindi novel.'[78]

The organic relationship between the national history and personal history, transmuted from the interiority of the Hindi heartland, through nostalgia for a frayed, decayed feudal system thus renders the narrative to be clearly one of immense anthropological potentiality rather than that of a clear-cut anti-feudal socialist tenor.

The novel closely depicts the strangely hierarchical domestic world of Shia Muslim Zamindars of Gangauli and the intra-class ancestral rivalry between the Sayyid Zamindars of Uttar Patti and North Patti. These intra-class rivalries flare up from time to time in matters of celebration of Moharram, consideration of matrimonial alliances and sometimes in matters of land ownership. In this pluralist world of the Gangauli village, these internecine rivalries amongst the Sayyid families often involve other classes, religious and caste communities such as the Thakurs, Brahmins, Kayasths, Ahirs, Bhars, Chamars and Pathans with the implications of their own respective religious and cultural affiliations. However,

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[77] Comment: Different scholars of Rahi Masoom Raza offer differential periods, this appears to be the closest fit.

[78] Ravindra K. Jain, "Muslim Identity in North India A Perspective from the Hindi Regional Novel," *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, June 30, 1994, 19–29, http://14.139.58.200/ojs/index.php/shss/article/view/605/573 , 20.

such interactions are not always violent, syncretic references to *qasbai tehzeeb* [79] or neighbourly etiquettes also abound in the novel where in Bhars (a Hindu caste) participate actively in Moharram mourning, removing tree branches and other obstacles from the path of the mourners allowing the *tazia* to pass by without much damage.[80] (Raza, 1994, p. 160). Gillian Wright, who had translated the novel to English, also contends in her introduction that after the Moharram 'congregation disperses, tabarruk or the blessed food, is distributed...to sanctify it, part of the tabarruk is kept near the tazias...to the Hindus of Gangauli this tabarruk is equivalent to prasad.' She also notes in the introduction that at the time of her writing, in small north Indian villages Shia, Sunni and Hindus all took part in Moharram, she brings up the example of "Mustafabad in Rae Bareli district where Hindus crowd the mourning majlises and pray at the tazias, and turn out in huge numbers to witness the procession, while Sunni cooks prepare special food for the occasion."[81]

Even though the Sayyid communities, practiced a form of social hierarchy, it helps to note that communalism never explicitly manifests itself within the rural life apart from immediately before and immediately after the Partition. Likewise, the Pakistan movement does not find any favour within the Muslim inhabitants of Gangauli. Across, different social classes, the creation of Pakistan, is considered an absurdity, with most of its inhabitants unable to conceive what Nation even signifies:

" 'Ba'aji, what's Pakistan?' She finally asked Sarwari one day.

'It's a country that will be made for the Muslims,' replied Sarwari like a great scholar.

'What is a country, Ba'ji?'

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[79] Gillian Wright, "The Making of Adha Gaon," *India International Centre Quarterly*, no. Monsoon 1993 (1993): 111–26, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23003975 , 115-16.

[80] Rahi Masoom Raza*, A Village Divided*, trans. Gillian Wright, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), 160.

[81] Gillian Wright and Rahi Masoom Raza, "Translator's Introduction," introduction, in *A Village Divided*, trans. Gillian Wright, Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), viii–xvii, xv.

This question completely stumped Sarwari as she didn't know what a country was either. She knew the advantages which Muslims would get from Pakistan. Her uncle Wazir had already told her about them when her brother Moonis came from Aligarh, he didn't talk about anything else. But no one had told Sarwari what a country actually was."[82]

This phenomenon was not only isolated within the womenfolk of the Sayyid households, other Shia Zamindars individuals too remained unsympathetic to the demands for Pakistan, while the non-Muslim classes went on unperturbed by it, atleast till the Partition and its aftermath, when most senior inhabitants of the village tried their best to contain the paranoia. It is difficult here to ascertain as to whether the inhabitants remained impervious to the Pakistan demand in a bid to protect their feudal privileges or was it an authentic rejection of communalisation on their part. However, the populist tenor such insularity against the Pakistan demand, is clearly determined by non-Zamindar Muslims as well. Citing the secular category of belongingness, one of the inhabitants of the village, Tannu, who had served in the Second World War, argues with the Muslim League activists from the Aligarh University as follows:

'...I am a Muslim. But I love this village because I myself am this village. I love the indigo godown, this tank and these mud lanes because they are different forms of myself. On the battlefield, when death came very near, I certainly remembered Allah, but instead of Mecca or Karbala, I remembered Gangauli. And I used to be upset and cry at the thought that I may never again be able to chew sugarcane at the indigo godown, and that I may never again taste the halva on the eighth of Moharam. Allah is omnipresent. Then what is the difference between Gangauli and Mecca, and the Indigo godown and the Ka'aba and our pond and the spring of Paradise?...Mecca is not my city. This is my home and Ka'aba is Allah Miyan's. If

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[82] Rahi Masoom Raza, A Village Divided, trans. Gillian Wright, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), 47-48.

God loves his home then won't he be able to understand that we too can love our home as much as He loves His?'[83]

However, when it comes to the time of voting, the act of voting for the Muslim League became almost an issue of class relations. With the Zamindars, worried about having to leave their land if Pakistan became a reality and on the other hand India being governed by a predominantly Hindu controlled Congress who were rumoured to be planning to abolish the Zamindari system; while the younger class of individuals, even within some Zamindari families openly supported the movement hoping that an 'Islamic government' in Pakistan would mean government jobs for Muslims in the Pakistani government. The phrase 'Islamic Government', which largely figured in the rhetoric of prominent Muslim League leaders like Chaudhary Khaliquzzaman, is thus treated quite sardonically here, in the concluding part of the novel, in an exchange between a dispossessed Zamindar and another inhabitant of the village who had gone to Pakistan after the Partition and had returned on a vacation:

" '…so I suppose people must spend there must spend their time fasting and praying?'

'Why?'

'Arre, bhai, it's an Islamic government. How can you ask why!'

'So you think an Islamic government means fasting and praying!'

'Have you people changed the meaning of Islam?'

'Islamic government, means, Dada, that Muslims get jobs.'

'Really! I never knew that the Prophet of God made all that effort and noise just for Muslims to get jobs. You really set my mind at rest today."[84]

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[83] Rahi Masoom Raza, A Village Divided, trans. Gillian Wright, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), 234-35

[84] Rahi Masoom Raza, *A Village Divided*, trans. Gillian Wright, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), 301.

Even though Pakistan continue to cause much mystification in the minds of the Zamindars of Gangauli even after Partition, their premonitions about the Congress are verified when the dalits of the Hindu faith who had originally been subservient to the Sayyids, become important within the Congress hegemony. Parsuram, a dalit individual from the Chamar caste becomes exemplary of this phenomenon within the novel. His rise in affluence and political control comes at the expense of the old Zamindari class of people, whose death knell seemed imminent. It is noteworthy to state here that, Parsuram's own political identity is not reflected on either his history or his activism for the Congress, rather it is established through his interactions with the Zamindars. It is quite possible, that Raza, who had become a member of the CPI by then, was referring to the bourgeois roots of Congress bureaucratic hegemony by this. But his usage of chaste Khadi Boli Hindi and steady rise in social standing, was something that may have further alienated the fast-eroding Zamindari class from the electoral democracy.[85]

Faced by a postcolonial bureaucracy that had reduced their Zamindari estate to 'a bundle of useless Compensation certificates'[86] (Ali, 2019,p.43) on one side and alienating them from electoral democracy on the other, the Sayyid elites of Gangauli, face a form of 'cultural involution' where:

'the formerly powerful community of Shia Muslims is reduced to chasing the shadow rather than the substance of real authority. They try to make good the loss of real power and authority by resource to an excessive concern with status-symbols. This is clearly portrayed in the novel.' [87]

But such a scenario does not necessarily draw them any closer to communalism. Rather, inspite of strong changes within the power centres within the village life, it still sees *qasbai*

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[85] Subhashini Ali, "Decline of a Social Order: The End of Zamindari Rule in Northern India," *Review of Agrarian Studies*, July-December, 9, no. 2 (2019): 26–43, https://www.ras.org.in/decline_of_a_social_order , 35.
[86] Subhashini Ali, "Decline of a Social Order: The End of Zamindari Rule in Northern India," *Review of Agrarian Studies*, July-December, 9, no. 2 (2019): 26–43, https://www.ras.org.in/decline_of_a_social_order , 43.
[87] Ravindra K. Jain, "Muslim Identity in North India A Perspective from the Hindi Regional Novel," Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, June 30, 1994, 19–29, http://14.139.58.200/ojs/index.php/shss/article/view/605/573, 26.

tehzeeb flower as it did before the Partition. However, in the absence of the Zamindari system and in the aftermath of the Partition; such forms of secular interaction is largely symbolic of their spatial belonging, rather than something political. Two instances from the novel establish that beyond all doubt: Phunnan who had been a Zamindar earlier comes to understand that Matadin, to whom he had pledged land to build a temple and half a bigha to support himself with had joined a Hindu fundamentalist group that was inciting the Hindus in his vicinity against the Muslims with speeches pertaining to Partition violence in Lahore, Calcutta and Noakhali. Having pledged the land to Matadin as a Zamindar once, he cannot revoke the charitable act which would go against the feudal mores of the time. Charity, as a part of Zamindari, here has been perceived as a purely secular act. The second instance would surely be the nature of relationship that Phunnan shared with his informal bodyguard Chikuriya. Chikuriya had been a low-caste Hindu, belonging to the Bhar community of Eastern Uttar Pradesh that has historically been subservient to the Muslim Zamindars. He does not consider Phunnan or even the imam of Gangauli to be Muslims, for these individuals 'gave donations to the Dussehra festival'[88] and different from individuals like Maulvi Bedar who would not have anything touched by a Hindu, or Hakim Ali Kabir who "kept bathing in the tank by his gate for the slightest of reason to keep himself pure"[89] (Raza, 1993, p.324) . It is very cathartic that, in the end of the novel, when Phunnan, no more a Zamindar, is ultimately murdered by unidentified lathi-bearing individuals, Chikuriya dies with him trying to defend him from the attack.

In the 'Introduction' that comes before the penultimate chapter of the novel, roughly synchronic with the end of the Partition, Raza makes the following emotional claim:

'The Jan Sangh says that Muslims are outsiders. How can I presume to say that they're lying? But I must say that I belong to Ghazipur. My bonds with Gangauli are unbreakable. It is not just a village, it is my home. Home. The word exists in every language and dialect in this

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[88] Rahi Masoom Raza, *A Village Divided*, trans. Gillian Wright, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), 160.

[89] Rahi Masoom Raza, *A Village Divided*, trans. Gillian Wright, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), 324.

world, and is the most beautiful word in every language and dialect...I will remain Saiyid Masoom Reza Abidi of Ghazipur, wherever my grandfather hailed from. And I give no one the right to say to me, Rahi! You don't belong to Gangauli, and so get out and go, say, to Rae Bareli.' Why should I go, sahib? I will not go.

This introduction was necessary to carry the story forward.' [90]

This claim by the author, could be read as a declaration against the suspicion levelled against Indian muslims by the Right leaning groups in terms of their belonging, and through that their territorial loyalties. Raza's words are repeated by other characters in course of the novel in different contexts and in different words. Once presented against the Muslim League, it still finds context when thought in relation to Jan Sangh's policies. The novel, and the kind of scholarship it has mostly inspired attests to the largely secular, symbolic belonging of these characters and their author to the region. They are not 'stickily attached to the region'[91] but their belongingness to the region is as 'populist' as any other citizen, and as secular as that of their own microhistories.

Also published in 1966, in succession to 'Adha Gaon', was Raza's second novel 'Topi Shukla'. This close proximity in publication and the overtly biographical nature of the novel has influenced some scholars to consider 'Topi Shukla' as a spiritual successor to 'Adha Gaon'. Gillian Wright, who had translated 'Adha Gaon' notably contends that the three primary characters of the novel are in fact based on Raza himself, his wife and his friend Professor Kunwarpal Singh. It helps to note that, it was this professor Kunwarpal Singh, who had prepared the hindi version of the 'Adha Gaon' manuscript when it was rejected by Rumani Dunya.[92] Coming back to the novel at hand, 'Topi Shukla' narrates the communal pathologies of its three protagonists: Balbhadra 'Topi' Shukla, his friend Iffan Abidi and Iffan's wife

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[90] Rahi Masoom Raza, *A Village Divided*, trans. Gillian Wright, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2003), 273.

[91] Ravindra K. Jain, "Muslim Identity in North India A Perspective from the Hindi Regional Novel," *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, June 30, 1994, 19–29, http://14.139.58.200/ojs/index.php/shss/article/view/605/573 , 25.

[92] Gillian Wright, "The Making of Adha Gaon," India International Centre Quarterly, no. Monsoon 1993 (1993): 111–26, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23003975 , 114-15.

Sakina. I identify their own versions and readings of the communal nature of the time as pathological, since their coming-of-age during the Partition of the country and their ultimate interaction at the Aligarh Muslim University campus in the sixties; all of them develop their own forms of social symptoms which sets them distinctly apart from each other. None of the main protagonists could in fact be considered communal themselves, but as Indian citizens with disparate notions of community.

Topi and Iffan come from distinct cultural milieus, to become close childhood friends. Balbhadra, alias Topi's came from a stock of bourgeois, middle class Ayurvedic doctor who is described to be an enthusiast of Persian and would speak in a sanitised Urdu. Yet he is also shown to be a passionate adversary of Urdu language, and a detractor of all things Islamicate. However, his innate sense of communalism is not a product of any serious ideological or historical concern, but due to his adversary doctor Sheikh Sharfuddin, who used to be his compounder once, and had reportedly stolen his formulation of medicines. In due time Sharfuddin's clientele was significant increasing at the cost of Topi's father's own practice. Inside the Shukla household, this innate sense of communalism found roots in his wife Ramdulari, and his three sons: Muneshwar, Bhairav and Topi himself. A brief excerpt from the novel would be of assistance in understanding the nature of communalism in the Shukla household:

'Topi's mother Ramdulari was a simple, religious and a homely woman. The eldest brother Muneshwar Narayan Shukla alias, Munni Babu was an important activist of the Ramrajya Parishad, while Topi's younger brother Bhairav Narayan had his eyes set on becoming a Congress activist. This was because, Congress to him meant greater financial rewards than what his own father could secure as a traditional doctor and a medicine man. Whenever he would listen that a Chief Minister of some province had left fifty lakhs or so in his Swiss Bank account on his death; and that he had been a bus conductor once and now could boast of owning mansions in all the important cities of the country, his eyes would twinkle

mischievously and he would nag to his mother: I will only become a Chief Minister one day…'
(translations mine)[93]

Raza's formulation of communalism in the Shukla household is important for its trajectory
of progression: it originates from an economic or class position based inferiority, develops as
a form of political radicalism in the next stage, and ultimately decays permanently into
individualist aspirations at the cost of alienation from democratic principles of governance.
Contrastingly, inside Iffan's household a distinctly different form of communalist tendency is
to be noted:

"Iffan's grandfather and his great-grandfather had been important Maulvi's in their time.
They considered themselves to have been born in the country of Kaffirs. They died in the
land of Kaffirs as well. But after their deaths, they were buried in Karbala as they had asked
for in their will. His soul metaphorically never breathed a sigh in this country. The first
Hindustani* son born in that family was Iffan's father.

Iffan's father Sayyid Murtuza Hussein never ate anything touched by a Hindu. But when he
died, he never asked for his body to be buried at Karbala. He was cremated in an ordinary
Hindustani burial ground.

Iffan's great grandmother too never ate anything touched by a Hindu. She was regular with
her Namaz. She undertook pilgrimages to Karbala, Najaf, Khorasan, Kazmain and several
other places. But she always kept an earthen pot of water at the gate for passers-by.

Iffan's grandmother too was regular with her Namaz. But when Iffan was afflicted with
chicken pox, she prayed: 'Mata forgive my son.'"[94]

The nature of communal thought expressed in Raza's description of Iffan's household
presents Islam as essentially a foreign faith and the Islamic imaginary of belonging as
transnational, yet, something that was being moulded into something different across

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[93] Rahi Masoom Raza, *Topi Shukla* (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2022), 15.
[94] Rahi Masoom Raza, Topi Shukla (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2022), 25.

generations in terms of lesser adherence to extra-territorial marks of faith and corollary beliefs in folk goddesses. Superficially, such a moulding of religious identities by geographical sense of belonging, may be ascribed to as secularisation of the public life of religious minorities in the wake of colonial and subsequently post-colonial democratic modernity. In fact, this is the exact kind of scholarly afterlife that this novel has attracted over time, as an annual review of Hindi literature in 1969 puts it: 'it throws up a truly secular character and promotes communal harmony.'[95] But it is my belief that Iffan and Topi's disposition and their familial life yields a dialectic of communalist sentiment that finds it hard to Otherize on the basis of faith. In short having been raised inside a communal milieu, and having experienced the Partition, the public lives of Topi and Iffan and their childhood friendship, makes it difficult for them to Otherize each other and thereby force them to share a communal pathology of fear and distrust in a secular country. Simply put, while communal pathologies insulate them from each other, the populist secular discourses of democratic principles, higher education, Nationalism makes it sure that their own communal fears and hatred are not linked to the greater cultural distrust pertaining to religious minorities.

Aligarh Muslim University, and the milieu around the university, occupies an important position within the novel. The city of Aligarh with its Aligarh Muslim University, often dubbed as the place where the 'ideology of Pakistan was born'[96] had been the site of violent student rioting in 1961 and communal controversies in 1965 pertaining to greater quota of seats for non-Muslim students. The 1961 Aligarh riots which occurred in the aftermath of student union elections where none of the students elected were non-Muslims.[97] Facing provocative celebrations from the students, the ABVP (youth wing of the RSS) retaliated,

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[95] Shrawan Kumar, "Hindi: A Year of Mixed Crop," Indian Literature 13, no. 4 (December 1970): 41–46, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24157154 , 43.

[96] Bharatiya Jana Sangh, "Problems of Unity," essay, in Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party Documents 1951-1972, vol. 4 (Resolutions on Internal Affairs) (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh Central Office, 1973), 97–140, https://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/198 , 122.

[97] Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, "Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India I (1947-1986)," Sciences Po portal, July 15, 2013, https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/hindu-muslim-communal-riots-india-i-1947-1986.html#title1) , n.p..

which ultimately led to flaring up of similar riots in Meerut and elsewhere.[98] The aftermath of the riots saw a demand from the Jana Sangh that called to "that the present communal character of Aligarh Muslim University be abolished and it be Indianised and run like other universities of the country."[99] Fresh controversies arose about the communal nature of AMU in 1965, when the serving Vice-Chancellor Ali Yavar Jung was reportedly assaulted for his attempts to reduce the seats reserved for Muslim students from seventy-five percent to fifty percent, which led the Jana Sangh to demand for a three point action to Indianize AMU by change of University statute, affiliation to nearby colleges to AMU to render it more territorial and screening of teachers and university officials to remove 'anti-national elements'.[100]

Topi and Iffan run into each other again in the campus of AMU during the above-described period. By then, Topi has become a member of the Jana Sangh itself[101] and Raza describes him to be assured of the Islamic efforts in disintegration of the Indian civilization and that they must be driven out of the country; while Iffan was serving as a lecturer in the Department of history. Raza colourfully describes Topi's interest in the AMU as one born out of a desire to understand the aspirations of the Muslim youth of the country. While at Aligarh, Topi's friendship with Iffan and his Sakina inspires several false rumours and scandals within the university campus pertaining to the nature of Topi's relationship with Sakina. Topi himself grows far distant from his own family, and starts moving in Muslim League circuits, the crumbling nature of his political convictions are explicitly rendered when he chooses to canvas for the Muslim League candidate instead of doing so for his elder

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[98] Paul R. Brass, "The Development of an Institutionalized Riot System in Meerut City, 1961 to 1982 ," essay, in *Forms Of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide In Modem India* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2006), 65–102, 66-78.

[99] Bharatiya Jana Sangh, "Problems of Unity," essay, in Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party Documents 1951-1972, vol. 4 (Resolutions on Internal Affairs) (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh Central Office, 1973), 97–140, https://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/198 , 122.

[100] Bharatiya Jana Sangh, "Problems of Unity," essay, in Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party Documents 1951-1972, vol. 4 (Resolutions on Internal Affairs) (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh Central Office, 1973), 97–140, https://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/198 , 122-23.

[101] Rahi Masoom Raza, Topi Shukla (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2022),33.

brother, who became a Jana Sangh candidate and his younger brother who became a Congress candidate:

'He has come from that Muslim University. I think he would work for you.' Munni Babu hinted at Topi.

'I already have a lot of volunteers who are not from the Muslim university. It is a matter of convictions.' Bhairav answered, 'Don't chit-chat politics with me. Jana Sangh would take the country backwards.'

'…and you'd use your pair of oxen* like a Muslim farmer uses his ploughshares to take this country forward? Nehru will be end of this country!'

' I would not know much of that. But Bhairav is right, they might name themselves as the Jana Sangh, but they do not have a single party office in the country side! It should be called the Baniya Sangh and not the Jana Sangh', intruded Topi

'So you'll assist Bhairav's campaign?', asked Munni Babu.

'No, I think I'll assist Kallan's campaign?, said Topi calmly.

'What that musalman blackguard's campaign!" exclaimed both the brothers.

'So now this household shall see those days when a brother will assist the campaign of a Muslim against his brothers!…I always protested against sending him to Aligarh!' , Ramdulari stuttered anxiously."[102]

A 'sinister shadow' of incidental and perceived communal intent charges the narrative of the novel[103], inspite of the fact that the narrative remains party to most generous and protective instances of religious tolerance based on inter-faith dialogue from time to time. Iffan's wife Sakina sends rakhis to one of the sons of a Hindu family that tried to save him during

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[102] Rahi Masoom Raza, *Topi Shukla* (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2022), 78-79.
[103] Suresh Kohli, "Review: Topi Shukla by Rahi Masoom Raza, Rahee Masoom Raza and Meenakshi Shivram," *Indian Literature* 49, no. 1 (225) (2005): 196–98, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23346593 , 197.

communal riots of the Partition. Her hatred for the Hindus stems from a pathological fear of death of those Hindu friends whom sends rakhis to. Cathartically enough Sakina gets rid of her disgust for Hindus, through her association with Topi, who ultimately commits suicide at the end of the novel.

Debates between Topi and Iffan on the communal nature of Hindu-Muslim interaction and inter-faith dialogue, often transgress its political context and appears as a metaphysical conundrum. They consider the possibility of no Muslims in the Indian hockey or cricket team when they play Pakistan, and they realise it is a question of suspected territorial loyalty. The communal implications of identity, form a corollary to the territorial allegiances. Something that Iffan had understood earlier during his tenure as a lecturer at a Government Degree College run by religious minorities:

"'This newer generation seems to be at a greater loss than our generation. We had no dreams. But these kids, they have nurtured fallacies as their dreams. I teach history. I doubt if India will have a history. I am being asked to read and teach colonial histories in class. Pakistan, I reckon will do the same. There, tarikhs* would be considered as the most authentic Islamic history. I wonder when Indians will write their own history.'

Why don't we go to Pakistan then?', asked Sakina.

