

The Other India

The Other India:
Narratives of Terror, Communalism
and Violence

Edited by

Om Prakash Dwivedi

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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Dedicated to my Parents,
and my loving wife, Veena

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INTRODUCTION

OM PRAKASH DWIVEDI

In one of his brilliant articles titled, “Thesis on the Philosophy of History”, Walter Benjamin appropriately comments on the paradoxical nature of civilization thus: “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.” (256). The same comment also stands true, if we look, even cursorily, at the history of Indian civilization, specifically, the moment preceding decolonization of India and its ensuing partition in two nations of India and Pakistan, because it ostensibly presents a myriad of stories underpinned by a commonality of brutal violence and denial of human rights to millions of people. The much celebrated political autonomy of India has only resulted in the suppression of its own poor and powerless citizens because it is *only* the elites and the powerful, who have replaced the roles of the Whites in this postcolonial period. It is those in power who suppress the rights of the weak, periodically producing and reproducing a new Other, which suffers mental trauma and physical violence, often accompanied with deaths.

Terror, communalism and violence have been recurrent bloody processes in the history of both colonial and postcolonial India. These piercing processes possess an inherent capacity of cleaving the individual's perception into two halves – the Self and the Other. Ostensibly, in this creation of the Other there is a continual denial of allowing the Other to relate to the Self and at the same time, a tendency to cast the Self and the Other as simplified opposites of each other. Because there is a denial, there exist repercussions of flagrant contestations, which inevitably dismantle the peace and the dream of a utopian world. Unfortunately, these acts of terror and communal violence have always been undergirded and nourished by state-sponsored agencies, which further subvert and blur the concept of democracy, human rights, and equality in India. In fact, Gyanendra Pandey, a famous historian, argues that ‘communalism’ in India is a great political threat as it wrongly breeds and encourages the cause of Hindu nationalism. Be it the 1947 historical partition of India, the 1964 Rourkela riot, the 1967 Ranchi-Hatia communal violence, the 1969 communal riot of Ahmedabad riot, the 1984 massacre of Sikhs, the 1992

Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya, the 2002 Godhra riot in Gujarat, or the latest terrorist attack in Mumbai in 2008: the one commonality which underpins them is the delirious role of damned political activists and religious fanatics. If colonial India was whipped by the demonic policies of British administration, then in post-colonial India, it is the political activists and religious fundamentalists who have furthered the task of British legacy.

The dismantling of the Ayodhya mosque by Hindu fundamentalists on 6th December 1992 on the basis of their fervent belief that it is the sacred place of their Lord Rama, ostensibly unveiled the monstrosity of postcolonial India which set off one of the worst communal riots ever seen in its history. The whole country was appalled by this demonic incidence, and the situation worsened because anti-Muslim pogroms were overtly carried on across the entire country resulting in infinitude deaths of Muslims. It was purely a political event promoted by the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), and inexorably supported by the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). As a reaction to the Ayodhya incident, on 27th February, 2002 in Godhara—a town in Gujarat—two bogies of a train were set on fire, resulting in the death of fifty-eight Hindu activists. This incident was retaliated by the BJP workers all over the State, resulting in the genocide of Muslim community. It was blot on the face of Indian secularism, killing as it did almost 2,000 Muslims. The aim was to create a pure Hindu nation, which simply was not possible until the nation is being inhabited by Muslims. Brenda Cossman and Ratna Kapur, in their book appropriately titled *Secularism's Last Sigh?*, take a sarcastic dig at the failure of Indian secularism:

On 6 December, 1992, . . . the RSS, BJP, and VHP combined, impaled the cause of secularism on the trishul (Shiva's spear) of Hindutva ideology. With their 'bare hands and teeth' they annihilated the five hundred years of bricks and mortar that held together a simple mosque—the Babri Masjid. Within minutes, the mobs of the Hindu Right had left the ancient structure in ruins, the remaining rubble occasionally belching clouds of smoke and dust, as if gasping for the last breath of secularism. The mosque lay belly up, harpooned with saffron flags and swarmed by the apostles of the God Squad ebullient in their victory over tolerance, faith and the secular ideal. (xi).