'For what? To teach them that Indians were uncouth brutes before Islam came to India?', he shook his head despondently."[104]

In his preface to the novel, Raza concedes the necessity of a 'compromise' that the individuals growing under the falling walls[105] needed to make to survive within the populist secular ecosystem that did its best contain communalism without making any effort to quell the same. Topi's suicide at the end of the novel, after Iffan and Sakina shift to Jammu, is not necessarily a compromise; instead it exposes the fallacy of secularism/ communalism binary.

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[104] Rahi Masoom Raza, Topi Shukla (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2022), 43.
[105] Note: A phrase used as a metaphor for partition in Hindi and Urdu post-partition novels alike. Examples include authors like Rahi Masoom Raza, Upendranath Ashk and others.

The riots described at the end of the novel, Iffan quitting his position at the Aligarh Muslim University and finally Topi's suicide refer to a collection of symptoms that discredit the praxis of popular secularism in the public life of the citizens, while rejecting communalism as well.

First published in 1969, Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Kingbadantir Nayak' , talks about the agrarian labouring classes of some villages in the Uttar Rarh* region of West Bengal and the greater problematic of traditional modes of ownership of land, old feudal loyalties in the face of 'scientifically-premised' co-operative farming. Siraj's depiction of the rural Bengali power structure in this novel is clearly based on land-ownership. The novel concentrates on a group of insolvent farmers and agrarian labourers who shift from the traditional role of farming to protection of paddy and crops at night and during heavy rains in the period preceding the harvesting of crops. It helps to note that Chhokulal, Jogibor, Baytullah and others in the group own their own arable land, but due to ageing or shifting from their traditional occupation has rendered them unable to be commercially competitive. In their own personal lives, their own land holdings remain a point of much anxiety. While Chhokulal received his holdings through ancestral inheritance, which was in fact a charity from the erstwhile Zamindar; Baytullah's reduced land holdings remain a testament to his father's loss in an ownership lawsuit against a Zamindar, leading ultimately to his insanity. The following excerpt, establishes Baytullah's plight clearly:

"Bapjaan fought the lawsuit as well. But he lost. The rest few bighas of his land were as good as gone...

He went insane. He had been a Faraizi[106]* musalman—devout enough to have sacrificed music; insanity would make him sing and dance. It was etched on his mind."[107]

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[106] Note: A Faraizi Musalman should possibly refer to a follower of the Faraizi movement led by Haji Shariatullah, who intended to remove un-Islamic (read syncretic) practices from the Muslim households and bring them closer to traditional teachings of Islam. So in this case as a Faraizi muslim, song and dance would have been impermissible to Baytullah's father.

Baytullah's own devoutness however is contingent to his class-associations, in the novel. In a description of disease within the village, he chases off a Muslim fakir who claimed to be able to dispel pox as a miracle in lieu of crops. Having come of a Faraizi stock of Muslims, he does not believe in Sufi folk traditions, much of which has been obtained by syncretic relations to other faiths. However contradictions still come to the fore within his identity when he decides to give away a handful of rice to Jogibor, which was intended to be a Friday donation at the nearby mosque. His act of charity, rendered it to be a rare moment of inter-faith solidarity, in moments of sheer penury. Baytullah's volatility between the two identities of being a devout muslim and that of being a marginal land owner with little knowledge of agriculture, could be interpreted as the Bengali Muslim's confusion in the face of counter-discourses of 'Unity of Being' and 'Unity of existence':

"[the Bengali muslims] …are embodied in the competing conceptual terminologies of 'unity

of being' (*wahdat al-wujud*) and 'unity of existence' (*wahdat al-shuhud*). The former

has provided the basis for a vision of religious synthesis and cultural amalgam between

Islam and the local Bengali environment, sometimes even emphasising the assimilation

and absorption of blatantly anti-Islamic features. The latter has contested such

assimilationist visions, has advocated distance between Hindus and Muslims and has

stressed the need for the assertion and affirmation of a distinct Islamic identity." [108]

The ex-Zamindar elites in the novel are represented within this novel as purely instrumentalist individuals who are imbricated within the discourses of 'mega-science' and electoral democracy for validation of their own personal selfhoods. Coming from a Zamindari ancestry, Saradindu is an agricultural scientist who intends to modernise the

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[107] Syed Mustafa Siraj, "Kingbadantir Nayak," in Nana Rasher 6ti Uponyash (Kolkata: Deep Prakashan, 2021), 133–288, 154-155.
[108] Alefiya Tundawala, "MULTIPLE REPRESENTATIONS OF MUSLIMHOOD IN WEST BENGAL: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH LITERATURE," SOUTH ASIA RESEARCH 32, no. 2 (August 20, 2012): 139–63, https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/0262728012454212 , 139.

existing methods of agriculture to increase productivity, and is shown to be enamoured by the resources provided by the cooperative farming policies of the government. His commercial interest could be argued as contingent to the land reforms considered by the erstwhile Swatantra Party:

"For mechanised farming we require economic holdings. Since a long time fragmentation of holdings has taken place through a natural process...the small farmers with their large families just consume what little they grow leaving practically nothing for the market. It is the large farmers with their marketable surplus supply of foodgrains to the urban population..."[109]

Saradindu's interests and desires are held as a ransom by ex-Zamindar Shankari Prasad who remains desirous of protecting his quasi-feudal status by protecting his relationship to land tenants and other ex-Zamindars of his region. In a novel, that considers cooperative agriculture as the scientifically prudent adversary to traditional modes of tenancy farming; it is hardly surprising that the elites appear to adhere to a particularly instrumentalist view of rural class-structure. It is arguably for such a view of 'modernization' discourse that questions of communal intent do not flare up as such. A different view suggests that Siraj's writings during this period were a distinct way of legitimising and validation of syncretism and creation of an aspiring class of non-communitarian Bengalis.[110]

The novel concludes ultimately with torrential rains and severe flooding that severely destroys Saradindu's agricultural farm and renders it practically irreparable. Considered in relation to the villagers collective mournful prayers for rain, earlier in the novel; the flood does almost appears as something divinely ordained. While the author does not give us much

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[109] Swatantra Party, Real Land Reforms , version PDF, Https://Indianliberals.In/ (Bangalore: Farmer's Federation of India), accessed September 18, 2023, https://indianliberals.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/5440-Real_Land_Reforms.pdf , 2-3.

[110] Alefiya Tundawala, "MULTIPLE REPRESENTATIONS OF MUSLIMHOOD IN WEST BENGAL: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH LITERATURE," SOUTH ASIA RESEARCH 32, no. 2 (August 20, 2012): 139–63, https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/0262728012454212 , 144.

information about the other farmers, it saves Shankari Prasad's doddering quasi-feudal status from bankruptcy.

In the end, Siraj's novel performs an intrinsic break with the earlier representations of postcolonial modernity in rural Bengal. In such a context, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay's novella 'Agradani' offers a very interesting contrast: where a doctor trained in Allopathic medicine is allowed inside the Zamindar's wife's childbirth room when it is anticipated that she her third child sixth consecutive time. By contrast, in Siraj's novel, Saradindu's scientific agricultural theories are almost described by the author in fanciful, speculative yet are replete with phrases drawn from western discourses of techno-sciences. This speculative anticipation of a rousing success transmutes into a form of irony, when Siraj narrates how Saradindu has to conspire with the local administrator of the government run co-operative apparatus, Srinivas Saha. Srinivas does not share Saradindu's optimism, but he suggests a solution to Saradindu from conceding to Shankari Prasad's authority, by engaging in siphoning of funds from the public cooperative. Siraj is indeed dubious of the statist principles as is evident above, but secular principles are too a part of these principles.[111] Siraj does stays ominously silent on that, and instead provides enduring examples of individuals like Baytullah who opt to be tolerant to bare demands of other peoples from other faiths in their own personal ways. Such narratives invoke a strategically different provincial form of secular tolerance based on inter-faith dialogue, from that of the Hindi novel of the period.

The final novel to be considered in this segment would be Bhisham Sahni's 'Tamas'. Published in 1973, the novel imbricates the context of a communal riot and that of the existence of a composite culture within itself. The contrasting forms of Otherization by the community within the novel, in relation to the discourses above, present the novelistic narrative as a political allegory. The allegorisation of the riot in 'Tamas', however is neither something speculative nor one born of generalisation. At least, three different historical riots

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[111] Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 13, no. 2 (1988): 177–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/030437548801300202 , 185-86.

have been utilised as the basis of the novel, which leads Daisy Rockwell, the translator to comment that the riot itself is the protagonist of the text:

"Structurally, it is a very unusual work, with no clear human protagonist. Readers who are not familiar with the novel will be confused as it slowly dawns on them that the real protagonist of Tamas is not a person at all, but the riot in itself."[112]

Likewise, Sahni himself, in his P.C. Joshi memorial lecture of 1999 had conceded graciously that the Rawalpindi riots of 1926 was the primary inspiration behind his conceptualisation of the novel.[113] In an effort to delineate the pluralist nature of the Non-Cooperation movement and through that the colonial nationalist struggle of Independence, Sahni contends that these riots were engineered to discredit the popular, non-communal basis of the freedom struggle. While Sahni's historical trajectory is validated by modern historians, who feel that the Muslim League's leadership [Mohammad Ali]'s unease with Gandhi's alignment with the Hindu Mahasabha in the aftermath of the failure of the Khilafat Movement, may have been the immediate cause that led to communal disturbances at the time.[114] But the veracity of communal disintegration, and the multi-polar nature of the conflicts (Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims) brings to mind the Kohat riots of 1924. The 1924 riots have been considered as one which dictated the rapidly declining nature of inter-faith dialogue during the period, and the multi-polar nature of the riot, was also a departure from the earlier communal riots.[115]. On the other hand, Daisy Rockwell, asserts a distinct proposition where she feels that Sahni's description of the riot and the complete decay of inter-community dialogue is perhaps an analogy to the 1970 Bhiwandi riots, which made him reflect on the earlier colonial era

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[112] Daisy Rockwell and Bhisham Sahni, "Introduction," essay, in *Tamas*, trans. Daisy Rockwell, Modern Classics (New Delhi: Penguin, 2016), ix–xviii, x.

[113] Bhisham Sahni, "Contours of Our Composite Culture: P.C. Joshi Memorial Lecture," Social Scientist 28, no. 1/2 (Jan-Feb) (2000): 32–41, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3518056 , 40.

[114] Shabnum Tejani, "The Question of Muslim Autonomy: The Khilafat Movement and Separation of Sindh 1919-1932," in *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2022), 144–98, 185.

[115] Saileshkumar Bandopadhyay, "Gorokkha Theke Khilafat O Tarpor," essay, in *Dangar Itihash* (Kolkata: Mitra O Ghosh Publishers, 1992), 32–56, 38-39. (Also See: Patrick McGinn, "Communalism and the North West Frontier Province: The Kohat Riots, 9th-10th September, 1924," *South Asia Research* 6, no. 2 (November 1986): 139–58, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/026272808600600204 , 146-47.)

riots.[116] Rockwell's proposition is inaccurate on one count: while Bhiwandi riots led to the complete breakdown of inter-community relationship in the atmosphere of clashes pertaining to celebration of Shiv Jayanti by a Jan Sangh linked organisation, the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal[117]; the riot described in Tamas is in in fact closer in nature to the Kohat riots, which was multi-polar and had its roots in complete inadequacy of the state machinery.

Sahni's understanding of communalism as a separate phenomenon from religiosity is understood in his description of the rhetoric of Otherization employed by almost all the religious denominations within the narrative. This is important, for usage of such a rhetoric effectively alienates the religious community (rather, the community of believers) from others, thereby insulating them from the possibility of any inter-faith dialogue. Inter-faith dialogue, thus, is only existent in the novel between Shah Nawaz and Professor Raghunath; and Hayat Bakhsh and Lakshmi Narayan who are representatives of the bourgeois with colonial education and trading elite classes respectively. Sahni's implication being; that secular identities within Independent India has followed the trajectory of protecting the interests of those privileged by the status quo only. Alternatively, the religious organizations, engage in their own diatribe of catholicity against external ethnic contamination by engaging in otherization. The Hindu Sabha*, represented within the novel by businessmen like Lakshmi Narayan, physically trained youths like Ranvir, and that of canvassers like Vanaprasthi, otherize the non-Hindu categories as the mlechha; and it is projected within the very same rhetoric that it is the duty of all Hindus to liquidate the mlechhas. An excerpt from the novel exemplifies the trajectory clearly:

'It was from Master Dev Vrat's mouth that he heard everything had already been written in the Vedas... "Mlechhas are filthy people—they don't bathe, they don't wash their hands after

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[116] Daisy Rockwell and Bhisham Sahni, "Introduction," essay, in *Tamas*, trans. Daisy Rockwell, Modern Classics (New Delhi: Penguin, 2016), ix–xviii, ix-x.

[117] Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, "Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India I (1947-1986)," Sciences Po portal, July 15, 2013, https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/hindu-muslim-communal-riots-india-i-1947-1986.html#title1) , n.p. (Also See: Probhat Chandra Chatterji, *Secular Values for Secular India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1995), 25-33. / Abhishek Choudhary, "In the Shadow of Shrimati Gandhi (1968-77)," in *Vajpayee: The Ascent of the Hindu Right 1924-1977* (New Delhi: Picador India (Pan Macmillan), 2023), 113–228, 239.

relieving themselves, they eat one another's left overs, they don't relieve themselves at proper times"...

Ranvir saw mlecchas everywhere. The cobbler sitting by the side of the road in the street nearby was a mlechha; Hamid who studied in the same class was a mlechha, the fakir begging for alms in the gali was a mlechha. The family living next door was a mlechha.' [118]

The Sikhs, inside the Gurudwara, are in the same way described as:

"The congregation swayed their heads in unison, hands clasped, eyes closed. Some clapped in time to the music. These were the voices of sacrifice, raised again after centuries. Three hundred years ago this same song had been sung before battling the enemy. All were transported by the mood of self-sacrifice. In this extraordinary moment their souls were joined with those of their forebears, as though they had returned once again to the past. The time had come once again to do battle with the Turks. Crisis had come once again to the Sikh community, and yet again it had come from the Turks. They felt themselves breathe the air from centuries ago." [119]

While in the Muslim neighbourhood, the discussions were as follows:

"What have the British done to us? Hindu-Muslim hatred has been going on since the ancient times. A kaffir is a kaffir, and until he accepts the faith, he's the enemy. It's virtuous to kill a kaffir."[120]

Ashis Nandy's formulation of splitting religion into constitutive elements of religion-as-faith and religion-as-ideology[121] are particularly helpful in case of this novel and its perception of the religious community. The descriptions of the mlecchas, Turks, kaffir by the characters essentially are manifestations of that fear of contamination of the catholicity of their own community. Thus, deeming religion-as-ideology to be an adversary of what Sahni

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[118] Bhisham Sahni, *Tamas*, trans. Daisy Rockwell, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2016), 84-85.

[119] Bhisham Sahni, Tamas, trans. Daisy Rockwell, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2016), 239.

[120] Bhisham Sahni, Tamas, trans. Daisy Rockwell, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2016), 240.

[121] Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," Alternatives: Global, Local, Political 13, no. 2 (1988): 177–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/030437548801300202 , 178-79.

understands to be 'composite culture'. The space accommodated to composite culture and religious tolerance in the novel is quite a narrow and superficial one, even before the riot had taken place, as is understandable from the description of how annual Guru Purab procession would create religious anxieties if it chose to pass by the Jama Masjid. Interestingly enough, Sahni comments that this was a regular occurrence only after Congress activism began, thus clearly identifying nationalism and colonial statism as main culprits for flogging up communitarian anxieties. Yet sectarian riots are argued to be of pre-colonial in origin by Sahni, who posit that the 'combatants [of these riots] had their feet in the twentieth century and their heads in the middle ages.'[122]

The author's doubts about administrative intent are proven when at the end of the novel we see that there is little affirmative action by the administration other than the election of a peace committee. The limitations of populist secularism come to a forefront in the election of the peace committee members, when it is decided that representatives from political parties are elected on the basis of their religious identities to the committee, thereby creating a communal bias to each of the parties.

The narrative of the novel, in establishing a riot as its protagonist, and by adding colonial and postcolonial political subtext to it presents a historical reading of how populist secularism as a principle can be vastly limited. In greater contextual reading, it appears to be only as successful as using religion as an instrumentalist principle of statecraft. The latter, cannot be simply called communalism, as it tries to appropriate some form of territorial identification at a future stage. Sahni's lietary rendering of the secularism discourse, is thus one where religion becomes (or could become) and ideology at some point thereby challenging and moulding the ideology of the modern statecraft. Sahni, thus too, like Nehru,

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[122] Bhisham Sahni, Tamas, trans. Daisy Rockwell, of Modern Classics (Gurugram: Penguin, 2016), 280.

before him, felt that "too much religiosity" ran contrary to the sentiments of governance and it stemmed from a refusal to separate the private and the public lives.[123]

Conclusion

The word 'secularism' was added to the preamble of the Constitution in 1976, as a part of the 42nd Amendment. As a change made during the Emergency, this addition, categorically accepted the statist imperative towards populist secularism discourse. In an Indian context, this 'secular state' of the Preamble to the constitution, is significantly different from the earlier Nehruvian model of 'sarva dharm sambhava' which held much support at the Constituent assembly debates. As a result, secularism was not simply a much hallowed basis of policy-making, but something that was being used in an instrumentalist fashion by political organisations on all sides of the spectrum. The literary texts considered as representative examples of the period, anticipate this significant shift in their own myriad ways. Curiously, one must note that both Indira Gandhi's and Upadhyay-influenced Jan Sangh utilise two different forms of ethno-nationalist secularism, in their own way: the difference between the two is slight, as is often understood from the differential racial histories that go at loggerheads within the narrative of the novels considered in this chapter. There's Bhisham Sahni's invocation of a 'composite culture' in relation to his masterpiece 'Tamas', but then again there are communal public spaces too that undo the warp and woof of communal amity. It helps to note that on both sides of the secularism discourse during the period considered here, we find ample popular support both for and against it. Considering, Ashis Nandy's argument on the subject of secularism in postcolonial India, it is easy to reflect, whether such populist tenor is ultimately to be blamed for the deracination of the classical, colonial and the Euro-centric origins of secularism. But here we as scholars of

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[123] Patrick McGinn, "Communalism and the North West Frontier Province: The Kohat Riots, 9th-10th September, 1924," South Asia Research 6, no. 2 (November 1986): 139–58, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/026272808600600204 , 149. (Also See: Bipan Chandra, "The Role of Ideological, Social and Cultural Elements: II," in *Communalism In Modern India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1984), 158–208, 171.)

Indian constitution, must accept the significant difference between European style church-state separation model of secularism, and the principled distance, sarva dharm sambhav model of secularism. While the first bases itself on a degree of separation, the second bases itself on an intention to rationalize and reform religion for public life of the citizens. It is therefore of least surprise to us, that in the period from Nehru's demise to Indira Gandhi's 42nd Amendment to the Indian constitution, the secularism discourse, indeed became strongly populist.

Chapter Three: 1977-1992: From 'populist' to 'State-Controlled Secularism

<u>Changes to the discourse of secularism in the period concerned</u>

In the fifteen years that followed the 42nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, secularism had largely evolved into a matter of bureaucratic policy, rather than an unstated hegemonic agenda. The popular understandings of 'secularism' (sic. Indian secularism) had been conserved within the Indian bureaucratic apparatus, even during the National Emergency which would irrevocably tarnish the legacy of the Indian democratic modernity. Secularism was now a policy matter, and it would be evident in our discussions on political events that transpired during this period.

With the promulgation of 42nd Amendment to the Constitution of India, Secularism was now added to the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. Quite interestingly, the period when this Amendment was made, is known in post-independence Indian political history as the Emergency. This meant that the amendment to the constitution was made without suitable debates in the Lok Sabha. Furthermore, this period saw rampant and unchecked detention of political elements that were deemed unfavorable to the Indira Gandhi regime. In a political tactic that ran on the lines of demonology, organizations and activists ranging from the far Right to the far Left, including certain militant religious cults were imprisoned. One of the hallmark features of the period included RSS members and Jamaat e Islami activists being imprisoned in the same ward of the Central Prison, Bangalore. A reference to this, is to be found in the jail diary of Lal Krishna Advani:

'The jail authorities put the Anand Marg (sic. Ananda Marga) detenus along with RSS members but accommodated the Jamaat people with those detained on smuggling charges—obviously prompted by considerations of religious homogeneity. The Jamaat detenus resented the classifications and requested that they be housed with RSS men. Some adjustments were accordingly made. It is interesting that a Government which claimed to

promote secularism perpetuated religious and other denominations by everyone of its acts. Here is a graphic example. Instead of putting all political detenus together, they were sought to be segregated on the basis of religion which led to lumping of political prisoners with those suspected of criminal activity. It was by its policy of dividing Muslims and Hindus that so called secularism was promoted.'[124]

While in ways more than one, the Emergency broke the barrier amongst several Opposition parties across the political spectrum; it must be noted that specifically in case of the RSS, the organization remained impervious to repeated claims from other Opposition parties to open itself up to Christian and Muslim minorities. In fact, RSS' choice to retain its Hindu identity proved to be of bane to the Janata Party leadership, which ultimately broke up on the agenda of dual membership of RSS cadres. Once the Emergency was over in 1977, Jayprakash Narayan (henceforth JP), who actively lent ideological leadership to the Janata combine had been repeatedly insistent on the RSS to include non-Hindu Indians into its fold. In reaction to this the RSS leadership would continually try to remove itself from being attached to the JP movement that yielded political advantage in Bihar and elsewhere. Curiously enough the RSS leadership was in this case contradicting its grassroots level activists who would pride themselves in being instrumental in the movement. To quote A.G. Noorani on the subject:

'In the Lok Sangharsh Committee, the RSS students wing, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, virtually led the Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti. The RSS ideologue, K.N. Govindacharya 'was one of the key instigators of the Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti'. Nana Deshmukh of the RSS and the Jana Sangh acted as 'aide-de-camp' to JP. On his arrest, JP entrusted Nana Deshmukh with the organization of the movement.'[125]

Janata Party's strictness with regards to the dual memberships for the RSS cadres and in turn RSS's insulation against inclusion of religious minorities within its fold meant that

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[124] Lalkrishna Advani, "A View From Behind The Bars: June 26th, 1975," essay, in *A Prisoner's Scrap-Book* (New Delhi: Ocean Books, 2016), 13–25, 18.

[125] A. G. Noorani, "The RSS,the Emergency and the Janata Party," essay, in *The RSS: A Menace to India* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2020), 172–202, 177.

when it came to providing a secular alternative to the Congress, the party and JP found itself ensconced in a discourse of cultural communalism. Even though time and again it is stated across diaries of several prominent RSS activists that the Emergency brought the organization closer to other minority religious political organizations, there was still a lack of credible popular evidence as to what extent they were perceived to be non-communal. On the contrary, the rest of the Janata combine, through Hemavati Nandan Bahuguna, took a leaf from earlier 'populist' models of secularism to enlist the assistance of the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid to campaign for their cause.[126] This in my opinion, rendered the Janata bid for the government to be of substantially communal, for not only was it not able to persuade the ex-Jan Sanghis and RSS activists for a more inclusive stand, but in turn had to resort to a theological icon in campaigning for the Janata combine. Thus effectively presenting an unique model of dialectical communalism. K.R. Malkani, in his prison diaries, agrees in theory that the problem of Hindu-Muslim interfaith discourse is of pre-Mughal in origin, yet they continue in the post-colonial Emergency era India for their suspected extraterritorial allegiance. He notes the following, on the unique position of the Indian Muslims:

'…that of a man waiting on the railway platform. He is waiting for a special train of his own imagining, to take him to an all-Muslim India, a train which never turns up and never can.' [127]

Elsewhere in the same context, he props up a spurious historical legacy of the RSS, as a spiritual reformist organization:

'The Hindus in India—like the Christians in the Turkish empire—reacted to aggressive Muslim militarism by going militant themselves. The result was Shivaji and Guru Gobind

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[126] Aditya Vardhan Singh, "Sampoorna Kranti: The Collapse of Janata Parivar, Idealist J.P. Betrayed," essay, in *Hey Ram to Jai Shri Ram: 20 Dates That Changed the Course of India* (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2022), 125–42, 129.
[127] K. R. Malkani, "Muslims--A New Perspective," essay, in *The Midnight Knock* (New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2022), 92–102, 103.

Singh and their free state in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Arya Samaj in the nineteenth century and the RSS in the twentieth.' [128]

Clearly, in both these instances, K.R. Malkani does two things: he clearly brings the position of the Indian Muslim to doubt in terms of his/ her allegiance and represents the RSS as a Hindu Militarist front, following the tradition of Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh, one in which non-Hindus would not technically find a place in spite of repeated requests by JP and the Janata combine. In an unstated way, the project of erasing the secular discourse went on ironically with a superficial application of 'populist secular' credentials.

RSS's critical importance in this project was clarified in 1980, with the creation of the Bharatiya Janata Party after the dissolution of the Janata Party. In his presidential speech presented at the inauguration of the BJP headquarters, Atal Vihari Vajpayee amply clarified the legacy of Jana Sangh and JP Movement finding a successor in the newly established political organization:

'…I would like to assert that it was not with any happiness that we parted company with the Janata Party. From beginning to end we kept exerting to preserve the unity of the Party. We were conscious of the pledge we had taken at Rajghat in presence of Lok Nayak Jayprakash to maintain the Unity of the party. But by converting the non-issue of dual membership into an issue, a situation was created in which it became impossible for us to continue in the party with any honor and self-respect…

The Janata Party formed because of the inspiration of Lok Nayak Jaiprakash has disintegrated. But his vision of a glorious India is still with us. We shall not allow it to be obliterated. His dreams, his labours, his struggles and his unflinching commitment to certain

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[128] K. R. Malkani, "Muslims--A New Perspective," essay, in *The Midnight Knock* (New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2022), 92–102, 102..

basic values are part of an invaluable legacy that we have inherited. The Bharatiya Janata Party is pledged to pursuing an unfinished task."[129]

The premise of a political organization, where the RSS did not have to function at the beck and call of other populist, non-RSS political parties, is what ultimately prompted the birth of Bharatiya Janata Party (Henceforth BJP) in 1980. The BJP's aspirational claim for the Jana Sangh, the Janata Party and even that of Jayprakash Narayan appears spurious when one acknowledges the continuous rebuffs that the Janata Party and JP received from the RSS sarsanghchalak. This is what led J.P to ultimately wistfully comment later in his life:

'...my only objection is that the RSS people are trying to influence politics under the garb of a political organization. I absolutely do not agree with this logic of the RSS. I still feel that the RSS should merge itself with the Pro-Janata organisations. But if it is bent upon retaining its own distinct identity, I would then repeat that it should include in it, non-Hindus, Muslims, Christians etc. I have always condemned Hindu Nationalism of the RSS.

In democracy every organization has a right to propagate its philosophy or ideology—this is essence of Democracy. But when it appears to dominate politics, we should have to be careful to see whether such philosophy or ideology threatens the basic philosophy of Indian Nationalism. I have no quarrel with the association of RSS with the Janata Party. But it will have to give up its Hindu image and become completely secular...

Everytime the RSS people assure me that they would internally improve. But I do not know what they do after going from here. It is continuing like this for last four years. After all there is a limit to everything.'[130]

J.P's exasperation with the RSS and Vajpayee's appropriation of J.P.'s legacy of opposition to the Congress (I) is situated on the thorny point of imagining a possible alternative to Indira

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[129] Atal Bihari Vajpayee, *India at the Crossroads* (Bharatiya Janata Party Publication, 1980), https://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/2619 , 1-2.

[130] A. G. Noorani, "The RSS,the Emergency and the Janata Party," essay, in *The RSS: A Menace to India* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2020), 172–202, 201-202.

Gandhi's hegemony: simply put whether that alternative should be a Hindu Nationalist one or should it be an inclusive, secular one predicated by the claims of a collective Indian Nationalism. The BJP thus is a negation of all ideological aspirations of J.P. at the cost of fulfillment of his superficial political ultimatum to replace the Indira Gandhi stranglehold on the Indian polity. Curiously enough, Vajpayee in his inaugural speech as the BJP president dithers and significantly moves away from the discourse of pseudo-secularism that was dominant within the Jana Sangh; instead he initiates a new discourse of 'positive secularism' where he argues that an organisation's dedication to secularism is concomitant to its interest in preserving the democratic ethos of the polity. Thus, secularism cannot be perceived as a natural doctrine of administration of the state, but as an instrument of furthering the democratic principles of the state (simply put as a matter of state policy).[131] In my opinion, Vajpayee's commentary can be problematized on two accounts: firstly, if indeed secular interests are ipso-facto conflated with democratic intent, then why did the RSS, and the BJP consider the dual membership issue and the secularization of RSS as a bogey, even after repeated requests by J.P.? In such a scenario, it would only reflect as to how both the organizations lack a functional understanding of democracy within their organizations; which is reflected by the fact that the RSS does not have elections for its office holder positions and neither does the BJP, where the RSS functionaries are parachuted into externally for proper functioning of the entity. In such a scenario, the point which becomes obvious is that neither the BJP nor the RSS believe in a sentiment of protective and perfectible democracy as a matter of social justice, but as a matter of majoritarianism (read Hindu Nationalism). Secondly, Vajpayee's observation of positive secularism (sic. Secularism to further democracy) is not at all different from Indira Gandhi's act of adding secular to the preamble of the Indian Constitution via the 42nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, 1976 because in both instances the nature of secularism intended is predicated upon two disparate populist political contexts: democracy in case of Vajpayee, and socialism in case of

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[131] Atal Bihari Vajpayee, India at the Crossroads (Bharatiya Janata Party Publication, 1980), https://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/2619 , 10-11.

Indira Gandhi. [132] Thus, highlighting my point of concern in this chapter that the discourse surrounding secularism in the period concerned was stringently circumscribed within the democratic/socialist intent of the polity, and thus only incidentally an intrinsic matter of 'state-control'. Hence, the period concerning the National Emergency and its immediate aftermath saw a shift from populist model of secularism to a largely 'state-controlled secularism', something apparent across the political compass of the time.

The gradual erosion of the secular credo, in favour of the creation of a 'state-controlled secularism' is strongly evident in atleast one instances during this period: the Shah Bano incident.

The Shah Bano case of 1985, is a glaring example of how state-controlled secularism faltered badly and proved to be of limited use in checking the rapidly communalizing political order. In this landmark divorce-restitution case, in which Muslim political outfits frantically tried to remove the Muslim individual from the purview of Section 125 of Code of Criminal Procedure arguing that the interpretation of the Quran was out of the judicial limits, the Rajiv Gandhi led Congress government's attitude proved to be of much political controversy. In a bid to protect the greater political Muslim interests, the Congress government of the time led by Rajiv Gandhi presented the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, 1986 whereby the Muslim man would not be obliged to pay alimony to the recently divorced wife beyond the time period of the *iddat*, beyond that, the woman would have to be supported by her family and in cases of non-availability of relatives, the magistrate could compel the Waqf board to provide for her (something which scholars like Jaffrelot feels is insignificant given that Waqf boards are in most cases are insolvent).[133] The Shah Bano incident makes it clear that in most circumstances, even if secular principles are ingrained within the directive and the legislative intent of the state, still the outcome may or may not

[132] As a part of the 42nd Amendment, Indira Gandhi led Congress added the words secular and socialist to the Preamble of India.
[133] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Contradictions of the BJP and the Erosion of Secularism," essay, in *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst and Company, 1996), 314–37, 336.

fulfill the specified ends of being either democratic or even socialist for that matter. In such scenarios, targeted application of quick-fix secularist legislation, may as well go on to further communalist status-quo within the polity. Simply put, the secular lip-service of the legislature more often than not yields significantly communal dividends.

In order to critically amplify this shift from the populist secularism of the period to state-controlled secularism or policy secularism, we shall in the next segment of this chapter analyze four novels, two of them in Hindi namely: Rahi Masoom Raza's 'Katra Bi Aarzoo' (1978), Krishna Sobti's 'Zindaginama' (1979) and two of them being Bangla, namely: Samaresh Basu's 'Jug Jug Jeeye' (1981) and Abul Bashar's 'Fullbou' (1988).

References to the shift from Populist Secularism to State Controlled Secularism/Policy Secularism in select non-Anglophone novels of the period.

Rahi Masoom Raza's 'Katra Bi Aarzoo' is a novel that is largely reflective of the default notions of power and class instinct as noticed by the author during the time of the National Emergency. It helps to state in this regard that Raza does not take part in a categorically partisan criticism, instead he critically interrogates how the Emergency as a historic period re-oriented class and individual political allegiance over time. Simply put, the novel does not stop at simply criticising the regime of Indira Gandhi, it sartorially subjects the Janata government and the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan at the same time. In doing so, Raza achieves two things at the same time: firstly, he rewrites the Emergency period as a time of authentic flashpoint when democratic principles were subject to partisan and bureaucratic beck and call; secondly, the Emergency is not represented as a watershed moment in Indian political history, instead shown as a significant moment of change in contiguity with Indian Independence, Naxal Movements and so on and forth.

Thus in Raza's narration of the everyday life of inhabitants living in the middle class Gali Dwarikaprasad neighbourhood of Allahabad, we do not find much change and churn apart

from that of few characters with significant political association. The communal undertones of the neighbourhood come to surface during the Emergency when it is noted that the informal Urdu name of the neighbourhood 'Katra Bi Aarzoo' had been scrawled on the signpost, thus displacing the official name 'Gali Dwarikaprasad' and the unofficial 'Katra Mir Bulaki'. The simmering political differences start floating on the surface of their daily life, as is understood from the fact that the local police and the administration assume this to be a code word for organized conspiracy by the journalist Asharam, who happens to be a part of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The surveillance takes an ugly turn when the police force raided a mosque in the neighbourhood, anticipating to find a bomb-making workshop run by Communists:

"Asharam was undoubtedly a mastermind of the conspiracy and he had to be arrested. He was sure that Asharam could be easily traced if the bomb makers could be interrogated. It was easy to get these chaps from that workshop they had heard of nearby. But the question remained where could one actually find Asharam?

In this pretext, they raided an old mosque and got hold of a bomb makers' network, he would keep it to convince Delhi about Asharam's complicity. The day they raided the mosque the entire neighbourhood erupted in protest and there was chaos. It was decided from Delhi that Hindus and Muslims from the neighbourhood would be interviewed by the Akashwani radio about how the Emergency proved to be of great advantage to them… From time to time, Delhi would nominate a few members of the either community to praise the Emergency so that the public opinion swung in favour of the regime." [134]

The communists did not remain the sole subjects of such surveillance. Public and partisan control remained over individuals of the minority community as well, however in a distinctly subdued fashion: by promotion of vasectomy amongst Muslim women, during the period. Raza had probably taken a leaf from the contemporary accounts of vasectomy campaigns by

[134] Rahi Masoom Raza, *Katra Bi Aarzoo* (New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 2022), 149.

Indira Gandhi in Muslim majority neighbourhoods of Delhi, that led to an uncontrolled outrage. Raza narrates:

'Shehnaz became a social worker herself. She became a vocal activist for the Youth Congress and remained well informed about the advantages of vasectomy. She would visit household women and convince them about the advantages of vasectomy campaigns run on political funds. She would show them packets of condoms and explain, often in exaggerations, about how they work. The scenario became such, that the women would blush at her mere appearance. She would wear a pair of coloured goggles, and would expect salaams from the inhabitants of the Katra whenever she passed by. Ironically, the urchins of the neighbourhood would call her 'Nirodh, Nirodh' whenever she was around. The name stuck on.'[135]

The significance of this mention of party-funded vasectomy drive is something that was validated by the Shah Commission in 1978, while investigating on the excesses of the government during the National Emergency. 'Pre-existing system of targets, incentives and disincentives' [136] so that volunteers were to be found in plenty for these sterilisation drives. Raza also offers an incident from the novel which verifies the veracity of such events: Badrulhasan Nayab Machhalishahri, a character in the novel, and an inhabitant of the Katra Bi Aarzoo, gets forcefully sterilized on his way to a wedding party in Panipat. Ironically, Badrul was a part of the bridegroom party in the first place for he was engaged to present a poem at the wedding mushaira on the importance of nasbandi (vasectomy) in Islam. Instead, he is arrested by the police, forcibly taken to a sterilization camp and rewarded with twenty rupees once the surgery is done. Significant scholarship exists on the how in reality such punitive steps by the administration were suitably hand in glove with the existing bureaucratic hegemony's perception of religious minority. This association is understood by atleast one scholar of the National Emergency, who contends that such a mode of action

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[135] Rahi Masoom Raza, Katra Bi Aarzoo (New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 2022), 107.
[136] Rebecca Jane Williams, "Storming the Citadels of Poverty: Family Planning under the Emergency in India, 1975–1977," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 2 (February 4, 2014): 471–92, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021911813002350 , 476.

effectively brings to the fore as to how the Malthusian project has deep roots in the project of modernity.[137] A differential opinion of the same vasectomy drive is offered by former RSS ideologue and journalist K.R. Malkani, who was imprisoned during the National Emergency:

'Turkman Gate reminds me—a few days after the incident (forced sterilisation drive) a delegation of Muslim leaders called on the President. They complained about the excesses committed on the people. The President wondered what he could do. One visitor stood up and said: 'You could have done one thing." "What?" asked the President. "You could have taken poison", returned the visitor.'[138]

He also observes the following about the ubiquitous nature of these vasectomy drives and how it enraged the general populace:

'We are aware of the trauma nasbandi was causing. The country was as agitated about it as it had been in 1857 over greased cartridges. But in this manner the jail was quite a sanctuary. The authorities knew that if the convicts felt in danger of being operated upon, there would be an overnight jailbreak…

I myself saw in the Rohtak Children's Ward a 14-Year old boy, Ganesh, from Dhuri, Punjab, originally hailing from Karnatka. Ganesh had gone to Hardwar to sell balloons at a fair. He was promptly seized by the police on 16th September, 1976. They took him to one Dr. Verma of Canal Hospital, Mayapuri, Hardwar who entered Ganesh's age as 25 and vasectomised him

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[137] Bharti Arora, "Rethinking Powers of Political: The National Emergency and the J. P. Movement in Rahi Masoom Raza's Katra Bi Arzoo," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 58, no. 1 (May 16, 2020): 83–100, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989420915944 , 9.

[138] K. R. Malkani, "A Feast of Thought," essay, in The Midnight Knock (New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2022), 74-82, 76.

While there was much resentment against forced nasbandi, most of educated people seemed to accept it as 'good for villagers.' However, the villagers didn't think so...'[139]

Arora's commentary and Malkani's observation direct us to the reality that these vasectomy drives, which were rampant during the Emergency, were conducted with the tacit complicity of the Congress (I) and the existing bureaucratic order. Likewise, these diktats were aimed mostly at lower-middle class neighbourhoods with a significant ghetto population. The Muslim man thus categorically became the first target of such drives.

Likewise, apart from demonization of religious minorities and ideological opposition to the erstwhile political order; Raza clearly reserves his critical judgement for the J.P. movement stating how the Janata combine coalition had no roots in the urban and rural middle class, and was solely dependent on political turncoats from other political dispensations. Thus, J.P.'s clarion call for a 'total revolution' was not to be an authentic alternative to the repressive hegemony of the Congress (I). Alternatively, the Emergency over time found consensus amongst the lower middle class on the context of '...a claim of a galvanized economy (that) became the legitimation of the Emergency, and a spectacle for collective edification.'[140] The juggernaut of National Emergency of 1977 was thus borne by the policy-based bureaucratic hegemony that alternatively chose to be repressive on religious minorities and political opposition.

Krishna Sobti's 'Zindaginama' (1979) is a novelistic rewriting of the Partition that underscores the changing discourses of community association. Within the scope of her longest novel, she encapsulates the rural life of Punjab in the light of impending partition. Plurality becomes a catchword within the narrative, where a cross-section of the Punjabi agrarian class is represented within the narratorial style of the 'anchalik upanyas' scheme. The characters thus become less important and their incidental associations with the feudal

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[139] K. R. Malkani, "Life Inside Jail," essay, in *The Midnight Knock* (New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2022), 83-92, 88.
[140] Arvind Rajagopal, "The Emergency as Prehistory of the New Indian Middle Class," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 5 (February 4, 2011): 1003–49, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x10000314 , 1019-20.

structure, the imperialist state become paramount to the definition of the community. Having said so, Sobti does not ascribe to the either the social realist aesthetic promoted by the leftist (bampanthi) literary collective or the markedly anthropological orality-influenced stylistic promoted by the more orthodox, nativist provincial writers. Sobti's literary credential is something that could be identified as the middle-of-the-road, which instead to emulating the popular extant styles chose to develop a micro-history arc of provincialist elements. Such a mode of historiography is free from the demands of political activism of the author, thus granting the individual greater autonomy of archival research. She comments:

"Putting aside the literary quarrels and literary politics, if we turn to the word culture, we will have to say that the emblem of culture is not some holy book, nor some ascetics' school or dogma, nor one science, nor one writer, nor one caste, religion or sect—it is different from the shared power of the people and the individual worldwide. The heritage of hundreds and thousands of literary pens are assembled together in it. Today it's worldwide publishing organisation and system are so powerful that it can corner whoever it wants. What we writers should say through words, what we would writer, this cannot be directed by any power whatsoever..."[141]

Likewise, within 'Zindaginama', perceptions of communalism or for that matter religious plurality bears its relation to power relations such as feudal, agrarian and so on and not to differences between these communities. The plurality of the rural folk exhibits amazement at news of riots, state patronage to religion and even in case of internecine events of religious intolerance while moving abroad for employment. An exchange between several characters, on the subject of moving abroad for employment, goes as follows:

" 'ji,...first there were many complications in Hong Kong. When they finally reached Canada, see what the good English government does. They let Bhai Bhag Singh abd Balwant Singh disembark, and arrested their wives!'

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[141] Rosine-Alice Vuille, "Literature and Politics," essay, in *Krishna Sobti's Views on Literature and the Poetics of Writing: Theoretical Positions and Literary Practice in Modern Hindi Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 333–67, 338.

'Guruditt Singh, what happened to your brother-in-law and his wife?'

'Miyan Khan, the same happened to others. Both were arrested.'

Kakku Khan asked, 'Badshaho, I wanted to know what British jails might be like.'

Fakira started laughing. 'If it's a jail, then what can be good about it and what bad?'

Shahji understood. He shook his head. 'No Fakireya, it's not like that. See, Kalapani jail is the worst and the toughest of all jails in our country for all our prisoners.'

Mauladadji was touched. 'Why not...Kakku Khan, it's a brother's heart after all. You thought of Vazeera. Otherwise, I would say Gujrat Jail is also quite famous.'

'Khalsaji, if a Gurudwara was built in Canada, the land must have been given by the Sarkar only, no? That is not a bad thing. It is good.'

Chaudhary Fateh Ali said, 'I've heard that an impressive masjid is being constructed in London too. No government can afford to object in such matters.'[142]

The conflation of running a jail with that of establishing a place of worship exposes the feudal perceptions of the rural panjabis towards that of the imperialist state. The state could alternatively choose to be repressive and communal when it seemed fit, thus invoking the culture of feudal patronage. Sobti's evaluation of history as a site of linkage between perceptions of past, present and future is closer to that of Hayden White's articulation on historiography[143], wherein, the multiplicity of subjective perceptions constitute a pluralist view of community sentiment. Hence the characters of the novel can chose to be pluralist in their outlook, even when the functions of the colonial raj can present a largely communal reality. While it is granted that Sobti's literary historiography is a step removed from the microhistories of its characters, but such a critical distance is clearly reflective of her own

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[142] Krishna Sobti, Neer Kanwal Mani, and Moyna Mazumdar, *Zindaginama* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017), 420.

[143] Hayden V. White, "The Burden of History," *History and Theory* 5, no. 2 (1966): 111–34, https://doi.org/10.2307/2504510 , 112.

stance of distancing herself from literary-political activism. The plural, contesting voices in the novel, as opposed to archival history of the time is indicative of the act of constituting a Punjab of critical academic imagination that had been obliterated by the Partition and communal flare-ups.

But the question remains: how does one implicate the National Emergency period in this authorial imagination? As argued earlier, Sobti's critical distance in her literary works and her choice of distancing herself from literary-political cliques during her lifetime are to be understood as indicative of her own unique position during the Emergency. Wherein, she did not succumb to the bureaucratic excesses of the state, on the other hand she was not necessarily swayed by J.P.'s clarion calls for 'Total Revolution'. Likewise, in essence, her masterwork 'Zindaginama', which brought her a Sahitya Akademi award and is considered to be her longest novel, could talk about a liminal space for pluralist society in the face of a communal Partition. The metaphors of plurality remain omnipresent in Sobti, as much as in the works of Raza, albeit in significantly different planes: that of provincialism and class structure respectively.

Samaresh Basu's 'Jug Jug Jeeye' (1981) written within four years of the 1st Leftfront government of West Bengal, and in the larger background of the Naxalbari Andolan, explicitly deals with the underground communist mobilization and its subsequent radicalization after Independence of India. The novel in consideration is, thus a roughly historicized account of gradually eroding and often chaotic underground communist insurgencies and their fight against communalism and feudal sentiments. The novel ends on a rather abrupt note with the activists within the narrative anticipating a split within the CPI, thereby hinting at an effective break within the Marixst political activism arc.

In an effort to delineate a logic within leftist activism, the narrative largely concentrates on the communalist streak that remained internecine within the political mainstream of pre-Partition and Post-Partition India. Samaresh Basu, identifies this streak to be of imperialist origin while carefully mentioning how the functional challenges of communalism went on

unabated within the recently independent republic. Likewise, congress activists like Rashid in Pre-partition India are represented in the following way:

'He would be lost in his thoughts mostly. An avid Jinnah supporter, who wanted Pakistan. He would often go into a tirade, "We need Pakistan at any cost. Else we shall never be a part of the high society.' He would say this, amongst may be ten fifteen other truths. He never said a word about Chiang Kai-Shek, during the Bengali-Chinese riots, while travelling from Roosevelt Town. But inside the Dhukribagan brothel commune in Sealdah, he would cuss at Kai-shek, whenever the discussion on the Riots came up. This was because Chiang Kai-Shek had snubbed Jinnah, and had met only the Congress leaders...Rashid seemed always deep in his own thoughts at Dhukribagan. He would often be out on reconnaissance rounds, sometimes alone. He wanted specialized training in political activism from Muslim ministers, bureaucrats, wanted a reasonably high-paying job...