This pellucidly can be seen as a serious dent to India's 'unity in diversity' and the implicit nature of its secularism. And this is not the only instance where such a demonic event has plagued India's civilization. This is a recurrent aspect of India's postcolonial modernity where humanity is being constantly pushed behind. If colonial India was fraught with constant

demands of division of the India, then this problem has only magnified in postcolonial India, because now the enemies, lay within, and as such, the Hindu fanatics demand the removal of Muslims to the neighbouring country of Pakistan. Concomitantly, it has also problematized the concept of citizenship in India which cavalierly celebrates equality, liberty and fraternity to all. Such a kind of political consciousness that is created on the exclusion of the other community is deplorable. But quite shockingly, it is *this* kind of exclusionary Hindutva politics that is being practised and propagated by a section of leaders in India. They are responsible for dismantling the very idea of nation and for propagating the episodic cycle of violence, so that they can foster and consolidate their own political considerations. By engendering such kinds of violence in the name of nationalism, which is mostly predicated on how identities are culturally and socially constructed, nationalism becomes a spectral delusion. It is in this context that Partha Chatterjee condemns the idea of nationalism in his book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* Chatterjee comments that the state “has been the cause of the most destructive wars ever seen; it has justified the brutality of Nazism and Fascism; it has become the ideology of racial hatred in the colonies and has given birth to some of the most irrational revivalist movements as well as to the most oppressive political regimes in the contemporary world.” (2).

What this seemingly demonstrates is the liquidification of human lives by the Nation-State that amazingly reduces them to waste products. The saddest aspect of human beings across the globe is that we find it increasingly tough to behave as humans. Be it the Holocaust or the 1947 Partition – they both represent the monstrosity of human beings, and also the failure of the Nation-State to protect the rights of its citizens. They are a mote in the face of humanity and modern Nation-States which euphorically promotes equality, but one only needs to go a bit deeper to discover its paradoxicality awfully emerges. Modern Nation-States anchor and proliferate equality and human rights of its citizens so far as they do not challenge their authority and power. Their much-eulogized multi-dimensionality surprisingly disappears in precarious times and concomitantly illegality becomes legality and the right to kill or displace minor communities is (c)overtly granted. Stephen Morton provides a dismissive view of the recurrent failure of Indian secularism. He states that: “events such as Emergency and the destruction of the Babri mosque by Hindu groups signal the failure of Nehru’s liberal vision of postcolonial modernity, particularly his promise to recognize the equal rights of all religious communities in India”. (94).

India and its Other

“Secularism in India does not mean animosity towards religion... it implies equal respect for all religions... it is a matter of pride for us in India that all the great religions in the world are respected in our country”. (Katz, 57).

The process of the Othering of minor communities present in India had its root in the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1915 as an alternative to oppose the secular views of the Indian National Congress. The Hindu Mahasabha, influenced by the political and fundamentalist ideology of the Maharastrian leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, acted aggressively augmenting thereby Hindu ideology across the country in the 1920s. If we start exploring the historical records of Hindu nationalism during this time, we shall come across the geneology of communalism in India. The assertion of Bal Gangadhar Tilak about Hindu nationalism can be counted as one such view. Drawing on Stanley Wolpert’s acute comment on the first instance of Bal Gangadhar Tilak’s public celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi in 1893 that laid the foundation stone of a fierce Hindu nationalism, Peter Morey and Alex Tickell in their brilliant book, *Alternative Indias*, contend that Tilak’s ‘political strategy’ was a direct move to oppose and subside the Muslim celebrations of Muharram’, and eulogizing thereby the Hindu religion. This set the ball rolling, where each community started promoting its rituals and sacredness against the other, and this often resulted in clash between the two communities. This draws our attention to the fact the present postcolonial communal or sectarian violence has its root in the colonial model of India.

In order to have a better understanding of a secular Indian nation – free of all the differences, let us have a look at the Nehruvian view of Indian nation that he dreamt of. In his famous book, *The Discovery of India*, Nehru juxtaposes two nationalisms – Indian and Muslim and then quickly moves on to choose a nation that is a *real* nation devoid of any communitarian differences. Here is what Nehru says in his monumental book, *The Discovery of India*: “Hindu nationalism was a natural growth from the soil of India”, whereas, “Muslim nationalism... comes in the way of the larger nationalism which arises from the differences of religion or creed.” He then proceeds to state that “Real or Indian nationalism is something quite apart from these two religions and communal varieties of nationalism, and strictly speaking it is the only form which can be called nationalism in the modern sense of the word.” (286). But it goes without saying that this idea of a secular nation collapsed like a heap of cards because what Indians achieved was only a *reel* of that *real* Nehruvian dream.

Sadly enough, this much-publicized secularism and pluralism have been obfuscated and dismantled by the sharp attacks of the Hindu Rights (the BJP, RSS and the VHP) on this eulogized avatar of India. Such kind of irrational ideology has ostensibly brought about the failure of nation-building task because this ideology is always duly underpinned by tides of communal violence and repression of the marginalized, which ironically, have become an overriding feature of postcolonial Indian nationalism, or what Rushdie cogently terms as ‘optimal disease’ of postcolonial India. Stephen Morton provides a dismissive view regarding these recurrent failures of Indian secularism. He states that “events such as the Emergency and the destruction of the Babri mosque by Hindu groups signals the failure of Nehru’s liberal vision of postcolonial modernity, particularly his promise to recognize the equal rights of all religious communities in India”. (94).