...but neither of us had any money. Jamal had informed us about a Muslim hotel. Rashid and I would have our meals there. It was during that time that I had first tasted beef. Beef curry and rice, for lunch and dinner. I never felt any distaste for it, except the first meal. Beef isn't like any other flesh, very different from mutton...later we would visit Jamal's workshop and sell fake revenue stamps. Jamal would sell thousands of them, while I was to correct the patterns with ink. Rashid secured me the job, once he knew that I was a painter.'[144]

The author's perception of communalist tendency amongst the minorities is omnipresent here. Be it within the perceived secularist Congress or markedly communalist Muslim League, the minority is perceives itself to be discomfited within the status quo. But such a communal sentiment is not one-sided, the Bengali Hindus too perceive the Muslims as militant, violently communalist during the post-Partition riots. Likewise, the Communist Party peace-committee has to face the following line of interrogation in their rounds through the riot-affected neighbourhoods:

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[144] Samaresh Basu, *Jug Jug Jeeye* (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1996). 174-175.

"This appears to be a Hindu neighbourhood. A voice from the jeep declared.

Somebody from the front row of the jeep reassured, 'Abdul, are you afraid?'

'Please don't mention my name, Comrade.', this was probably Abdul's petrified voice. 'They might drag the two of us out and put us to sword.   We should have taken the Wellesley way out.'

The jeep came to a standstill. 'We have been barricaded from the left turn...'

Before the words finished, Tridibesh noted a crowd of people behind their jeep. Two or three torches were lit. The lane was not as dark as they had thought. A voice could be heard. 'No, it 'aint the police after all. Which political party do you represent? The commie..?'

'Yes, has there been any fights around?', there was a voice from the jeep.

Somebody answered, 'What do you have to do with that? Your posse has been anyway out to safeguards those *neres* . It will take three times the men you have with you to cool them down. As it is, we have been faced around 5 waves of attack from the Moulali side throughout the day. They have killed three of our men, that too at the entry of the neighbourhood. They have sent in women so that it becomes difficult for us to defend our turf.

'Have you received police picketing?' A voice came from the jeep.

A cussword came as an answer from somewhere, the same voice went, 'The police are on to us. They are fending us off and guarding the Muslim mohallas. The Hindu darogas are even bigger beimaans, they are threatening us to save their jobs. We have decided, that if we must die, we'll kill the bloody lot of them, and die.'[145]

The communal underpinnings appear within the narrative of the novel as an impossibility of the communists to present a unified front against the status quo of the time. Communal intent is thus represented as a reality that does not necessarily respond in an expected

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[145] Samaresh Basu, *Jug Jug Jeeye* (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1996). 395.

fashion to the post-Partition hegemonic status quo. In presenting the mostly unfazed communalism of post-Partition Bengal, Samaresh Basu does two things: he distinguishes the origin points of colonial communalism and post-partition communalism and he professes his own doubt about the resourcefulness of Nehruvian cult of progress to handle communalism. The doubt appears to be perfectly congruent with the Emergency period, when state sponsored policy secularism proves to be incompetent in dealing with incidents such as Mass vasectomy campaigns against religious minorities and protection of restitution rights of minority women. In both cases the state had its resources, but their faulty application meant that in reality, a pluralist notion of communalism would run riot within the political body of the state.

Abul Bashar's 'Fulbou' (1988), written in the aftermath of the landmark Shah Bano incident exposes the double marginalized scenario of the divorced Muslim woman in the Indian context. A rural elite, Nisar Hossain, decides to marry for the fourth time at the age of sixty to the sixteen year old child, Razia Sultana. The fact that Razia Sultana was considered by Nisar's mother to be her grandson, Millat's fiancée, further complicates the matter within the family and outside. The narrative is not a romance at all, but instead a social realist depiction of a Bengali Muslim household in post-Independence India. The marriage happens, and incidentally Nisar Hossain dies without being able to consummate the marriage. At his death, Razia begs to Nisar for a temporal separation (a *'khalas'*), while Nisar declines to give her a talaq and dies shortly after; thereby rendering Razia to be a widow of Nisar. Greater complications arise at Nisar's death when Millat finds himself unmentioned in his father's will and remains at the mercy of Razia, his ex-fiancee and technically his stepmother. The novel explores how Razia and Millat develop feelings for each other in a scenario where their marriage is not allowed under the shariat system. The novel ultimately ends with Razia's suicide and the greater Muslim community's boycotting of both of them for leading an un-Islamic and a non-shariati way of life. The political lessons learnt from the Shah Bano incident of 1985 followed by the legislation of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 provide for an insightful reading of this narrative. In both the cases, that

of Shah Bano's claim for a post-divorce restitution from her husband Mohd. Ahmad Khan under the CrPC 125 and Razia's tearful claim for a temporal separation (khalas) at Nisar's death reflect badly on the greater situation of Muslim women which grants little autonomy to them by way of freedom of exit or association from the greater Muslim community. This lack of autonomy for women is largely related to the fact that the existence of Personal Laws demarcated the boundaries of communal and gender identities, thereby leading to stringent unilateral control over the women subjects by the orthodox community elders.[146] This orthodoxy of thought in matters of marriage is observable in Nisar's own defence of his decision to be married for the fourth time:

'The desiring mind is non-existent. So the desiring mind is of less importance. The condition of the society must be judged on the basis of the desiring body…I belong to the community of the Muslims. Not of Hindus. I belong to the community of the Nabi.

All educated men are corpses. Corpses! By the blessings of the Hindu rajahs, the country has come to resemble a graveyard. The battle of Uhud and Badr had killed nearly all able bodied men. It was a design of the Kaffers. Women were unable to find men suitable for marriage. Most men were six feet under earth. It was at this point in history that four marriages for Muslim men was decided upon. Why four? Even fourteen would have made sense. These days the educated sons can't find employment. Unemployed! They can't even find work as labourers. A generation that survives on being pickpockets, all of them are dead, spiritually! I, however, am able enough to support and provide maintenance to those dependent on me. I still feel vitality in my veins. I have no need for a vasectomy. So, why should I be petrified to follow Nabi's sunnat? Tell me Anwar? Have I even forced Razia in anyway?'[147] (translations mine)

Nisar's observation on historical origin of multiple marriages in Islamic theology used as a defence by him for his own decision, hints at the greater problematic of personal laws within

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[146] Kumkum Sangari, "Women Against Women," essay, in *Politics of the Possible: Essays on Gender, History, Narrative and Colonial History* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1999), 184–278, 238.

[147] Abul Bashar, *Fulbou* (Kolkata: D.M. Library, 1988), 38.

the ambit of minority identity. In its preservation and adherence to a set of personal laws, is the minority identity then invoking communalism as a mark of difference? Especially when the courts of the land are perceived as Hindu courts and the country is presented as a majority country? Nisar's observation, coupled with his son Millat's own sense of dilemma about binaries of being a Good Muslim or a Bad Muslim in a country where the community is not in majority:

'...if my own crisis was limited to either forgiving or being disgusted by my father than I am sure it would have been a lot more bearable for me. I would have been easily able to extricate myself from these tribulations. But my problem is not simply about either forgiving or being disgusted by my father. It feels as if I have to continually clarify myself to the civilization. I find it very difficult to call myself a Mussulman. Because I question myself ...was my father an ideal Muslim himself?

...I am aware that his life was strictly dictated by the criterions of the Shariat. All his decisions were based on the shariah courts of this country. He never compromised, or even erred. He only married the fourth time to fulfil the sunnah of Nabi. This was what he claimed. He felt that a true Muslim must only look like one, and then only he might be one. But at the time of his fourth marriage he acted quite distastefully.'[148]

Nisar's insistence and Millat's doubts about his father's intent align with each other and reflect the greater problematic of the minority community trying to preserve its identity through the perpetuation of a communal difference. Simply put, even under the premise of a country run on the basis of a secular constitution, a Muslim individual perhaps has little choice apart from preserving his communitarian differences from the majority, if he has to ascribe to the laid down norms of devotion. Thus communalism becomes a default in such instances and any legislation that choses to protect and placate such claims under the pretext of secularism, shall ultimately end up in fomenting even greater communalism. Therefore, the legislation of the The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 which

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[148] Abul Bashar, Fulbou (Kolkata: D.M. Library, 1988), 22.

removed the duty of providing maintenance from that of the divorced husband to that of the bride's relatives, family, failing which the Waqf board is predominantly a communal piece of legislation. The earlier scenario of the Shah Bano incident, where the divorced woman sought legal remedy on the basis of the CrPC 125, was a secular piece of legislation. The greater communal balancing act behind this piece of legislation is also commented on by different commentators:

'The Muslim Women Bill was an effort to pacify ruffled Muslim sentiments over the reopening of the Babri mosque and the conservative objections to the Supreme court verdict. In this way the Indian state performed a balancing act of accommodating and according protection to all religions and religious sentiments under the umbrella of a multi-theocratic pluralism and an ideology of secularism that encourages and protects all religions.'[149]

The above observation clearly hints the structural and functional differences between pluralist and secularist modes of argument when it comes to a defence of communalist intent. Even in the defence of the Congress government in relation to the legislation of this Bill, the ideologies of communitarian differences were unmistakably noticeable, as Gautam Novlakha notes that the Bill was perceived as proverbial fig leaf to assuage the fears of a disgruntled community. Hence the parallels of the community in question to the majority, and the former being unreasonable and impervious to social reforms was also a part of the parliamentary discourse surrounding the Bill. [150]

Consequently, the author also explores the inter-faith differences between conceptualizations of widowhood in his narrative wherein the two different forms of divorce (talak and khalas) are unavailable in the Hindu theology. Ideally, such a parallel is not communal but still insufficient enough to establish the special juridical requirements of the

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[149] Zoya Hasan, "Minority Identity, Muslim Women Bill Campaign and the Political Process," Economic and Political Weekly 24, no. 1 (January 7, 1989): 44–50, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4394220, 48.
[150] Gautam Novlakha, "Ruling Party's Defence of Muslim Women's Bill," *Social Scientist* 14, no. 6 (June 1986): 55, https://doi.org/10.2307/3517411, 57.

Muslim woman vis-à-vis her position to her community. One of the characters in the novel has the same realization while trying to find out a workable solution to the problem:

'...the conjugal life is indeed mired with different complications. Even in their sexual mores, it smacks of insecurity. But even in such circumstances can one simply seek liberation? Is the judiciary the sole protector of the Muslim woman when it comes to liberation? Especially when Indian muslims consider the Indian judiciary to be a Hindu court? For these women, there's no bigger sense of liberation that the talak pronounced by the husband. What use it is to apply to the court. The society considers such divorcees to be a joke.'[151]

The protagonists' thoughts are synchronous to the some scholarly comments on the Shah Bano incident wherein it is stated that feminism should ideally oppose any form of ideologically premised multiculturalism. Simply put, in matters of gender rights, there should be a categorical attempt at erasing the dissension points between cultures so as to project a form of 'overlapping consensus' designed at achieving reasonable pluralism under the aegis of secularism. In case of the Muslim Woman, 1986 legislation and in case of this narrative by Abul Bashar, any premise of any such overlapping consensus is starkly absent, even though it remains the aspired end.

First published in 1989, Syed Mustafa Siraj's "Aleek Manush", restructures the question of syncretic religious values for the rural colonial India. Awarded the Sahitya Akademi for Bangla literature in 1994, the text for the most part interrogates the role that feudal interactions had played in relation to practicing of faith and reform of folk religions. Likewise, Sufi syncretic strands, Faraizi school and even Brahmo Samaj come together in this narrative as conflicting forces of reform.

The novel narrates the legends around the Faraizi Muslim preacher Badi-uz-zaman of the Maulahat, who gets continually estranged from his son Shafi-uz-zaman, for his esoteric and eccentric ways, which leads Shafi ultimately to receive English education, in turn taking him

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[151] Abul Bashar, *Fulbou* (Kolkata: D.M. Library, 1988), 167-68.

to the Brahmo Samaj who come as a settler class into the district with intentions of cultural reform and commercial cooperative agriculture. Contrary to the claim that Siraj's novel tries to provide a niche within the mainstream for the Indian rural muslims within the colonial modernity, it is my contention that the author's exploration of the expanse of the Faraizi movement drives a wedge between the traditional orthodox order represented by Badi-uz-zaman and his son Shafi-uz-zaman who receives western education and in turn gets closer to the nationalist project of Indian Independence from the British. Siraj's narrative is an obvious echo of the churn and confusion of the 1990s India when the religious minorities were on one end receiving attack on their belief system from the Hindu majoritarian forces and were receiving overtures of assimilation from the Congress (I). The context of the Faraizi movement becomes significant here for it created an Orthodox class of rural Bengali Muslims from the South Gangetic Bengal, who were mostly insolvent agricultural labourers working at the behest of the regional Zamindars. Popularized by Haji Shariatullah since 1818s, the movement aimed to bring back rural muslims back into the fold of classical Islam, from a largely folk and syncretic strand of Islam that they followed in their personal lives. The seriousness of the movement is understandable from the fact that Badi-uz-zaman's refusal to bless Muslims who followed heathen practices:

'Abdul had given up on his desire to seek the blessings of Badu peer. Peershahab had clearly stated that his aurat must quit butparasti (idol worship) first. Then she must follow it up with tauba. She must read the Namaz five times a day. It is only then, that Badu peer would bless her husband, Abdul continued with his confession with regret. Shafi listened to him carefully, and stated that he would discuss his scenario with his father, knowing well that he could not…'

Apart from intrusions from the Faraizi movement, the rural Muslim class also suffered from confrontations when it came to a choice between religious education and that of modern western education. This conflict, effectively was representative of a choice that the Muslim of the time had between choosing to be a part of the mainstream public life or to be a part of the

insular religious circle that kept Muslims away from the public mainstream in the first place. Being a part of a preacher household Shafi's choice of a future would thus become doubly significant:

"…I cannot let this happen Shafi! You must receive proper education. The muslims must be trained to compete with Hindus. You must read about Sir Sayyid Ahmad in your books? While Deoband creates classes of beggars camouflaged as preachers, Aligarh trains leaders of the new age and world. Why do you think he calls them camouflaged beggars? Don't you understand Shafi? You belong to a house of preachers. You are perceptive. You must understand that it is a disrespect to your abilities to live off alms. I have tried to reason it out with your brother Nuruzzaman, that this was not true Islam. However, Deoband has made him too much of a firebrand, he quotes the Koran-Hadees at the drop of a hat. He would not understand that his Murids (devotees) do not respect, but instead pity him. I am sure your father understands this as well and it is for this reason he has enrolled you in a school with English education…I'll personally make sure that you are enrolled into the illustrious 'Nawab Bahadur Institution' in Lalbagh. You are still a child, Shafi. If they do marry you off, you shall never receive proper education."

Siraj's words here are strongly reflective of the multiple options available to the Muslim youth; even then it is quite hard for the reader to ignore the communal reality involved in such a reading. For a novelist in the 1994, writing under the shadow of the demolished dome of the Babri, one wonders that if it is a conscious decision or an unconscious assimilation within the greater discourse extant at that time: that the minorities were slowly becoming a separate community within the greater community of Indians.

On the other hand, Shafi's interaction with the Brahmos within the narrative symbolizes an assimilationist trend of secularism, through cultural reform and acknowledgement:

"Debnarayan da would sit on the bedi of the Brahma-mandir. He would play the cymbals. He would call the singers Baitalik. It was for the first time I had been exposed to music so

closely. Abba used to state that listen to music would destroy forty years of bandegi (penance). But, if people sang about Allah in such a fashion, I doubt if he would be angry. Debnarayan da would ask me to join. I don't know how to sing. There was another slightly irritating routine: whenever a new person would come to the Brahmo settlement, Debnarayan da would introduce me as a Muslim member of the religious collective. They would never believe, looking at my dhoti and kameez. Their disbelief would be apparent on their faces. I would move myself angrily. It was like this, that I had come in contact with Jamini Majumdar. While walking towards the new checkdam, he asked me if I were a Muslim. On introducing myself as Syed Shafi-uz-zaman, he suggested that I left the settlement. 'The other gentlefolk do not appreciate your presence. As it is that a lot of settlers have come here in greed for cheap land, and this has shifted the opinion against Debnarayan. He might be a Brahmo. It is quite possible that these jealous folks might sabotage the settlement by slashing the new checkdam. Also, you are a Mussulman convert to Brahmo Samaj, the local Muslims would not take that kindly.' I let him know that I had not converted yet. To which he laughed resoundingly...'

It is inside the Brahmo Samaj settlement that Jamini Majumdar, slowly and steadily attempts to lure Shafi into the Swadeshi fold. Starting from a discussion on how Bankimchandra had considered it fit to hate the Muslims in Anandamath, yet it did not make his postulations on Nationalism any less true. Over time, Shafi does turn into a Swadeshi, and is incarcerated for assassinating a British bureaucrat. The climax of the novel describes how Shafi's father and buzurgpir Badi-uz-zaman is disappointed to hear of his son living with Brahmos, and considers him to have converted to Hinduism based on hearsay from his devotees. Towards the end of the novel, Badi-uz-zaman is presented with an opportunity by the local Zamindar's accountant Abdul Bari Chowdhury, where Shafi could have been pardoned if Badi-uz-zaman attested that his son chose to dissociate himself from the Swadeshi group. However, Badi-uz-zaman remains insular to this claim, but by now he has learnt about Rabindranath Tagore's association with the Brahmo Samaj, and had from other sources understood that his son was still a Muslim.

Syed Mustafa Siraj ends the novel on a note of crumbling indigenous solidarity in the face of the all-pervasive British imperialism. In the words of a commentator on the novel, Badu pir's insularity to his blood son's predicament and the greater nationalist implication, underscores the contested boundary of 'public faith as a discourse'. Such a contested boundary encapsulates the nature of minority identity be it at the onslaught of imperialism or even for that matter Hindu majoritarianism of 90s India.

Conclusion

From the 42nd Amendment till the legislation of the Muslim Woman's Bill, 1986 in response to the opening of the Babri Masjid, the period considered in course of this chapter had carried multifarious literary and political events that chiefly established the shortcomings of state-controlled secularism when it came to externally administering of a secular legislation. In most cases, such acts by bureaucracy led to unintended (often cautiously intended) agglutination of communalist elements on the subject. Whether it be instances of state-funded vasectomy drives, revisionist readings of Partition history or for that matter well-meaning efforts aimed at greater accountability from people, more often than not communalist sentiments were ultimately fanned thereby garnering the bureaucratic hegemony a sense of torpor. In my opinion, this was the marker of an age of rapid erosion of the secular credo in itself, and a gradual creation of a pluralist modernity that competes for state protection and administrative favour by the bureaucracy.

As opposed to the state sponsored secular legislative activism during this period, the dissenting political organisations such as the Janata Party till 1977 and the BJP from 1980 onwards silently polished their own discourses of 'positive secularism' as a clinching alternative. However, it is safely understood, that such an alternative was yet again premised on a form of majoritarian hegemony. The tenor of such a mode of ideology comes to the surface clearly in landmark moments such as the Shah Bano case, when right wing activists

and politicians did not take kindly to the exclusionary principle of Muslim Women's Bill, 1986. Their anger was not simply based on absence of gender justice, but on the communal nature of the legislation. This was a two-edged sword, that could not only be used to expose the communal underpinnings of an admittedly secular state, but also to fan the male-rivalry that was trenchant across twentieth century Hindu communal discourses, as Kum Kum Sangari notes:

'the excessive patriarchal privileges of Muslim men were chastised, women were figured as property endangered by men of 'other' groups, men as proprietors governing competing patriarchies, communal tension as between Hindu and Muslim men.'[152]

In the garb of such internecine rivalries, the contradictions within the professed alternative of 'positive secularism' continued. Hence while Atal Vihari Vajpayee the first President of the BJP could talk of reinventing the secular credo distinctly from minority appeasement, K.S. Sudershan of the RSS, who would later go on to be the sarsanghchalak of the RSS, could be blasé enough to claim that religious conversion and denationalisation refer to the same, in the aftermath of the Meenakshipuram mass-conversions in 1981.[153]

Between the sandwiching notions of state-sponsored secularism and the self-avowed positive secularism, communalist rancour spread unabated through the body politic of the nation. As the texts selected in this chapter suggest, in terms of the imagination and the reality, the discourse of dialectical communalism would go on to share the same origin point to the that of mention of secularism in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution.

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[152] Kumkum Sangari, "Women Against Women," essay, in *Politics of the Possible: Essays on Gender, History, Narrative and Colonial History* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1999), 184–278, 238.

[153] K.S. Sudarshan, "Conversion or Denationalisation," essay, in *Politics of Conversion*, ed. Devendra Swarup (Delhi: Deendayal Research Institute , 1986), 277–90, 287.

Chapter 4: 1992-2006: Birth of confrontational Secularism and the Neoliberal Turn

Changes to the secularism discourse in the period concerned

Majority of serious commentators on the nature of secularist politics in India agree in essence about the significance of the Babri Demolition of 1992 on the public life of religious minorities in India. It is my opinion that the Babri Incident in itself is not a stray symptom of Post-National Emergency communalism, but a direct exhibition of the limitations of a State-Controlled Secularism, in a world that would soon be a witness to serious acts of both National and International terrorism. In the Pre-Demolition era, as shown in the previous chapters of this thesis, the secularist discourse was effectively becoming a euphemism for state control over the state bureaucracy which in turn took a close interest in reforming and rationalizing religious expression and superstitions to deem it fit for a public life. In the aftermath of the Demolition of the Babri Masjid and the political mainstreaming of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, the communalist tenor of the Indian public/political life was soon to become a defining force leading onto a confrontation of sorts between the secular credo of the state, as enumerated in the Preamble and that of a majoritarian claim for Hinduisation of the demography. To consider the Demolition of Babri as the sole historical point of this confrontation, however, is in my opinion too much of an essentialist decision, on the contrary such a model of confrontation had been visible in public discourses ever since the Hindu interference in the Muslim Personal Law after 1984. Rina Verma Williams comments:

'In 1984, however, part of the Hindu community began mobilizing to reform Muslim personal law or even abolish the personal laws and establish one uniform law (as in traditional concept of the nation-state). This mobilization led to Hindu-Muslim conflict over the personal laws. India's experience indicates that we must rethink the assumption of legal

uniformity underlying the traditional conception of the nation-state...ethnic harmony prevailed when the personal laws of different communities were not threatened...'[154]

Thus what started as a covert demand for reform and autonomy in terms of rationalization of Muslim personal laws vis-à-vis the Indian public life, transmuted effectively into a zealous, nation-wide clamor for confrontation by the time the Ram Janambhoomi Movement, of which the Babri Demolition was an immediate fallout, became a clarion call for political organizations like the BJP after 1990. This brings another curious parallel to our mind between that of the Shah Bano affair and that of the Ram Janambhoomi movement: that none of the events had the trappings of a political flashpoint at its start. Going by the White Paper published by the Bharatiya Janata Party on the Ayodhya and Ram Temple Movement, it helps to note that while the bases of the Ayodhya movement could be traced back to 1983, when at a meeting in Muzaffarnagar it was mooted by attendees like former Union Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda and Professor Rajendra Singh of the RSS as to whether the Ram Janmabhoomi could be liberated. Curiously enough the incident finds very little currency within the political mainstream of the country, till in 1989 it found a mention within the electoral manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party:

'...By negativing the Supreme Court judgment in the Shahabano case, the government has put a premium on communalism and obscurantism. And by recognising Urdu as second official language in Uttar Pradesh on election eve, it has shown more interest in Muslim votes than in Urdu language. In the process it has only given the country so many corpses. By not allowing the rebuilding of the Ram Janma Mandir in Ayodhya, on the lines of Somnath Mandir built by the Government of India in 1948, it has allowed tensions to rise, and gravely strained social harmony.'[155]

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[154] Omar Khalidi, "Hinduising India: Secularism in Practice.," Third World Quarterly 29, no. 8 (2008): 1545–62, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20455129 , 1548.

[155] "Bharatiya Janata Party Electoral Manifesto 1989," n.d,< https://library.bjp.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/238/1/BJP%20ELECTION%20MANIFESTO%201989.pdf> , 358.

Given RSS's overt or covert intellectual guidance to the BJP, it is of little surprise that when the time came for the Ram Janmabhoomi incident to be a part of the political mainstream currency, it was BJP who ultimately hogged it. Also noteworthy in this context, is the fact that even in 1989 manifesto, the mention of the Ram Mandir appears as a part of recognizing Urdu as the second language of Uttar Pradesh and the 1948 restoration of Somnath Temple by the government, thereby making the entire episode contingent to the largely outmoded 'secularism' debate and not a central position of contention. This however changes quite fast and by the time the 1991 elections were held in the aftermath of the Advani Rath Yatra which prompted the fall of the V.P. Singh National Front Coalition Government. In the 1991 electoral manifesto of the BJP, we find the following utterance vis-à-vis the Ram Janmabhoomi issue:

'BJP firmly believes that construction of Shri Ram Mandir at Jamnasthan is a symbol of the vindication of our cultural heritage and national self respect. For BJP it is purely a national issue and it will not allow any vested interests to give it a sectarian and communal colour. Hence party is committed to build Shri Ram Mandir at Janmasthan by relocating super imposed Babri structure with due respect.'[156]

In case of both these mentions on the electoral manifestoes, it is worth noting that the Ram Janambhoomi Movement, or even the Ayodhya Movement, or for that matter the Ram Shila Poojan find no mention: which could possibly hint at the fact that even though it was identified as an electoral issue of sufficient importance, the BJP as a mainstream party shied away from presenting its intellectual links to other Sangh Parivar entities such as the RSS and the VHP which again would have possibly dubbed them to be a communalist entity.

In fact on the political mainstream, the claim for the Ram Mandir, and a conspicuous silence on the existence of the Babri Masjid already in place went hand in hand with a conscious distancing tactic from the rhetoric of Ram Rajya. The fact that the BJP was involved in

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[156] "Bharatiya Janata Party Electoral Manifesto 1991," n.d, https://library.bjp.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/239/1/BJP%20ELECTION%20MANIFESTO%201991.pdf, 323.

developing a fledgling discourse of 'Cultural Nationalism', divorced from the multicultural reality of India has been noted by commentators like A.G. Noorani, but the point remains as to in what route did they think of taking in terms of separating them from other more radicalized segments of Hindu Nationalist mobilizations. Such distancing is evident when Atal Vihari Vajpayee comments:

'The BJP has not endorsed the concept of Hindu Rashtra, but we do not denounce this extreme demand made by some, including admittedly sections of our own party. We have called for a Bharatiya rashtra, the name Hindu rashtra is given by those who feel that all Indians, including Muslims, are culturally speaking Hindus. Let them remain Muslims as far as their religion is concerned but otherwise let them not abdicate their identity as Hindus. The name Hindustan was given by others to India and it symbolizes the cultural heritage of the country...'[157]

This visible political discomfort with the term Hindu Rashtra even within a milieu that was baying for the demolition of Babri Masjid, enunciates the very nature of confrontation that had seeped into the erstwhile public life.

The next significant moment which defined the public discourse on secularism in the period concerned was the Places of Worship (Special Provisions Act) of 1991. In a landmark act of legislation, it was deemed that the state would freeze the status of religious places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947, and prohibit the conversion of any place of worship and ensures the maintenance of their religious character. Tabled and passed by the P.V. Narasimha Rao Congress (I) government in the ambience of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement gathering steam and the unforeseen assassination of Rajeev Gandhi, this piece of legislation took the following exceptions, which created much furor within the Parliament:

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[157] "26th January, 1991," Illustrated Weekly of India, January 26, 1991, https://ia600704.us.archive.org/33/items/dli.bengal.10689.11599/10689.11599.pdf .

- The Act does not apply to ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites, and remains covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

- It also excludes cases that have already been settled or resolved and disputes that have been resolved by mutual agreement or conversions that occurred before the Act came into effect.

- The Act does not extend to the specific place of worship known as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, including any legal proceedings associated with it.

It was unsurprisingly the third exception that created much controversy within the political establishment. For the BJP and other Right-wing political establishment, this was yet another event after the Shah Bano incident where the central government kept a door open to appeal to bureaucratic reformist sensibilities. Likewise, within the Parliament, the political discourse again went back to the debate of secularism; wherein the partisan entities in power endorsed the bill in the name of post-Independent secular credo of the country while the Right wing cohort went on to attack such a model of secularism as a lip-service to minority appeasement. Yet again, a moment when the discourse of cultural nationalism was to have been the legislative plank for the Right-wing coalition, they were forced to play ball with the new scenario at hand. Shreesh Chandra Dikshit's (BJP MP, Varanasi) speech on the occasion clearly presents the position of the Right:

'We think that the intention behind bringing this Bill is minority appeasement and not secularism, we are prepared to have a national debate on secularism. We have a lot of doubts about this bill. This Bill is going to give rise to a very critical situation...The Vishwa Hindu Parishad has passed a resolution in this regard. At present the Vishwas Hindu Parishad is agitating for religion and not literary or political demands. When we start any agitation, a situation develops and the best way to tackle that situation is not to play with feelings of Hindus. Through this Bill it appears that the feelings of Hindus have been played

with…Those who want to see the might of the Hindu society…it was said here that the Ram-Temple will be constructed, they will go there and agitate. We welcome them. But I would also like to tell them that such kind of language has been used earlier also.'[158]

Leader of Opposition of the House, Lalkrishna Advani's remark on the same also clarifies the helpless scenario of the Right:

'…the decision of opening the lock was delivered by the court and after that Babri Masjid Action Committee was formed, and there began efforts to change the secular reality—which was there since 1949—that an idol was placed at the birthplace of Rama and was worshipped daily. There was demand that Babri Masjid should be returned to them. It was a result of that there was so much resentment, ad anger and all these agitations in the country.

My submission is that if there is one norm for every citizen then secularism would come to stay permanent in India. But there are two norms or standards in the country which we have observed this morning in this very house…if my party is getting support nowadays throughout the country that is because of the dual policy adopted by your people. You should not forget that my party has made more sacrifices than any other party to maintain the unity and integrity of the country.'[159]

Simply put, while outside the parliament, in greater public life the Ram Janaambhoomi movement had garnered enough steam to generate streams of Karsevaks to Ayodhya, inside the Parliament the Right wing entities who sat in opposition effectively proved to have failed in resting their case on 'Cultural Nationalism' often dubbed in their 1989, 1991 manifestos as Bharatiya civilization.

But under wildly different circumstances they would again get a similar opportunity to present their opinion on the subject of Cultural nationalism.

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[158] Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Bill, 1991, Lok Sabha Debates, September 10, 1991, https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/8847/1/10_I_10091991_p180_p247_t260.pdf , p. 383-84.

[159] Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Bill, 1991, Lok Sabha Debates, September 10, 1991, https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/8847/1/10_I_10091991_p180_p247_t260.pdf , p. 479.

Terrorism and Cultural Nationalism: A Neoliberal Turn

On the 13 th of December 2001, the Indian Parliament house was at the receiving end of a ghastly terrorist attack from two Pakistan-based terrorist outfits, Lashkar-e- Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. In the ensuing retaliation to defend the Parliament, lives of four personnel of the Delhi Police, one Mahila CRPF personnel, one of Watch and Ward of Parliament Security and a gardener was lost.[160]. The aftermath of the incident saw fervent debates in the Lok Sabha session of 18 th December, 2001 on the subject of possible promulgation of Preventive of Terrorism Ordnance by the National Democratic Alliance coalition Government helmed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The debate on this issue remains primarily important, for even if it did polarize the contemporary MPs, it brought back the discourse of a form of revanchist Nationalism at the Parliament and Otherizing of the Muslim minority as potential terrorists. Definitions of terrorism, 'National Interest', and even the first possible Parliamentary consideration of a national citizen's register remain some of the cornerstone developments that the attack on the Parliament had produced in these subsequent debates.

Happening on the 93 rd day after the 9/11 Twin Tower incident in the United States of America and on the 73 rd day after the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly car-bomb incident, the Indian Parliament Attack naturally was considered to have been a part of these chain of terrorist activities and likewise George W. Bush's speech on Global War on Terror remained a big part of the subsequent debates that took place in the Lok Sabha. President Bush's comment on the subject of international terrorism:

"The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century. A war against all those who seek to export

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[160] Discussion Under Rule 193: Terrorist Attack On Parliament House. (2001). In Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Session (Thirteenth Lok Sabha):Tuesday December 18, 2001 (pp. 344-372). Lok Sabha Secretariat. (Originally Published 2001)

terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them."[161] This discourse was in essence invoked by the then Minister of Home Affairs L.K. Advani, in his own passionate diatribe in favor of otherizing the Muslim Identity, which was in turn perpetuated within the Parliamentary house by other MPs of the NDA coalition.

The discussions on the Parliament attack in the Lok Sabha, followed a tone of radical cultural binarization. From the very start the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) coalition sought to present a volte face in their defense of the POTO (Prevention of Terrorism Ordnance, 2001) which was being categorically attacked by the Opposition parties on counts of being draconian as well as ineffective in the face of international terrorist activities. However, it must be understood, that the Parliament Attack, which happened in the shadow of 9/11, was simply not considered as a Law and Order scenario, but as a priceless moment which could be used to attack the assumed 'minority-bias' of the opposition parties. Such a mode of political conduct is in fact historically consistent with the BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party) who were the majority stakeholders with Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Prime Minister in 2001 coalition government of India.

The NDA's rejection of secularism is in line with BJP and the BJS's perception of composite nationalism as a compromise of Muslim appeasement (interestingly it is not termed as minority appeasement in their manifesto). The much sought after rhetoric of establishing Dharma Rajya (often interchangeably referred to as Ram Rajya in certain circles of the Hindu Right) is easily visible within the Lok Sabha debate in the aftermath of the Parliament attack. A resonance of such a call for cultural Nationalism (true Bharatiya Nationalism) is to be found in the speech presented by Dr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra (BJP, M.P. of the 13 th Lok Sabha, South Delhi) in response to Mulayam Singh Yadav's initial comments about Muslim persecution and Government negligence of security in the Parliament attack where he categorically dissuades the criticism of Muslim bias within the NDA coalition government's perception of a terrorist. Even then, strong undercurrents of such a bias remain in the

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[161] American Rhetoric. (n.d.). George W. Bush: Prime Time News Conference on War Against Terrorism. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbushoct2001newsconfference.htm

Parliamentary speeches from MPs of other coalition partners of the then NDA government. Shiv Sena MP, Anant Gangaram Geete could be considered an interesting example of such a phenomenon within the debate. Speaking in favor of stronger anti-terrorism and anti-infiltration laws, Geete found himself defending the POTO, and stating how legal action against Bangladeshi immigrants in Maharashtra, is often pressurized towards stalling. Geete's presentation at the debate is important for he implies the existence of a style of politics extant in contemporary India that "linked every action against traitors with Muslims and Islam."[162]. A cursory glance through the Party Resolutions of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh would denote that this was not a fairly new phenomenon of the time. It has been a long – standing point of contention for the Right-leaning political parties in India that the primary bane of cultural Nationalism in India was the infiltration of anti-national elements from its borders. The coalition of such parties routinely criticized its opposition parties for taking part in appeasement politics for such a class of infiltrators. Such a political rhetoric has two-fold implications: firstly, the Bharatiya Nationalism that it chose to engender was in effect a binary to the rhetoric of cultural infiltration and terrorism ('anti-nationalism'); this project went on surreptitiously within the project to question the minority-appeasement secular politics of its opposition. Secondly, by identifying an extant form of politics that linked traitors with Muslims and Islam in general, the parties of the coalition took part in dubbing the minority community to be largely of un-Indian origin and hence unsympathetic to the cause of Bharatiya Nationalism (with well-known exceptions like the nuclear scientist and later President of India, APJ Abdul Kalam). Such a project of rendering a community politically reprobate in relation to the aspired end of Bharatiya Nationalism, has in the words of Achin Vanaik has two techniques:

'One is to cultivate a grievance through the politics of 'historical revenge'. Here it is necessary to establish the 'foreignness' of Islam (and implicitly the 'unIndianness' of Muslims) and to arouse as much hostility as possible to the actual and presumed iniquities of rule by Muslim

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kingdoms. In doing the last it helps greatly if domination by Muslim rulers over Hindus and Muslims can be passed off as frequently and silently as possible, as 'domination by Muslims over Hindus.' But 'historical revenge' is not enough. Today's Muslims have somehow to be put in dock because today's Hindus have to be welded together. Since there is no direct Muslim oppression of Hindus, the angle of attack is slightly shifted. It comes to rest on the state's role in 'appeasing', i.e. favouring Muslims.'[163]

The very basis of a 'non-theocratic' Dharma Rajya (as enunciated in the earliest manifestoes of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, and later in the parliamentary politics of BJP and its NDA partners) thus rests on the premise of othering the Muslim minority Indians as possible terrorist/ infiltrators/fundamentalist, and the formation of a culturally homogenous citizenry that strongly adheres to national interests and "Rule of Law". The argument over the promulgation of POTO in the wake of the Parliament attack needs to be observed as a political act intended to foment a cultural basis of citizenship. The very discussion of internal sovereignty and how laws like POTO and earlier TADA discredited the incarcerated citizens of their basic civilian rights is as important as the subtext to the debate which is the possible linking of religious minority communities with acts of terrorism. Rashid Alvi's (BSP MP, Amroha, 13 th Lok Sabha) spirited defense of Indian Muslim minorities in the face of NDA's terrorism charge is important in this regard for he tries establish the sacrifices of Muslim freedom fighters in the Indian freedom movement. He tries to exhibit the act of terrorism as something that is entirely divorced from the essential practices of religion. Criticizing Geete's rather circumstantial linking of traitor-mentality with Islam, he presents the act of terrorism essentially as a transgression of law and order, while maintaining that the Indian Muslims remained secular. Rashid interestingly was not the sole voice, he was joined in his argument to an extent by Omar Abdulla (then Minister of State, Ministry of External Affairs, MP, National Conference) and Mamata Banerjee (TMC MP, South Kolkata, 13 th Lok Sabha) who

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[163] Vanaik, A. (1993, January 4). The parivar project: creating hatred to mould hindu unity. *The Indian Express*, p. 8. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=P9oYG7HA76QC&dat=19930104&printsec=frontpage&hl=en

in spite of being a part of the NDA ruling cohort were quick to categorically reject the possible communal rhetoric attributed to terrorist activities.

Apart from the political rhetoric on the subject of the nationalism/terrorism binary, we should also consider how the TADA Act (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act) and the POTO (Prevention of Terrorism Ordnance, later Prevention of Terrorism Act or POTA) differed in terms of their definitions of Terrorism. The TADA Act defined terrorism as:

Whoever with intent to overawe the Government as by law established or to strike terror in the people or any section of the people or to alienate any section of the people or to adversely affect the harmony amongst different sections of the people does any act or thing by using bombs, dynamite or other explosive substances or inflammable substances or lethal weapons or poisons or noxious gases or other chemicals or by any other substances (whether biological or otherwise) of a hazardous nature in such a manner as to cause, or as is likely to cause, death of, or injuries to, any person or persons or loss of, or damage to, or destruction of, property or disruption of any supplies or services essential to the life of the community, or detains any person and threatens to kill or injure such person in order to compel the Government or any other person to do or abstain from doing any act, commits a terrorist act. while, the POTO (later known as POTA) increased the purview of act of terrorism to include raising of funds with the intention of using it to perpetrate terrorist activity.[164] . It is to be noted that both these acts were ultimately repealed by the government regimes that chose to institute them in the first place, owing to rampant misuse. However, even then one must note that the parliamentary and the bureaucratic definitions of terrorism and citizen remained remarkably divergent on their rationale.

It is to be noted that, 1990s onwards there has been a marked increase in the documentation of threat to the 'Nation-state', in the Indian popular culture. As argued earlier in this paper, the very category of the 'terrorist' is the product of a political binary-formation. Furthermore,

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[164] POTA, India Kanoon, < https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1778/>

it is necessary to be understood that the identity of the terrorist is sustained in politics of the NDA and contemporary popular culture on two registers; namely non-Hindi and non-Hindu. In the wake of the Congress-instituted New Economic Policy of 1991, the NDA's rhetoric of cultural Nationalism/Terrorism is to be considered a 'compensatory agenda' of the Hindutva politics of the time that tried to insulate some form of Hindu chauvinism in an age when economic 'liberalisation' was definitively changing the traditional definitions of the state.

Thus while the Babri Demolition by the Karsevaks and the central government's response to it reflected the gradually rising limitations of the state with regards to reformist motive and in turn accentuated a mainstream political imagination of 'Cultural Nationalism' within the Right-Wing elements; the Parliament Attack of 2001 and the Third Vajpayee Government's response to it effectively promoted and authenticated the confrontational secularist approach, in the milieu of the Global War on Terror. Bred within the discourse of cultural nationalism, such a confrontational approach to the secularism approach would gradually undo hitherto progressive outlook of the state while promoting in practice a Hindu assimilationist agenda.[165]

In the next segment of this chapter, we shall consider six non-anglophone novels namely:

Taslima Nasreen's 'Lajja' (1993), Narayan Sanyal's 'Hindu Na Ora Muslim' (1995), Uday Prakash's 'Aur Ant Mein Prarthana' (1998), Kashinath Singh's 'Kashi Ka Assi' (2002) and Sheila Rohekar's 'Taviz' (2006) as representative of the literary discourse existing at the time pertaining to the birth of confrontational secularism after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. This would allow us to navigate through the gradually solidifying discourse of Hindu cultural nationalism within the neoliberal modernity.

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[165] Omar Khalidi, "Hinduising India: Secularism in Practice.," Third World Quarterly 29, no. 8 (2008): 1545–62, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20455129 , 1557-58.

References to confrontational secularism in the aftermath of the Babri Demolition and gradual solidification of communal signifiers in select non-Anglophone novels of the period

Taslima Nasreen's 'Lajja' (1994) has the distinction of being the only non-Anglophone novel used in this study, which has been written by a non-Indian author from the Indian subcontinent. Written in the aftermath of the Babri Demolition in 1992, the novel sparked significant religious outrage in Bangladesh and led the author to live a life of exile ever since 1994, initially in Sweden, and later in India since 2004. Taslima Nasreen's 'Lajja' thus becomes a significant literary testimony that analyzes the limitations of state secularism in the aftermath of the Babri incident. Published initially in 1993 in Banagladesh, a revised and updated version of the novel was republished in 1994 by Ananda Publishers of Kolkata, West Bengal thereby rendering the text to be a milestone figure in the greater discourse of religious freedom/ orthodoxy within the Indian subcontinent. Back in Bangladesh, Lajja became a site of trenchant contestation between Islamic fundamentalist forces and the progressive secular elements, which ultimately however led to a fatwa against her own life. In West Bengal however, Taslima became an important literary figure even before Lajja was released and she was awarded the 1992 and the 2000 Ananda Award. It is for this reason, 'Lajja' must not simply be perceived as a Bangladeshi novel, but as a text that interrogates the state's limitation vis-à-vis the enforcement of a secular status quo, thereby leading to the birth of confrontational accounts of religious fundamentalism and progressivism.

The Babri incident in India, had indeed set off a chain of progroms against Bangladeshi Hindus, with more than 14 Hindu temples attacked and 11 of them being completely destroyed.[166] Even international sporting tournaments were not spared during this period when a SAARC Quadrangular tournament match between Bangladesh and India A had to be called off midway owing to hostile crowd.[167] Interestingly enough three Indian cricketers from that India A team, namely: Navjot Singh Sidhu, Sourav Ganguly and Vinod Kambli

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[166] Minorities at Risk Project (2004). "Chronology for Hindus in Bangladesh". United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Archived from the original on 18 October 2012. Retrieved 5 December 2011.

[167] "Bangladesh v India 'A' at Dhaka, 7 Dec 1992". cricinfo.com. Wisden CricInfo. Retrieved 5 October 2012.

would later go on to have successful sporting careers, with Sidhu later becoming a Rajya Sabha MP on a Bharatiya Janata Party ticket after retirement. Coming back to the progroms, it was officially estimated that during this period that 11 people were killed, an account which historians like Sachi Ghose Dastidar feels to be untrue and largely reflective of an unofficial Holocaust that has been going on against Bengali Hindus in the aftermath of the Partition in 1947.[168]

Nasreen's 'Lajja' thus effectively caught the Bangladeshi political establishment on a sticky wicket, especially in a Cold-War World where the U.S.S.R had just fallen thereby giving rise to several independent post-Soviet republics, some of them with a significant Muslim concentration. One academic notes the scenario, as an anxiety of the West in a new phase of global politics when the Cold War was going through a period of thaw, when Islam, as a 'green menace' was fast replacing Communism, or 'red menace' as the chief antagonist to the free and fair world of the West.[169] Inside the country, the author would for the last time in her career would receive a spirited defense from the progressive, secular elements of the Bengali society on both sides of the border when her book would receive a ban and she would receive death threats and the fatwa from the Islamic Fundamentalist elements (in this case the hitherto unknown Council of Soldiers of Islam). In India, the novel interestingly would have a separate and unprecedented afterlife, when the Bharatiya Janata Party cadres would distribute free copies of a Hindi translation of the novel that included sections not in the original novel.[170]

The novel talks about the Dutta family—Sudhamoy and Kiranmoyee along with their children Suranjan and Maya who get caught within the communal eye of the storm during

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[168] Sachi Ghosh Dastidar, "Bengal's Hindu Holocaust: Partition of India and Its Aftermath," essay, in Empire's Last Casualty: Indian Subcontinent's Vanishing Hindu and Other Minorities (Kolkata: Firma KLM, 2008), 206–41, 209.

[169] Md. Mahmudul Hasan, "Free Speech, Ban and 'Fatwa': A Study of the Taslima Nasrin Affair," Journal of Postcolonial Writing 46, no. 5 (December 2010): 540–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2010.517061, 541.

[170] Dina Siddiqi, "Taslima Nasrin and Others: Contest Over Gender in Bangladesh," essay, in Women In Muslim Societies: Diversity Within Unity, ed. Herbert L. Bodman and Nayyirah Tawhidi (London: Lynne Renner Publisher, 1998), 205–28, 216.

the 1992 progroms. The Dutta family is emblematic of a secularized identity category of Bengalis who had opted to stay back in Bangladesh in the aftermath of the 1947 partition which led to the formation of East Pakistan. Curiously enough, the patriarch of the Dutta family, Sudhamoy, is presented to be an atheist and yet in the greater socio-cultural habitus of 1990s Bangladesh he is perceived as a Hindu and hence a subject of suspicion from the Muslim majority bureaucratic hegemony. Likewise, he faces stringent communal discrimination at work, where as a public servant he is never promoted, while other Muslim juniors get promoted easily. This leads him to retire as an Assistant Professor of medicine:

"Sudhamoy's juniors got their promotions. His file had been buried under the files of Dr. Korimuddin and Dr. Yakub Mollah, but they soon began working as associate professors. Sudhamoy kept walking to and fro from the ministry.

' Not today, come tomorrow please. Your file will go to the secretary…Not tomorrow, come the day after please. We have a meeting today…The minister is out of the country. Plase come back after a month.'

After listening to these kinds of excuses several times, Sudhamoy finally figured out that he was not going to get his promotion. After running around for nearly two years, it became evident to him that some of his colleagues, even though they weren't competent, had outstripped him. His juniors had become associate professors and were lording it over him. He was nearing retirement and was actually entitled to be an associate professor. It was not as though he was greedy, it was his by right. Finally Sudhamoy Dutta retired as an assistant professor.

His colleague Madhob Chandra Pal whispered in his ear, as he placed a garland of marigolds around his neck, as they bade him farewell, 'In a country of Muslims, we should not expect too many opportunities for ourselves. Even what we are getting now is a favour'

And then he laughed loudly! Madhob too was working as an assistant professor. His name too had come up for promotion a few times and though many others had got through.

Madhob always faced obstacles. And then Madhob had other things working against him. He had been to the Soviet Union!…"[171]

However, it gets from bad to worse for the Dutta family when Maya, Suronjon's younger sister is abducted by what is understood to be Muslim criminals and they never hear from her again. This sets off another chain of reaction in Suronjon, who had been dealing with unemployment and communal discrimination from the greater Bangladeshi society. He observes:

"The problem is that I am a human being with integrity. There is no conflict between aggressive fundamentalists—Hindu or Muslim. Don't you see the friendship between the leaders of the Jamaat of this country and BJP in India? Fundamentalist parties want to come to power in both countries. At the meeting in Baitul Mukarram, Nizami has clearly said that it is not the BJP but the Congress which is responsible for the riots in India."

Suronjon, a secularist, is at great torment to make sense of his own political position in the aftermath of the riots. A subject of communal discrimination, he still remains unable to ally himself to the fundamentalist groups, or for that matter relocate to India with his family. This excerpt accentuates the greater problematic of state role in preservation of the secular status quo within the society. So in the end, when we read Suronjon solicit and ultimately rape a Muslim prostitute, the palpable vicarious revenge becomes evident. The entire incident is narrated in a fashion so as to invoke a chiaroscuro between a possible plight that Maya may have faced in the hands of her captors and that it was Bijoy Dibash (16th December, commemorating the surrender of the Pakistani army to the Indian forces in 1971, leading to the birth of Bangladesh):

"Shamima went away. Suronjon felt good inside. He was ot going to feel bad about anything today. Today was the day of victory—everyone was happy and celebrating, setting off fireworks. It was on this day twenty one years ago that Bangladesh was liberated and this

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[171] Taslima Nasreen, Lajja: 20th Anniversary Edition, trans. Anchita Ghatak (Gurugram: Penguin Books, 2014), 29-30.

was also the day that Shamima Begum came to Suronjon Dutta's room. Glory to the Liberation! Suronjon wanted to snap his fingers. Should he sing that song 'Bangladesh is first for me, also the last! Bangladesh is my life, and I will be with Bangladesh in death too!'?

He hadn't told Shamima his name, not even once. He should have told her that his name was Suronjon Dutta. Then Shamima would have realized that the young man who had scratched and bitten her and had drawn blood from her flesh was a Hindu. Hindus also know how to rape, they also have arms, legs and a head, their teeth are sharp too, and they can use their nails to scratch...'[172]

Suronjon's act of raping a Muslim prostitute, triggered off by a fear that Maya must have faced a similar predicament at the hand of her captors ironically underscore the post-Liberation War Bangladeshi Government's act of labeling the 'raped Bengali woman' as a *birangona* (the heroic woman). A birangona was a Bangladeshi woman who had been raped by the Pakistani Army during the Liberation war, and is in fact often perceived as an euphemism for the 'unacceptable status of a dishonored woman'[173], while the Bengali word for a prostitute is *barangana*. This inherent contradiction between multiple registers of heroism and 'impurity' sustains the internal contradiction of Suronjon as a secularist. He is an atheist, and yet he finds no better antidote to his anxiety vis-à-vis Maya other than rape. While ultimately at the end of the novel we find that the Duttas decide in favor of escaping to Kolkata, the narrative reflects the impossibility of the state apparatus to hold itself against the rapidly communalizing public opinion. This happens to the extent of a veritable contradiction between the potentialities of statecraft and the realities of public mobilization. Lajja, thus effectively brings us to the confrontation between secular discourses of liberation and not communal realities of 90s Bangladesh, wherein the secularist elements find

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[172] Taslima Nasreen, Lajja: 20th Anniversary Edition, trans. Anchita Ghatak (Gurugram: Penguin Books, 2014), 296-97.
[173] Dina Siddiqi, "Taslima Nasrin and Others: Contest Over Gender in Bangladesh," essay, in Women In Muslim Societies: Diversity Within Unity, ed. Herbert L. Bodman and Nayyirah Tawhidi (London: Lynne Renner Publisher, 1998), 205–28, 209.

themselves alienated from the communal here-and-now of the Bangladeshi (and the greater Indian Subcontinent's) communalizing public life.

Narayan Sanyal's 'Hindu Na Ora Muslim' (1995), further accentuates the discourses of communal confrontation within the rural cultures of the North India in the aftermath of the Bhagalpur riots and the Babri Masjid demolition. The collection consists of two short novellas that deals with the distinct nature of difference between communalism and racial discrimination by interrogating the nature of power structure at play behind them.

The first novella titled 'Santan Mor Maar' ('They are my mother's child too') was written as a fictionalized account on the basis of an interview by Dr. Suresh Khairnar to Communalist Combat (Aug-Sept, 1994), where he talks about the his successes in bringing Bhagalpur to the country's mainstream after the 1989 Ram Janmabhoomi Riots at Chandheri village and elsewhere and how his actions of developing neighbourhood Peace Committees and greater inter-faith discourse kept Bhagalpur riot-free even in the aftermath of the Babri Demolition.

The novel narrates how Professor Jamaluddin Chowdhury, of Tejnarayan Jubilee College, Bhagalpur who makes an effort to bring back a divorced converted Muslim woman, who had at one point been his student. Smritilekha Dwivedi alias Zulekha Ahmed, had married her classmate Rashid Ahmed, much to the chagrin of her own family. Trouble ensued on the matter of cow sacrifice during Bakri-Eid celebrations in the Ahmed household, when much to the annoyance of the Ahmeds, Zulekha had begged of his in-laws to do away with the ritual sacrifice:

'It was in the week leading to the celebrations that Zulekha understood that the household calf Budbud would be sacrificed on account of the Eid celebrations.

This was too much for Smritilekha who had herself fed and reared the calf after her marriage. She requested her husband tearfully to sacrifice a goat instead. But Rashid was not amenable to this, in his opinion a goat would feel the same pain as a calf when sacrificed.

Zulekha wanted to reason. She wanted to state that if she had a child, it would be marginally less painful for her to tolerate the death of another child instead of her own, especially Budbud whom she had fed with her own hands.

Rashid objected that now she was a Muslim, and had married a Muslim, she would have to reject such Hindu sentiments. Even mentioning of such sentiments would be a sin in Islam.

When Rashid and Alijan left for Bhagalpur on Monday morning, Zulekha took the household calves Budhi and Budbud to the other end of Idgah field where the Hindu mohallas could e found. Maheshwar Prasad Tewari was a well respected rich man of the neighbourhood. His daughter had been a college classmate of Zulekha. She was available on account of Eid holidays, providing Zulekha with an opportunity to explain the scenario to her. On the basis of this, and in order to check the slaughter of the calves, Maheswar Prasad purchased the calves from Zulekha for thousand rupees and kept a receipt for that.'[174]

This incident ultimately leads to Zulekha's talak from Rashid, and had rendered her a dependent within the household of Jamaluddin Chowdhury. Over time, while Zulekha learns stitching to sustain herself, Rashid comes back, and with the consent of Zulekha, suggests a procedure known as Nikah Halala in shariat, which would allow him to re-marry Zulekha. As a part of this procedure, the following procedure is suggested:

'Under the Shariati system, 'talak' removed all forms of relationship between the man and his wife, but technically there was a way of them remarrying. This procedure was only possible if the divorced Muslim woman married a different man for three months and had a normal sexual relationship with him, following which the second husband would have to divorce her. In such a circumstance, the divorced woman must have her normal periods during the three months of her marriage, and the second husband too can only take part in this arrangement if he is unmarried or a widower.'[175]

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[174] Narayan Sanyal, "Hindu Na Ora Muslim" (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1995), 31.
[175] Narayan Sanyal, "Hindu Na Ora Muslim" (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1995), 40-41.

Once the Nika Halala, is completed Rashid and Zulekha re-marry and relocate to the Siddhpur locality of Ahmedabad, Gujarat; and this is when the riots break out in Bhagalpur. It is during this riots that Professor Chowdhury gets grievously attacked by a rioting Hindu mob and only survives somehow, while his landlord and his family get killed. He is subsequently taken to the Ahmed household by Rashid, where with time it appears that his head injury during the riots had sustained a lasting impact on him which meant that he had several episodes of hallucinatory lapses, and in these episodes he could retain no memory of it later.

Ram Janmabhoomi riots ensue in Siddhpur as well, but this time it is the Muslim aggressors who attack the Hindu household. It is in these circumstances that Rashid beheads Mahendrabhai Dave, who was a well-respected member of the local Hindu community. During this event, Prof. Chowdhury had pounced on Rashid in a bid to stop him from this act of murder. However, it was too late, and in the scuffle Prof Chowdhury had injured himself unconscious, and was identified as the perpetrator of this act.

In a legal scuffle that followed, an out of court settlement is reached between Manubhai Dave, Mahendra's elder brother and Wazir Khan Pathan, wherein it is decided that to protect the communal harmony of Siddhpur in the face of a Shia-Sunni riot, he would retract the case provided Rashid, the actual culprit accepted the crime in public. Once the public acknowledgement of crime is completed, and Manubhai had punished him publically with a slap and an introduction to the works of Mahatma Gandhi, the muslim elites of the region, represented by Advocate Maganbhai Barot, who had earlier represented Manubhai, suggested the creation of a communal harmony trust with the funds from compensation meant for Prof. Chowdhury's acquittal. The purpose of this trust was to preserve communal harmony in the region with the aid of an inter-communal group of enforcers. In due time, over discussions it was also decided that the trustee would also receive public funding from the Hindu mohallas and the inflated funds were to be utilized to repair the local Jain temple and the Masjid. To accentuate an environment of greater inter-faith discourse and remove

communal rhetoric from the region it was ensured that Muslim labourers and contractors would be employed to repair the Jain Temple and Hindu labourers and contractors would be employed to repair the Masjid. In a fitting end to the novel, we find that the trustee group is named 'Bapuji Sampradayik Sampriti Sangh' and its inaugural meeting is chaired by Khushwant Singh.

Sanyal's narrative within this novella appears to present the greater problematic of hegemonic Nationalism, wherein a fantasy of peerless, conflict-free statehood is peddled at the cost of fomenting greater inter-faith discourse at the local neighbourhood level. Manubhai Dave, Prof. Chowdhury are effectively community elites who are in control over the kind of rhetoric and take serious responsibility about the political aftermath it may have had at a regional level. Noted historian of the Subaltern Studies group, had long back presented his own suspicions of a project of Nationalist historiography that steamrolls all forms of plurality at the cost of binaries. These binaries in turn foment a regional cultural of otherization on the basis of religion, culture, caste, creed and etc. He formulates that:

'At the present juncture in India, however, the totalizing standpoint of a seamless nationalism seems particularly counterproductive. The dominant nationalist historiography that insists on this standpoint needs to be challenged not only because of its interested use of categories such as "national" and "secular." It needs to be challenged also because ofits privileging of the so-called national over the local, the mainstream over the marginal, the rational over the affective.'[176]

The riots in the aftermath of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement/ Babri demolition delineate the need for the political order to pay a greater heed to the 'visceral register of subjectivity

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[176] Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defence of the Fragment," essay, in Routine Violence Nations, Fragments, Histories (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 16–49, 43.

and intersubjectivity'[177] of which riots, and riot induced murders such as the ones narrated within the novel are a part of.

The second novella within the collection, titled 'Nirashibeesh Ireland', talks about solidarity in the face of racial otherness, and how communal otherization is to be navigated vis-à-vis solidarity. The novel follows a magic realist style and imagines the protagonist Basudev Chapekar to be a successor of the illustrious Chapekar family, who were instrumental in assassinating W.C. Rand, the British Plague Commissioner of Pune in 1897. The present day Basudev Chapekar is described to be pursuing a postgraduate degree in medicine in Ireland, and he meets Sabira Khatun, who is pursuing a doctorate in sociology on scholarship. During their sojourns in the provinces of Ireland, the couple take up temporary work in Limerick to stay together during their vacation. Trouble ensues when 'Big Billy' Randson, who happened to be Basudev's supervisor at work, suggests that Sabira sleep with him in lieu of suppressing the information that he is working as a daily wage labourer while on a students' visa. To get rid of Big Billy, Basudev procured a saw-scaled viper from Mumbai, and released it inside his tiffin basket. It is around this time that Basudev learns from his family journal that he is indeed a successor of Damodar Hari Chapekar who had played a key role in Rand's assassination. The magic realist mode reigns supreme in the novel when we understand that Basudev's decision to murder Big Billy is effectively inspired by his predecessors' radical antics. The highlight of this novella is however the author's masterful identification of contemporary communalism to have originated from the Cultural Nationalist ideals of Bal Gangadhar Tilak:

'It was Tilak Maharaj who had first started writing Nationalist essays in the Kesari journal—it was a fresh claim, "My countrymen—take heed. Requests do not deem respect—if you can protect your manliness, then lend me your ears, else not."

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[177] William Connolly, "The Conceits of Secularism," essay, in Why I Am Not a Secularist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 47–72, 52.

It was he who had for the first time inaugurated and conceptualized Ganpati Puja. It was Ganpati who had spelt doom of Gajasur. In the very inaugural puja, Tilak Maharaj had replaced the word 'Asur' with 'Yavana'.

It was following the successes of the Ganpati Puja, Lokmanya conceptualized the Shivaji Utsav. It was Shivaji who had promised Bhavani Maa to unite Bharatvarsh. Tilak developed and inaugurated the Raigarh fort as a museum to Shivaji's memory. He writes in Kesari: "Was Shivaji in any wrong to have murdered Afzal Khan in a surprise attack? In my opinion, no. If you hear that your fortress has been breached in the middle of the night, it shall be ethical for you to entrap him in a room and set him on fire. I fail to see how these Yavanas and Mlechhas are given authority by the British to administer rule over us. Our mother land feels exploited. So cast those Yavana-written penal codes away and liberate your motherland..."

His writings captured the minds of the educated Hindu youths and soon, Tilak directed them to form the Maharashtra 'Mitramela' which was strongly radicalized and later renamed 'Abhinav Bharat'...'[178]

Sanyal furthermore identifies the Pune Plague of 1897 as the watershed moment of political Hindu Nationalism when the Plague commissioner, Walter Charles Rand chose to make a communal distinction between Hindu women and Muslim women during Plague-victim identification campaign. While Muslim women were allowed to be checked up separately in a secluded place, whereas Hindu women were required to undergo observation by five specialist doctors after having undressed. Naturally the incident strongly polarized the Hindu youth in the region, which suitably aided Tilak's discourse vis-à-vis the relations between the British government and the Muslim bureaucratic elites.

The author's target may have as well been the contemporary discourses of communalism and their intricate tentacular connectivity to the democratic process; through the definitions of

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[178] Narayan Sanyal, "Hindu Na Ora Muslim" (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1995), 86-87.

majority and minority; but the pitfalls of a totalized Nationalistic historiography is visible to the reader when both the novels are read as companion pieces. But the confrontational reality remains unabated, as is understandable from the concluding passage of the novel:

'I have been thinking of India. That group of politicians that dismantled the Babri hoping to be swept into the power inside the parliament; leading to murder of several Hindus all over the world in communal riots. Possibly, as revenge to which, Bombay was ripped apart in numerous blasts killing thousands, are all of these orchestrators not Big Billies themselves? With Golwalkar, Bal Thackeray, Advani, Sangh Parivar, Sankaracharya on one side and Mawlana Mausudi Sahab, Mawlana Saida and fundamentalists like them on the other? Just like Big Billy effectively brought snakes to Ireland, unconsciously---these people too have made it possible for the venoms of communalism to wreak havoc on Indian minds...and will continue to do so till they are in power.'[179]

Uday Prakash's '...Aur Ant mein Prarthana', talks about the predicament of political Hindutva and Sangh Parivar fronts like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in a rapidly globalizing world. Dr. Dinesh Manohar Wakankar, a forty-eight year old public service doctor, who also doubles up as an Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh member is the protagonist of the novel. Described to have been a solitary individual, and yet a gifted student, Dr. Wakankar's exposure to the Sangh, happened during the final year of his MBBS degree, when he had started reading up on political philosophies and Indian metaphysics extensively. Curiously, Dr. Wakankar's final choice of joining the Sangh is dictated by his Marathi roots, and not his extensive reading habits, due to which the influences of Savarkar, Tilak , Golwalkar and Hedgewar were unmistakably a part of his nationalist definition of selfhood and belonging. However, his integration within the apparatchik of the Sangh is supported by the fact that once he received state government employment in 1965-66, he was almost consistently posted in backward regions of the state, thereby affording him enough time and intent to work on the local population's integration within it. Within the

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[179] Narayan Sanyal, "Hindu Na Ora Muslim" (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1995), 160.

Sangh, Dr. Wakankar comes in close contact with Right-wing intellectuals and historians who shaped the discourse of Hindu solidarity in the face of world-wide political churn:

'Wherever he would go, he would influence youths to take part in nation-building by joining the organization. He would cite history to argue how, apart from the Jews, the Hindus have borne the brunt of significant exploitation. How powers that be had conspired to make Hindu solidarity impossible. The Jews still had their own nation, for Hindus however slavery seemed the only option left. The executors of Partition in 1947 had left no stone unturned in making Hindus fight amongst themselves, and the situation was such that in contemporary India, the Hindus led the life of refugees.'[180]

Likewise, within the higher echelons of Sangh, a similar and yet a more polarizing perception of history existed and was promoted, where in the underlying discourse was one of political solidarity and not one of reform, or for that matter not aimed at the empowerment of Hindus:

'The Bhaiji from Mumbai had stated in no uncertain terms that Gautam Buddha and Mahavir Jain had negatively influenced the trajectory of Hinduism. Had it not been for the efforts of the Shankaracharya, Hindu religion would have seized to exist. Later, Ram Mohun Ray, Gandhi, Nehru and people of their ilk too had influenced Hinduism adversely. These intellectuals were of a western modernist perception.

These words would have significant influence on the common members of the Shakha. An alternate history starting from the vedic age till the present would be presented to the common members of the Sangh in the most simplified fashion. Likewise, most Sanghis would offer their sincere adulation to Maharana Pratap, Shivaji, Guru Golwalkar, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee.'[181]

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[180] Uday Prakash, "'...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana,'" essay, in "...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana" (Vani Prakashan, 1998), 102–202, 111.

[181] Uday Prakash, "'...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana,'" essay, in "...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana" (Vani Prakashan, 1998), 102–202, 118.

Dr. Wakankar, as a well-read individual would not find it difficult to identify the gap between actual history and political demagoguery within the Sangh and the possible limitations to the Hindu Rashtra if it were achieved through violent methods. But he continued to notice how such demagoguery found an active and supportive audience within the rural dispossessed Hindu classes. Over time, we see Dr. Wakankar develop a kind of anathema to the historical discourse behind the need for Hindu solidarity and militarization, and he starts questioning the racial supremacy discourse at play behind such invective rhetoric. It is fairly obvious, that the technique that the author utilizes here is one of 'otherization'. But the author's application of the technique is significantly insightful in this regard, for he necessarily understands that the logic of functioning inside the RSS, was not one of spiritual solidarity and reform but one of political radicalization through a communalization of other. Thereby, Gandhian ahimsa could be dubbed as a form of cowardice, especially when other communities depended on bombs, guns and external training. It is at this point in the novel, that Dr. Wakankar feels it necessary to revise his own opinion on fascism:

'I feel that, fascism or any other totalitarian racist ideology, is a conspiracy of the devil against the divinity. Om Shanti! Om Shanti! Om Shanti.'[182]

At the height of Economic Liberalisation, Dr. Wakankar notes how the bourgeois elements of the local Hindu society were slowly and steadily hijacking the intellectual space within the Sangh, which came at the cost of the rural dispossessed, tribals and other non-savarna members of the greater Hindu society. This effectively alienated the organization from the ground realities of rural Indian provinces and centered it solely on the bourgeois trader class that saw the Sangh as a source of profit and a protective organization:

'Money should keep flowing—in whatever form. The fact that money kept flowing was understood when one would see cars of Maruti, Tata Sierra, motorcycles run on Japanese technology, walk-man, cassette records in this backward town of Madhya Pradesh that was

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[182] Uday Prakash, "'…Aur Ant Mein Prarthana,'" essay, in "…Aur Ant Mein Prarthana" (Vani Prakashan, 1998), 102–202, 121.

nearly one thousand five hundred kilometres away from Delhi. One could see a form of technological modernity that was divorced from social backwardness and was dependent on financial surplus. Money meant modernity, lack of money meant backwardness.

Most of the memberships came from the trader communities. It was their lookout to milk government schemes for their own profit. A significant chunk of such members were involved in building roads and bridges for the public works department, some of them were also involved in utilizing government subsidies to open their own factories. Schemes meant for the educated unemployed were solely utilized by Sanghis: permits for newer shops, quota for production of certain goods, transport licenses, alcohol retail licenses were almost fully enjoyed by Sangh members. The Bhaiji who rode a cycle earlier now rode a scooter, and the one who rode a scooter now drove a car. The policemen saluted them, and bureaucrats depended on them for transfers and promotions. Whenever there was a tour of the D.M and the S.D.M. the Sangh activists would always be a part of the delegation team.'[183]

Economic Liberalisation and Globalisation thus effectively meant that the individuals from the RSS, or with and RSS background were slowly and steadily involved in hijacking the bureaucracy to the extent that corruption became a norm and the administration became further alienated from the ground reality of the state.

Likewise, within the RSS and outside the RSS within the greater public life, Dr. Wakankar faced a hitherto unforeseen scenario of alienation. If earlier during the Jan Sangh years, the RSS had been a front for political solidarity in lieu of spiritual ennoblement, in the BJP years, it had become a conduit of RSS activists to actualize the vested interests of their class. This meant lesser presence at the grassroots level, and longer deliberations of secretarial matters of the state.

In a fitting climax of the novel, we find Dr. Wakankar at odds with the other influential cliques within the RSS in the aftermath of a postmortem procedure in relation to localized

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[183] Uday Prakash, "'...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana,'" essay, in "...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana" (Vani Prakashan, 1998), 102–202, 173-74.

Rah Yatra riots. It is here, that the split within the RSS is complete: the protagonist is requested to lie on a postmortem report relating to the corpse of a Muslim individual who died in the riots from a police bullet. He is categorically coaxed into doing it by Minister of the State Government, T.P. Singh and Collector Randhawa, both of whom were from RSS backgrounds. At once, the fallacy of RSS's idealized fantasy of Hindu Rashtra is laid bare to us:

'I can see it clearly how thousands of murders are being choreographed on a daily basis in this country—counterfeit medicines, fake liquor, dacoits , criminals and a community of them at that, by police, by the administration. All these murders have nothing to do at all with faith or religion. A thoroughly corrupt hegemony stands before us, which doesn't care about its victims' faith: Hindu or Muslim. Like in Bangladesh, the Muslims had taken part in genocide of muslims, rape of muslim women and had given birth to a class of penitent refugees; in our country too, Hindus are dying at the hands of Hindus themselves...It is a shame that these Hindus remain committed to idea of Hindu Rashtra and fund the RSS these days.'[184]

The fallacy of Hindu Rashtra is exposed in the climax of the novel when Dr. Wakankar is coaxed by Minister T.P. Singh and Collector Randhawa to develop a postmortem report that protects District Magistrate Gupta from sanctions and suspension. It is a Kafkaesque situation, for all the stakeholders in the context were from RSS backgrounds, yet they were representing the interests of a smaller class of power elites within the democratic system. Such was the formulation of the Hindu Rashtra, and such became the definitive functionalities of Hindu solidarity: ultimately dependent on bureaucratic power-brokering by utilization of confrontational policies.

Sheila Rohekar's 'Taviz' explores the line of rhetoric of confrontation between multiple discourses of secularist bureaucracy as presented by Uday Prakash to a greater detail. Sheila

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[184] Uday Prakash, "'...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana,'" essay, in "...Aur Ant Mein Prarthana" (Vani Prakashan, 1998), 102–202, 130.

Rohekar's position within this study is one without parallels: she happens to be the only living Jewish woman writing literature in an Indian Language at present time. While owing to the author's linkages to a conspicuously small minority community, it is indeed difficult to gauge the authenticity of her minority experience or for that matter find its reflections in her writing; still the context of Babri Masjid demolition essentially posits it with significant sense of universality when it comes to minoritarian and inter-faith public life in the shadow of the dismantling of the dome.

The core narrative of the novel 'Taviz' ('Amulet') is about the inter-faith marriage of a Hindu woman, Reva to a Muslim man, Anwar; and how the socio-religious transgressions involved in the process implicate tragedy and identity crisis within their son Anant's life. The frame narration of the novel is concerned with the gradual marginalization of the characters from the mainstream centers of political and social privileges of belonging and ultimately translates into the three characters being murdered on separate occasions of communal flare-ups.

Rohekar's narrative intensifies the contemporary communal angle within the novel with usage of contrasts and flashbacks within the narrative time of the novel. A major source of this contrast is the diary of Reva's grandfather who had been a radical freedom fighter and had come under Gandhiji's tutelage to mend his ways, all the while preserving his sincere doubts about the same. This diary remains the only site of linkage between Reva's married life and that of her own maternal family after the break between the two is completed by the inter-faith marriage. The journal closely interrogates the hollowness of the polity in the immediate aftermath of the Indian independence, and gets the reader to contest the limitations of 1990s exclusivist identity politics (read Hindutva) with that of a colonial golden past when inter-faith discourses and cross-religion solidarities were a common thing: even under the shadow of the Partition.

Reva's romantic relationship and later her marriage to Anwar is represented as a symbolic act of transgression of the borders of the religious hegemony, which ultimately destroys any

sense of belonging later in their son Anant's life; a parallel here is to be noted between Anant and that of Reva's grandfather who grows significantly alienated from the Congress bureaucracy of post-Independent India:

'Tuesday, 1959

What did we even achieve by independence? The same colonial social structure, that same chasm of inequality between the rich and the poor; or even worse for that matter! The ethical paralysis of the society, its blindness to the divinity of its politicians and its corruptions will never allow us to build that Bharat which Panditji had dreamt of…

Friday, 1963

I stood by Reva today, but Sarala's anger had a point.

Remember Gandhiji? For whom you had left home? Even he had never partaken food inside a Muslim household. Yet you come to convince me.

I could not explain Gandhi's spiritual dharma to her.'[185]

Similarly Reva and Anwar's son, Anant grows up in an environment which creates the deepest sense of alienation and pathological un-belonging to him. I use the term un-belonging consciously to hint at the problematic of being ripped apart from the domestic family structure twice: first by a lack of religious identity, followed by the murder of his biological father by rioting Hindus. While the psychoanalytic implications of such a form of alienation is not the line of interrogation here, we must concern ourselves with the contradictions of Anant's upbringing that underscore such a pathology. Even though Anwar is shown to be the first university-educated member of a 'backward' Muslim family, his son is named with a Sanskrit word that arguably passes off as a Hindu name; he does not receive religious education, yet he is circumcised in keeping with the Muslim ritual:

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[185] Sheila Rohekar, Taviz (New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2005), 278.

'Once Anwar's parents had left, he took it upon himself to enlighten Reva on the purposes and importance of circumcision (khatna). Instead of describing it as a religious ritual, he went to the pains to defining it as a surgery to keep off certain diseases. He thought aloud how it kept the desert people disease-free and had probably for this reason found a mention in other Abrahamic religious texts as well. Circumcision was now a standard post-birth procedure in all foreign nations. "I would want that Anant is circumcised as well, not for the Islamicate implications but as a protection against possible diseases.

Annu had a surgical khatna, a truth that was only known to his parents.'[186]

Bodily a Muslim, in name and in mind a Hindu, Anant thus was ordained to grow up in a state of religious hybridity that 'entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy'.[187] In the author's words he is, Hindu as well as Muslim, in reality, it de-sacralizes the very origins of both his tentative religious identities.

The novel narrates the impossibility of Anant's adoption of both the identities when his father is killed by beheading in the environs of a communal riot of Ahmedabad in 1969 by a Hindu mob that sought him for medical assistance and when his paternal grandmother from Reva's second marriage to RSS apparatchik Mahesh Jha—deems him untouchable for being borne of Muslim blood. Caught between this fear of being identified as a Muslim and being unacceptable as a Hindu, Anant gets rid of his patronymic name Siddiqi and adopts Kumar instead to ease his anxieties of belonging. What appeared to be a positive gift, was now cast off as a burden; and while in college, Annu, in a bid to embrace some sense of belonging turns to Hindutva nationalism and Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Erasing his muslim ancestry, his involvement with the notorious radical movement as a karsevak, thus appear as a compensation for a lack of sustainable identity.

Ironically, when he is killed by a police bullet in front of the Babri Masjid during karseva, his circumcision is discovered, and at once it is considered as a signifier of his true religious

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[186] Sheila Rohekar, Taviz (New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2005), 110-111.

[187] Homi Bhabha, "Introduction," essay, in The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), 1–18, 2-4.

identity. Circumcision being the unquestioned Muslim signifier, at once the entire identity of Anant as a karsevak became a suspect, speculations run wild about him being a Pakistani agent provocateur with some intentions of sabotage. Ultimately, it is conjectured that he may have been a part of a larger conspiracy and his creamtion is only possible with the efforts of his close friends Vikas and Bablu, and his ashes are purportedly consigned to the dust bin and not to the Ganges.

In a cover-up incident that follows we find that Reva too is killed by a nefarious nexus of politicians and bureaucrats, so that there is no claim vis-à-vis Annu's corpse. What remains at the end of the novel, is Naina, Annu's step-sister from Reva's marriage to Mahesh, who in a bid to trace Reva's whereabouts gets to find her grandfather's journal and deceased Annu's amulet. By then, obviously Reva too had been murdered as a part of the cover up, and much too Naina's confusion to the amulet too carried not some Islamic surah but 'a healing mantra dropped by a master from Ayodhya'.[188]

Unlike most other provincial Hindi novels emanating as popular literature from postcolonial India, Sheila Rohekar's appropriation of the registers of communalism and secularism are not one of positive adulation, or even in a Gandhian mode of syncretism. Instead she underscores the very premise of unity in diverse, not as a secularist formulation but as one of multiculturalism, wherein the contesting sense of religiosity and spirituality lead to the continual rupture of the marginal voices at the behest of majoritarianism. The metaphysical concept of 'Yad va Sem', roughly translated as 'name and memory' in English[189], which is at once so important in post-holocaust Jewish writing, too finds a recurrent mention within the novel with Reva's corpse going unidentified , unmourned and Anant's corpse being cremated en masse and the ashes being consigned to the dustbin, too thus direct our readings at the

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[188] Heinz Wessler (2012). "Who am I?" : : On the narrativity of identity andviolence in Sheila Rohekar's novel Tāvīz. < https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278010538_Who_am_I_On_the_narrativity_of_identity_andviolence_in_Sheila_Rohekar's_novel_Taviz> , 57

[189] Heinz Wessler (2012). "Who am I?" : : On the narrativity of identity andviolence in Sheila Rohekar's novel Tāvīz. < https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278010538_Who_am_I_On_the_narrativity_of_identity_andviolence_in_Sheila_Rohekar's_novel_Taviz> , 58.

possible terrains of conflict that make it impossible for an admittedly secularizing polity being successfully able to deal with a multicultural and multiracial reality.

The final novel in this chapter, Kashinath Singh's 'Kashi Ka Assi', utilizes black humor and North Indian parochialism to identify the neoliberal underpinnings of religiosity and religious interactions in a Benaras that faces erasure of its lifestyle in the wake of the Hindutva wave of late 90s. Even though, it is significantly difficult to identify a singular novelistic strand within the narrative, one could consider it as a series of loosely connected chronological vignettes that narrate the communal rot which ultimately leads to the decay of the greater discourses of spirituality and secularism owing to electoral chaos and neoliberal intrusion in the aftermath of the Ram Janmahoomi Movement and the implementation of the Mandal Commission.

Narrated in the form of a roman a clef, the novel chiefly inaugurates the cosmopolitan nature and the public intellectual milieu in the Assi Ghat of late 1990s Benaras. Likewise characters like Dr. Gaya Singh, Tanni Guru, Pandeyji and the author himself appear as literary representations of real people, with Dr. Gaya Singh being a caricature of the author's elder brother, Marxist academic and later Professor Emeritus at JNU, Dr. Namvar Singh. The narratives appear in the novel from time to time, as introspection of a highly political time that passed by the protagonists. The political-social milieu of the time is described as follows:

'The friends of V.P Singh were leaving his government like rats from a sinking ship. Assi was teeming with these friends, but they had no takers. Everyone had their eyes set on Adhyaksh ji (L.K. Advani) in Delhi. He had set the wind to the rhetoric of sending the government tumbling down. The Mandal Commission had alienated the leaders of Eastern Uttar Pradesh from grassroots. The BJP cadres would sloganeer 'Thakur buddhi! Yadav Bal! Jhandu ho gaya Janata Dal' whenever the groups would meet each other on the street. The Janata dal leaders had no answer. They neither had support of the Thakurs nor the Yadavs. Accustomed to the politics of Opposition, they had little experience in running a government.

In this scuffle, the slogan 'Jai Shree Ram' became a rage. At Pappu's tea stall, bhang started selling as much as tea. All the regulars at Assi, became Rambhakts and started taking an interest in karseva. This was galvanized by Advani's arrest on 23ʳᵈ October. The Janata leaders were sipping tea with the karsevaks at the Assi ghat, knowing very well that the Mandal controversy had made them a joke.

Pandeyji was irate at Gopal's Pan-shop, he argued, "The country is going through a crisis, you would not know if a terrorist was amongst us stuffing a bomb under your seat! You'll speak for the Yadavs, the Brahmans will beat you to a pulp; you speak for the Brahmins, then there's no telling as to what these Yadavs will do. If you kept a beard, then you might pass by Madanpura or the Nai Sadak intact, but those from the Hindu mohalla will definitely scalp you. Look at those louts in orange bandanas, shouting and moving with pomp...'[190]

One of the hallmarks of this political radicalism induced furor, was unmistakably communalist tendencies, as is understandable from the author-protagonists' conversation on electoral politics, with a Muslim vegetable vendor on the street:

' "So who are you voting for this time?

You tell me, whom to vote for?

I laughed him off, 'So you'll vote for whoever I ask you to?'

'Well, tell me first?', now he was smiling too, as if I was the bigger idiot...

'Arrey, as if it was worth telling you that the biggest issue in this election is secularism?'

'Secular? Matlab? Muslim votes?

'No votes to protect Muslim interests, Christian interests against Hindu fundamentalism, against the Party flag hanging outside your shop (BJP flag)'

'It's all the same sahib...who's contesting for the seculars?'

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[190] Kashinath Singh, Kashi Ka Assi (New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 2006), 26-27.

'Dinanath Yadav'

'He'll definitely lose. Nobody knows him.'

He kept looking at me. Then slowly and thoughtfully, he went on, "Sahab, please don't take this otherwise but I would like to say something too. I have spent my entire life in this mohalla. Whatever little education I received, I got here. I grew up playing with kids here, every other person knows me. My livelihood runs on them. My family too. I can't speak for others, but I do not consider them separate from myself. I'll only vote for that person, for whom my mohalla votes. But even if I do vote for that person, the others won't believe that I did so. I feel pained about this.'[191]

These seething underpinnings of communality are pervasive within the narrative through the discourses of the working class stakeholders of Benaras. It is through the contrasting registers of fundamentalist sentiment and communal victimization of religious minorities that the trajectory of neoliberal turn to secularism plays out. Simply put, within the discourses of electoral politics, the neoliberal turn to identity politics make sure that while the very phrase secular is dubbed to be in favor of Muslims, parties like the BJP are not deemed communal in the same vein, instead they are perceived as Hindu Nationalist. In a city known for religious tourism from abroad as well as other state, the neoliberal turn of the economy makes sure that the world wide mores of polarization contaminate the waters of Benaras as well.

CONCLUSION

The 1990s with its Babri Demolition and Parliament Attack later, effectively encapsulate possibly the most turbulent phase of political life and public discourse in post-Independent India. Within the greater arc of Post-Shah Bano incident, this historical period could be considered as one of extreme reaction from the margins of Indian polity in terms of radicalization. The Shah Bano incident and the Congress (I) government's flip-flop policy

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[191] Kashinath Singh, Kashi Ka Assi (New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 2006), 56-57.

when it came to legislation vis-à-vis the Babri demolition greatly clarified the rapidly reducing scope of the state in matters of religious expression and identity. It is as much a product of the rapidly changing neoliberal world as much as it is a product of an electoral democracy where circumcision is a clinching evidence of being a Muslim, or for that matter secularism could be dubbed as an euphemism for Muslim votes. While it could be a matter of natural argument that such discourses did remain a constant fixture within the manifestos of fringe political establishments, this confrontation of the 90s made it possible that such discourses could very well infiltrate mainstream popular discourse. Simply put, even within the extant discourses of secularism, now confrontational discourses of appeasement, fundamentalism and cultural nationalism could run riot, enough to sully the liberal democratic origins of the same.

CHAPTER 5: 2006 -2020 (and beyond): Sachar Committee, the Supreme Court judgment on Ayodhya Dispute and the contradictions of plurality.

Changes to the secularism discourse in the period concerned

The Sachar Committee Report of 2006, is to be seen as a historic moment in the Indian polity when the confrontations between the secularist discourse and pluralist ideal were brought to a fore. The findings of the Sachar Committee (SCR), headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar clearly stated the problematic lack of significant representation of religious minorities within the government bureaucracy and within educational institutions. While, the notion of 'backwardness' too figures out in this contradiction, one must note that these disadvantages do not willy-nilly always involve cultural content in them, often this deprivation and lack of awareness is of a material nature, translating as lack of employment, housing, education and financial support. Along with the Sachar Committee report, the National Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities (known as the Ranganath Misra Commission Report) of 2007, identify that the categories of minority and backwardness are greater than that of cultural registers and majorly involve materialist concerns of the public life. Likewise, post 2007 Indian political life saw a contradiction between the fast waning secularist discourse and the gradually developing discourse of plurality wherein consent and confrontation went hand-in-hand. The marginalization and subsequent polarization of the minorities on the basis of backwardness (and other related stereotypes related to backwardness), thus achieved material consolidation within popular public opinion.

However, one must note that, far from the nature of the public backlash that the committee was receiving, the report was neither exclusively concerned with Muslims

nor was it a purely binding set of suggestions on either the state or the central governments. The purview of the report could be understood as an analysis of issues on three registers, namely: identity, security and equity and how these issues feed into each other in myriad ways so as to influence the discourses of backwardness and destitution. The report identifies and defines the ambits of a specialized class: in this case called Socio-Religious Communities (SRCs) that are again divided into Muslim and non-Muslim orders. The committee report makes an interesting distinction in this regard while demarcating Muslim and non-Muslim SRCs:

'They carry a double burden of being labeled as 'anti-national' and as being 'appeased' at the same time. While Muslims need to prove on a daily basis that they are not 'anti-national' and 'terrorists', it is not recognized that the alleged appeasement has not resulted in the desired level of socio-economic development of the community'[192]

Such a labeling of one of the significant categories of minority SRCs is ultimately held within the report as symptomatic of a form of 'identity crisis' leading to 'perverse response even to well-intended programmes'[193]. Subsequently, these responses to deprivation and discrimination are ipso facto interpreted as objective realities of the community concerned thereby absolving the statecraft from criticisms. Simply put, while the state's attempts at leveling the social field (or habitus) are in fact subtly poised against the concerned SRCs, the insulation of the target communities from such attempts are considered as responses tailor-made to preserve the autonomy of the community. Thus, insufficiently reformist affirmative actions aimed at greater

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[192] Prime Minister's High Level Committee and Rajindar Sachar, <u>Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India Prime Minister's High Level Committee Cabinet Secretariat Government of India A Report</u> § (2006), 11.
[193] Prime Minister's High Level Committee and Rajindar Sachar, <u>Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India Prime Minister's High Level Committee Cabinet Secretariat Government of India A Report</u> § (2006), 13.

social inclusion are often contradictorily perceived to be at loggerheads with religious expression as afforded by secularist discourses extant. It is therefore not surprising at all, when one notices that the very recommendations of the Sachar committee were criticized and often rejected on ambits and concerns relating to treatment of individuals from majoritarian dispensations. Within the Hindu Right political ecosystem, represented most significantly by the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Sachar Committee Report was constituted as a 'political crime'[194], while within the discourses emanating from the organizational wings of Hindutva, the findings were interpreted to 'anti-national'[195]. Vociferous criticisms came from the intellectuals related to the RSS, who harked back to the colonial era racial historiographies to justify the tenor of appeasement allegedly inherent in the report. Rakesh Sinha, one of the significant academics linked to the RSS, most notably took this opportunity for a call to reconsider the Article 30 of the Indian Constitution so as to Indianise the minorities, as opposed to providing them with greater inclusivity within the national mainstream:

'...the need to deconstruct the psychology that Muslims are separate from others in this country. To enable this, the Article 30 of our constitution must be revoked. This will enable the integration of Muslims into the national mainstream [...] it is the mindset of false identity politics that needs to be demolished [...] This has to be countered and the mindset should be deconstructed.'[196]

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[194] Staff, "Advani Blames Upa of Minority Appeasement," https://www.oneindia.com, March 20, 2006, https://www.oneindia.com/2006/03/19/advani-blames-upa-of-minority-appeasement-1142844937.html.
[195] Thomas Blom Hansen to Letter to the Editor, "The India That Does Not Shine," Isim Review (Universiteit Leiden, November 2007), https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17128 , 51.
[196] Vishwa Samvada Kendra, "'Separate Muslim Universities: Mindsets and Threats': Prof.Rakesh Sinha's Speech Summary," Vishwa Samvada Kendra, January 8, 2013, https://vskkarnataka.org/separate-muslim-universities-mindsets-and-threats-prof-rakesh-sinhas-speech-summary/.

This brings two contrary discourses to the fore. Firstly, while the Sachar recommendations for the most part dealt with the categories of religious minorities in general, with Muslims as a special case; within the political ecosystem, the recommendations were perceived to be purely Muslim oriented both by the UPA government and the Centre-Right Opposition parties. So effectively, the recommendations enunciated a subtle environment of religious polarization, a development that was quite unexpected. Secondly, this attempt to link Article 30 of the Indian constitution with that of highly racialized historiography from the colonial era, brings us closer to the rather exclusivist nature of post-colonial nationalist discourses which could be easily perverted willfully, at the cost of limitations of the secularist discourse. Interestingly the very first state government to respond critically to the findings of the SCR, was Gujarat, and its response highlights the aforementioned tenor of exclusivist Indian Nationalism. In keeping with the findings of the committee, the UPA government launched a pre-matriculation scholarship scheme for Muslim students based on academic and economic criteria, which was interestingly refused by the Gujarat state government of the time, under the Chief Ministerial reign of Narendra Modi, on grounds of being discriminatory towards students of other communities. In 2013, after much legal wrangle, when the program was indeed implemented, the Gujarat state government went on to file a affidavit against the Sachar Committee claiming it to be unconstitutional as well as non-statutory. [197] Simply put, the intention behind the affirmative action was judicially derailed by the Right wing controlled state government in keeping with a kernel logic that found religious and linguistic minorities to be a liability for the project of nationalism and they must be nationalized thoroughly before as a social class they

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[197] Cristophe Jaffrelot, "The Muslims of Gujarat During Narendra Modi's Chief Ministership," essay, in Indian Muslims: Struggling for Equality of Citizenship, ed. Riaz Hasan, Islamic Studies (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2016), 235–58, 239.

could be included within the cultural mainstream. It is worth of note here that the context and optimization of the minority identity as something extraneous to the interest of the state is not held contradictory by the Right political institutions that considers plurality of identity as more sacrosanct as opposed to secularist discourses. The instrumentalist tenor of political act is unmistakable here in this regard, wherein even affirmative actions towards a target community must be derailed for reasons of historical antagonism.

The publication of the Sachar report along with the RMCR Committee for the first time brought up the context of 'development deficit' with regards to the scenario of minorities in India. The concepts of development is a secular one, while the discourse of minority in India, is primarily one dictated by the religious expression of people. The Sachar committee report, the UPA government's attempted affirmative actions and finally the Hindu Right parties perception of it amply highlighted that while development discourses too in this period would not be necessarily free from doldrums of identity politics. Likewise, within the Post-Sachar Indian polity, the discourses of minority had now polarized enough to insulate communities. This evolution interestingly happening half a decade after, T.M.A. Pai Foundation v State of Karnataka (2002) case where minority was defined as a numeric category, and not a mere faith based consolidation:

"In India, the Kerala High Court, after observing that the Constitution granted specific rights to minorities, declared that "in the absence of any special definition we must hold that any community religious or linguistic, which is numerically less than 50% of the population of the State is entitled to the rights guaranteed by the

Constitution."[198]

The above statement, that emanated from the T.M.A Pai Foundation case, when considered in relation to the findings of the Sachar Committee report allow us to identify the gradually reducing scope of identity politics that was extant at the time. While it is a fallacy to consider the findings of the SCR as political, we must not forget the fact that the discourse of backwardness which influenced the findings had political moorings. It was for this reason that any form of affirmative action when considered to dispel such backwardness was also more often than not considered to have been not free from political interests (sic. Minority appeasement). Caught in this conundrum between backwardness and lack of execution of affirmative action has in the words of several political commentators and social theorists led to a gradual crumbling of the theocratic consolidations within the minority registers, especially within that of Indian Muslims. Commentators like Javeed Alam, has identified such a trend of development as a possible precursor of citizen politics, wherein alienation from the traditional community leadership has led them in their search for newer political equations within the mainstream neo-bourgeois of the country.[199] In my own observation, a similar trend is to be noticed within the Hindu Dalit classes as well, as is evident from electoral trends from 2014 onwards in states with presence of significant communal and casteist activism. The legislation surrounding the banning of instant triple talaq in 2019 (retrospectively in force from 2018) could be considered as one such event. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court declaring the concept of Instant Triple Talaq to be unconstitutional and hence null

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[198] "T.M.A.Pai Foundation & Ors vs State Of Karnataka & Ors on 31 October, 2002," righttoeducation.in, accessed July 21, 2024,
https://righttoeducation.in/sites/default/files/W.P.%20(C)%20No.%20350%20of%201993.PDF , 46.

[199] Javeed Alam and Surinder S. Jodhka, "Contemporary Muslim Situation in India: A Long-Term View," essay, in Religion, Community & Development: Changing Contours of Politics and Policy in India, ed. Gurpreet Mahajan (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 203–27, 204.

and void in 2017, the BJP government under the prime ministership of Narendra Modi passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 which '...planned to make instant triple talaq (talaq-e-biddah) in any form — spoken, in writing or by electronic means such as email, SMS and WhatsApp illegal and void, with up to three years in jail for the husband.'[200] What is even more significant is the fact that the court litigation that ultimately led to this piece of legislation was filed by a Muslim woman activist, Ishrat Jahan, and that during the parliamentary debates that led to the final legislation, Indian National Congress had curiously supported the passage of the bill, even after having dissented on the probable motivation behind it. While Ishrat Jahan eventually joined BJP later, one cannot disregard the fact that it took a Muslim woman's litigation to get rid of such a contentious and polarizing 'right', at a time when a Centre-Right coalition was in the government. It vindicates the post-Sachar Commission claim made by several political historians that the crumbling of traditional communitarian solidification within the minorities is a reality. This reality dispels the notional value of so called minority 'communalism' and reinforces the age-old postcolonial formation of *maibaap sarkar*, within which the relation between the state and the citizens is of patron-client. Simply put, such developments hint at a probable and significantly alarming phenomenon of refeudalisation of the state's linkage to its citizens, wherein these citizens are effectively rendered as passive receivers of patronage.[201]

What does it mean for the citizens in the margins of the state when the state establishment legislates on matters relating to their immediate social classification?

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[200] Sandeep Phukan, "Lok Sabha Passes Triple Talaq Bill Govt. Refuses Congress's Plea for Review by House Panel," The Hindu, December 29, 2017, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/lok-sabha-passes-the-triple-talaq-bill/article22319663.ece .

[201] Gopal Guru, "Struggle for the Margin or from the Margin," essay, in Religion, Community & Dvelopment: Changing Contours of Politics and Policy in India, ed. Gurpreet Mahajan and Surinder S. Jodhka (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 248–62, 250.

Does it mean a success for citizen politics of such deprived classes and greater presence of such classes in the legislative policy of the state? Or does it mean an identification of the margins of state governance? It is under such circumstances that the secularist systems of governance take a backseat and popular pluralist sentiments of the citizenry occupy a position of centrality within mainstream polity. Thereby, the citizen, regardless of its gender, religious, and economic register come under the direct charitable or punitive motives of the hard state. Identity thus becomes a category of circumstantial value, when the state establishment engages in a direct discourse with the traditionally deemed backward marginalia of the nation.

Under such 'stately' interactions in the Post-Sachar commission Indian polity, the phenomenon of Love Jihad too interestingly occupies a place. Originating in 2009 from an incident of elopement and alleged forced religious conversion in Kerala, the phenomenon has remained surreptitiously functional right until 2017 within the popular imaginary of the citizen. Laura Dudley Jenkins, who specializes in the scholarship relating to religious freedom and mass-conversion in India, observes the following about 'Love Jihad' phenomenon:

"The Love Jihad masterplot is one type of pre-dominant conversion narrative . Love-Jihad narratives tap into a masterplot or 'recurrent skeletal story' shared by a culture or community that shapes key ideas such as identity, justice or threat. Masterplots feature stock character types. Contemporary love-jihad narratives parallel similar stories told in the past about threat Muslim men supposedly posed to women of other communities, stories that shared similar themes if fewer motorcycles or terrorism overtones than in the present. The characters in this masterplot include a sinister, sexy Muslim man and an innocent, gullible non-Muslim damsel in distress, incapable of choosing for herself to convert. The former lacks sincerity, and the later

lacks both sincerity and agency. The converter is insincere in his love, the convert insincere in her new religion. According to this masterplot, the female lacks both religious sincerity (because she is carried away by lobe or lust rather than sincere beliefs), and agency (because she is duped by her lover). Given these faulty premises, religious freedom does not mean her freedom to convert but rather her need for protection from conversion."[202]

The pathological fear of 'Love Jihad' convulsed the state establishment to the extent that it received significant legislative reaction from Uttar Pradesh in 2020. Yogi Adityanath, the chief minister of the state shepherded the passing of The Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance 2020 which curiously does not make a mention of the freedom of religion subtext, present in such kind of legislations emanating from other Indian states. Furthermore, the presenter of the bill analysed it before the media as follows:

"Today, the Uttar Pradesh cabinet decided to introduce an ordinance against unlawful religious conversions. More than 100 cases of 'love jihad' have been reported in the last few months in Uttar Pradesh, so we are bringing an ordinance against these unlawful religious conversions"[203]

Such a vocal defense of the bill effectively seals the possible linkage between Love Jihad as a phenomenon and fear of religious conversion as a majoritarian pathology. Furthermore, as an immediate reaction to the Love Jihad phenomenon, we find the mention of the creation of 'Anti-Romeo Squads' in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh state

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[202] Laura Dudley Jenkins, "Persecution: The Love Jihad Rumor," essay, in Religious Freedom and Mass Conversion in India (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 180–215, 181-182.

[203] Special Correspondent, "U.P.'s Population Control Move Unconstitutional, Say Women's Organisations," The Hindu, July 19, 2021,https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ups-population-control-move-unconstitutional-say-womens-organisations/article35413216.ece .

election of BJP, thereby allowing us to develop a trajectory to this majoritarian pathology.[204]

As one would note later in case of Instant Triple Talaq, in case of the 'Love Jihad' phenomenon too, matters of religious controversy and majoritarian fears are over time quelled by the statecraft through invocation of a feudal linkage between the state and the citizen. Legislation thus becomes instrumental in either rewarding or punishing the individual citizen, in terms of class identity and religious ideological implications.

For the discerning observer of India mainstream legislation, such a refeudalised pluralist tenor of legislation is to be observed not only in case of the so-called minorities or as the Sachar Committee calls SRCs (socio religious consolidations), but also in case of majority Hindu consolidations as well. The Modi government's post-2019 involvement with the establishment of the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya is a case in points. After nearly twenty seven years of legal wrangle, the Supreme Court had on 9th November, 2019 pronounced the binding judgment of the Ayodhya dispute (also known as M Siddiq (D) Thr Lrs v. Mahant Suresh Das & Ors), under the leadership of Judges Ranjan Gogoi, Sharad Arvind Bobde, DY Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer, which unanimously declared the following:

- The Court ordered the government of India to create a trust to build the Ram Mandir temple and form a Board of Trustees within three months. The disputed land will be owned by the government of India and subsequently transferred to the Trust after its formation.

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[204] BJP Uttar Pradesh, Lok Kalyan Sankalp Patra 2017 (Lucknow: BJP, 2017), https://www.indiaspend.com/wp-content/uploads/20170128_BJP_UP2017_Lok_Kalyan_Sankalp_Patra.pdf , 18; Also see, Kenneth Bo Nielsen and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, "Love Jihad and the Governance of Gender and Intimacy in Hindu Nationalist Statecraft," Religions 12, no. 12 (December 2, 2021): 1068–86, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12121068 , 1071.

- The Court ordered the entire disputed land of area of 2.77 acres to be allocated for the construction of a temple while an alternative piece of land of area of 5 acres be allocated to the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board for the construction of a mosque at a suitable place within Ayodhya.[205]

- The Court ruled that the 2010 Allahabad High Court's decision, division of the disputed land was incorrect.

- The Court ruled that the Demolition of the Babri Masjid and the 1949 desecration of the Babri Masjid was in violation of law.

These four major rulings from the sentence effectively developed the tenor of the other observations made within the 2019 Supreme Court sentence. For our considerations in this chapter, these four points remain central. In dismissing the rulings of the 2010 Allahabad High Court Judgement, the Supreme Court in 2019 effectively involved the state into the scheme of things. The Archaeological Survey of India had earlier conducted an excavation of the disputed site on the orders of the Allahabad High Court. The report of the excavation concluded that there were ruins of "a massive structure" beneath the ruins of the mosque which was "indicative of remains which are distinctive features found associated with the temples of north India", but found no evidence that the structure was specifically demolished for the construction of the Babri Masjid.[206] Likewise, the 2010 Allahabad ruling saw to it that the land in question was to be divided into three parts: 1/3rd going to Ram Lalla

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[205] The Hindu Netdesk, "Highlights of the Ayodhya Verdict," The Hindu, November 9, 2019, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/highlights-of-the-ayodhya-verdict/article62125657.ece .

[206] Anne-Julie Etter, "Creating Suitable Evidence of the Past? Archaeology, Politics, and Hindu Nationalism in India from the End of the Twentieth Century to the Present," South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal, no. 24/25 (December 14, 2020), https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.6926 , 8.

Virajman represented by the Hindu Mahasabha, 1/3rd going to the Uttar Pradesh Central Sunni Waqf Board and 1/3rd going to the Nirmohi Akhara.[207]

The 2019 judgment by the Supreme Court made two significant changes to this, while Nirmohi Akhara's claim was dismissed due to failure of their lawsuit, the addition of the Central Government to this sentence as the individual party duty bound to initiate the trust board that would be responsible for construction and the day to day management of the Mandir. Subsequently, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra was formed, and the Nirmohi Akhara was given a position on this trustee board as per the 2019 Supreme Court ruling.

The Central Government duty in forming the trustee board for the Ram Mandir, was an unprecedented and radical choice for it made the construction of the Mandir a contingent prerogative of the State, thereby bringing in statism in a religious discourse of such diverse implications for the first time in postcolonial India. Earlier such instances where the state and the judicial order were in association such as the Shah Bano incident, the state ipso facto had a mere position of suggestive importance. In declaring the Babri demolition of 1992, as well as its desecration in 1949 to be in violation of law, and yet invoking the administrative order in proper dissemination of judgment, the Supreme Court in 2019 came closest to interrogating the working contradictions between the functional discourses of secularism and pluralism within the contemporary Indian polity. It encapsulates the contingencies of

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[207] Other Original Suit (O.O.S.) No.1 of 1989 (Regular Suit No.2 of 1950) Gopal Singh Visharad since deceased and survived by Rajendra Singh Vs. Zahoor Ahmad and others AND Other Original Suit No.3 of 1989 (Regular Suit No.26 of 1959) Nirmohi Akhara and others Vs. Baboo Priya Datt Ram and others AND Other Original Suit No.4 of 1989 (Regular Suit No.12 of 1961) The Sunni Central Board of Waqfs, U.P. and others Vs. Gopal Singh Visharad (since deceased) and others AND Other Original Suit No.5 of 1989 (Regular Suit No.236 of 1989) Bhagwan Sri Ram Lala Virajman and others Vs. Rajendra Singh and others, elegalix.allahabadhighcourt.in (High Court of Judicature at Allahabad (Lucknow Bench) 2010), 284-5.

the legislative Order in preserving the religious plurality within an avowedly secular polity.

It is in this larger context of changing nature of political process in India, that Sachar Commission and the Supreme Court's attempt to bring in the state vis-à-vis the Ayodhya Ram Mandir controversy now occupy the two extremes of the secularist discourse ranging from affirmative action to majoritarian prerogative. At both the extremes, state's participation becomes a statement of its intention to reinforce in some way the processes of development deficit and religious expression respectively. However, the contradiction remains that, in a polity, where the state is expected to intervene in moments of extreme deprivation, can such a state be effectively deemed to secular or as a bureaucracy caught between the dichotomies of representing the interests of every community that seeks redressal of its rights and historic malfeasances? It is at best as we had argued earlier, a veritable confrontation between pluralist intent and secularist actions.

In the succeeding segment of this chapter we shall consider one literary text that effectively deal with such contradictions to the point of representing the blurry lines between such intent and actions. Chandan Pandey's 'Keetigaan' (2022) originally published in Hindi, Bangla would be the sole representative text considered in this chapter.

 References to the change within the discourse in select non-Anglophone novels of the period

Even though, the period concerned shows significant evolution of the secularism discourse vis-à-vis religious freedom and identity, strangely enough it is hard to come across direct references to the political churn in literary texts of the time.

Chandan Pandey's 'Keertigan' (2022) are perhaps only example that come closest in interrogating this development. It is my hope that future scholars on the subject of communalism and Nationalism shall be able to speculate better on the conspicuous absence of such literary texts and popular culture evidences in Post-Sachar India.

Chandan Pandey's 'Keertigan', published very recently in 2022, too talks about a similar trend albeit in a different strand. It talks about the perils of marginalized religious communities in an era marked by pronounced majoritarian mobilizations, when they do not receive the necessary affirmative action of the state. Simply put, it talks about how absence of statism could mean the perversion of the fragilities of the nation's multicultural realities.

In an era marked distinctly by violent vigilantism and mob lynching by majoritarian communal forces, Chandan Pandey's 'Keertigaan' as a narrative talks about journalists working in a news periodical/ web portal named Keertigaan, who are involved in investigative journalism with events of mob lynching and maintaining an archive of the same that lists name of the victim, cause of death, cause of lynching and place of lynching. It is therefore not of much surprise that its journalists remain under intense pressure for reasons of security and information mining.

The two protagonists—the lonely alcoholic divorcé, Sanoj, who writes poetry in his spare time (which makes him the butt of a myriad office jokes); and his Bangladeshi-Hindu refugee colleague, Sunanda—are given the job of collecting data and testimonies on lynching across the country. The sexual politics informing the relationship between them prevents the storyline from getting didactic.

The two journalists are part of a news-mag team, Keertigaan, literally the "Song of Glory." Their brief is to travel to the sites of these 'incidents,' meet, and talk to the affected families, other witnesses, and record their testimonies. At times, they also end up meeting those who had proudly organized the lynching and filmed videos of the brutal act.

Inspite of initial lack of interest from Sanoj's side, as the narrative progresses, the interviews of the victim's kins, audio recordings start affecting him significantly enough to induce hallucinations in him where he sees murdered victims in his surroundings, meetings and even inside his own room. The eyes of these victims stare at him mutely, as they would interview Gau-rakshaks, political henchmen and other stakeholders of the act. What is even more jarring is the fact that since the author had based all the events of lynching from newspaper archives and keeping the victim names unchanged it becomes doubly claustrophobic and uncanny for a politically-informed reader, leading to a momentary déjà vu.

The interactions between Sunanda and Sanoj bring to the fore to two contravening perceptions about these events of mob-lynching. Her brother being the victim of a mob-lynching attack in Bangladesh, which led her family to migrate to North Dinajpur district of West Bengal, she is in greater control of her agency. Their free flowing interactions on the origins of these events disclose the possible importance of history. Were these events a product of generations of falsified history being disseminated in media, classrooms elsewhere or were these legacies of class-conflict wherein it was only the Dalit, Muslims and members of Scheduled Tribes who bore the brunt of it? Even though in Chandan's own words from an interview state the immediate influence of the novel being:

'I had been in the grip of writer's block. I was stuck with a number of unfinished drafts and then the news of a lynching in a city like Pune put me in a trance. The thought would not leave me. While not talking about the excesses committed by those in positions of power has always been the norm, right now, there seemed to be this sudden, rather systemic endeavour to underplay, deny, justify and plain ignore a crime against humanity and our collective conscience at work.'[208]

While Chandan Pandey is probably referring to the lynching of one Mohsin Sheikh[209], as the immediate flash point event that made him start working on the novel, it helps to note that none of these lynchings considered in the novel occur in Tier-I or even Tier-II cities of India, which could probably link these events to the refeudalisation of the social order. The Mohsin Sheikh incident also occupies a position of centrality for it is considered to be the first such event under the Modi regime.[210]

Coming back to the narrative, reporting these events take a significant psychological toll over the employees of the organization. As the reporting recce begins, it is observed that vigilante mob justice spreads like internet virality all around, with the little team of journalists finding it difficult to keep track:

'Dalsingar, the cameraman was sent on an assignment to the Ballabhgarh neighbourhood of Delhi to report on the gruesome mob lynching of Hafiz Junaid[211],

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[208] "In Conversation : Chandan Pandey Speaks To Varsha Tiwary On 'Keertigaan,'" Thirdlane Magazine, June 12, 2022, https://thirdlanemag.com/in-conversation-chandan-pandey-speaks-to-varsha-tiwary-on-keertigaan/non-fiction/.

[209] Sushant Kulkarni, "Meet Bhai, Man Who Heads Hindu Group Blamed for Techie's Murder," The Hindu, June 6, 2014,< https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/meet-bhai-man-who-heads-hindu-group-blamed-for-techies-murder/>

[210] Syedda Shahid, "India: First Mob Lynching of Modi Era - the India Observer," THE INDIA OBSERVER - "Your News, Your Voice," June 8, 2020, https://www.theindiaobserver.com/india-first-mob-lynching-of-modi-era/ .

[211] "Bloodstained Tickets and Bewilderment Are What Remain of a Train Ride Aborted by Hate ," The Wire, July 1, 2017, https://thewire.in/communalism/as-fear-grips-junaids-village-family-recalls-horror-of-lynching .

who was murdered on a running train. People who knew senior editor Rajabali considered this as a risk, while his rivals in this office found it to be a publicity gimmick. Rajabali however thought that all individuals were law abiding unless they became witness to a crime and that all individuals were journalists in their own way.

…when Dalsingar returned from the assignment, the only words that he could say was that he wanted to be only a cameraman for the rest of his life. His teeth would chatter while reporting that contrary to popular notions Junaid's murder was a perfectly planned one and not a spontaneous act of mob justice.

Junaid's brother had testified on camera that it was almost as if his brother's murderers derived some form of pleasure from his murder. They had stabbed him multiple times with the pacing train enough to hack his gut and muscles beyond any recovery. Had the train not stopped at the next station, the murderers would have hacked him into a pool of lump…

…Dalsingar, looking at whom one would find it very difficult to ascertain if he took any pleasure at all in anything other than latest fashion, had said something which had deeply shaken all others in the office. He said, "The camera lens is a secure boundary for me, which keeps me safely insulated from all these events of murder."'[212]

Dalsingar's experience, Sanoj's hallucinations and Sunanda's lived experience of rough mob justice attest to the reality and the commonplaceness of such events. Their predicaments are largely reflective of what Rahul Mukherjee calls 'vigilante virality' in which protection of cows and resorting to mob violence against minorities become ritualistic acts of collective aspiration: 'Such witnessing from members of

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[212] Chandan Pandey, Keertigaan (New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 2022), 81-82.

their own community is crucial for the aspirations of the majoritarian Hindutva boys today who are recording and circulating the videos because they want their acts to be recognized so as to gain stature within their community'[213]. It is worth noting that within the circumstances of lynching within the narrative, a sizeable chunk of perpetrators are shown to be from non-Brahminic castes. Therefore, it could be speculated that the narrated real events may in fact be hinting at a greater Hindu consolidation irrespective of caste lines. The novel ends on a note of complete mental disintegration of the lead male protagonist, where he is no longer able to identify those around him by their actual names while retaining a clear memory of the list of lynch victims.

Conclusion

The historic period bounded by the Sachar Committee Report on one hand in 2006 and the Supreme Court ruling of the Ayodhya Babri Masjid in 2019 culminating ultimately in the Ram Mandir Bhoomi Pujan in 2020 effectively marks the entry of the Indian polity into the Post-Secular Modernity. I chose to call this period to be post-Secular modernity for it re-orients the state in a fashion that it must play a dominant role in protecting the secularist model of governance from being perverted to facilitate a normative scenario of majoritarian cultural hegemony. In hindsight, this produces a significantly fragile statist position that orients the legislative order towards a feudalized discourse of pluralism, wherein all forms of identity need the assurance of security from the state establishment. Simply put, the post-Secular modernity of this era, in terms of the literary and political discourses available, leads us onto a future of statist plural polity.

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[213] Rahul Mukherjee, "Mobile Witnessing on WhatsApp: Vigilante Virality and the Anatomy of Mob Lynching," South Asian Popular Culture 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 79–101, https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2020.1736810, 16-17 .

CONCLUSION

The thesis consistently holds the greater contradiction of how increased state presence within discourses of secularism could in fact erode the secularist principles of the statecraft, especially in case of the Indian polity. A longer and more historically consistent view could also claim that the mere mention of secularism within the Preamble has hastened a faster decay of the ideology due to contestations between religious dispensations and their ideological apparatus.

Also worth noting in this regard is that there is not one 'singular', pristine, master-signifier narrative of secularism within either the political discourses or the literary discourses of the periods considered within post-Independent India. Hence, unsurprisingly, the secularist principles emanating from distinct Indian provincial literary traditions too turn out to be different owing to differential origins of communal pathologies: while in case of Hindi and Urdu literatures it is a product of the long running controversy between Hindi and Urdu languages in matters of bureaucracy and statecraft, in case of Bengali literatures it is related to feudal relations between the religious dispensations.

Just like there is not one master discourse of secularism, similarly, communalism too in case of post-Independent India lacks singularity.

Having stated the dissonances, it is also important that the limitations of my thesis are brought to fore for the interests of future scholars on the subject. Media texts

such as commercial theatre and cinema do not find a representation in this thesis, for the popular classes of consumption vary significantly across the forms, thereby necessitating dedicated research. Having said that, I have tried to discuss films vis-à-vis neoliberal cultural nationalism elsewhere in a publication pertaining to my thesis.

I believe future lines of scholarship emanating from my work would deal with the post-secular pluralist modernity and its interaction with the neoliberal citizenry.

Possible lines of interrogation could also include the fallacy of considering Secularism and Communalism as binaries vis-à-vis the Indian polity in the millennium.

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