It thus becomes tellingly apparent that Indian historiography is replete with ‘intercommunal conflict’ and the ensuing bloody battles. One of the worst aspects of these communal violences is the fact that it is always the victims from minor communities who are being projected as real monsters. Once predicated as the ‘Other’, the ‘enemy within’, it is their existence that is being looked as threatening and undermining the nation’s security and peace. In one of his brilliant articles, the renowned historian, Gyanendra Pandey, judiciously argues about the complicit nature of violence and how it is seen as coming always from outside or the Other. Listen what Pandey states in his article in “Community and Violence”:

What stands out in the victims’ memory of... is the proposition that the violence was always ‘out there’, and never in us. Violence was what was done by the other, although in a literal sense this other sometimes included wayward members of the speaker’s own community.¹ (2037).

According to Pandey, one of the inherent flaws of violence is the disquieting fact that during ‘unsettling times’ violence is usually taken up as a compulsion, a moral duty, to save ‘the community or nation’, which one *must* perform so that the sacrosanctity of its community, religion and nation remains intact, powerful and unquestionable. Concomitantly, it is the Other, or the marginalized community, and not one’s community members, which is at the receiving end, and as such is overtly and brusquely blamed for igniting the spark of violence. Because what one does is *only* ‘an act of martyrdom’ to save one’s community and nation from ‘*their* violence’, and in so doing the Self engenders and positions the Other as a lurking threat or diabolical to the nation.

In a country like India which has more Muslim citizens (around 140 million) than they exist in Pakistan, it would be irrational to count India *only* as a Hindu nation. Hence, it seems totally illogical to view Muslim as an Other. One must take into account the concept of Indian nation in this regard, as put forth by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the framer of the Indian Constitution: “if the Muslims in India are a separate nation, then, of course, India is not a nation.” (cited in Amartya Sen, 309). Years later, we find a repercussion of the same by Arundhati Roy who raises a coherent question about the nature of Indianness. She contends:

Whether or not there has ever been a single civilisation that could call itself ‘Indian’, whether or not India was, is or ever will become a cohesive cultural entity, depends on the differences and similarities in the cultures of the people who have inhabited the sub-continent for centuries [...] So is India Indian? It’s a tough question. (25-26).

It thus becomes amply clear that Indianness has been predicated upon and bred by differences due to which secularism has remained a thing only on paper. It is the Hindu majoritarianism that continues to manoeuvre the ideologies of postcolonial India – by always positioning the Other as dangerous to its community and the nation. Peter Morey and Alex Tickell make a plausible comment on this diabolical nature of majoritarian politics in the Introduction to their book thus: “Such majoritarianism attempted to reshape national identity along Hindu lines, was prepared to use democratic and extra-parliamentary means to achieve its aim, and sought to create a purified Hindu culture in a purified Hindu homeland.” (x). Jyoti Puri also argues the same point when she says that “Hindu fundamentalism claims to represent the true forces of nationalism, and speaks of themes that have long been the preserve of nationalism, namely, injustice, exploitation, territory, and inherent rights of people, among others. Like fundamentalism, nationalism seeks to transcend parochial identities, such as religion, region, sect, clan, etc., in exchange for the rewards of citizenship” (224). This, then, clearly sums up the vexed issue of national unity and the failure of the pluralistic nature of Indian nation. In his book, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee strongly condemns the failure of the Indian nation thus: “[t]he continuance of a distinct cultural ‘problem’ of the minorities is an index of the failure of the Indian nation to effectively include within its body the whole of the demographic mass that it claims to represent.” (134).

Seen from this angle, one needs to rethink over the inherent problem associated with identity. Identity, as it has been demonstrated, time and again, can be a source of both pleasure and suffering. The major plausible

question to be examined is how one should identify or relate oneself with the Other. It is, indeed, wrong to think any particular identity or community is evil. But sadly this is exactly what *has* happened to our human world where the Self always views the Other as nothing else but only as an Other that must be eliminated or expunged. Such a structuralist and reductive view always proves problematic because it means that the Self will not accept the alterity of the Other. The same problem has also dotted Indian nationalism which always treats the Other or minor communities as a potential source of threat and danger, providing thereby members of Hindu Rights and other jingoists a plausible reason to magnify the sacrosanctity of Hindu nationalism by eliminating them.

Racial and communal hatred has become ubiquitous due to the tendency of the one to assert oneself over the Other. It has become a 'churning sea-bed of crisis' – today's meteoric threat that reverberates time and again because of the obnoxious role the State in granting its agents the right to kill its citizens. The case of Hindu nationalism becomes all the more problematic because of its continual refusal to count the Other as human being, and its complicit tendency to view them as disloyal, betrayers, a problem that could no longer be ignored, turning them into scapegoats thereby to accomplish its mission of churning out a pure nation. This certainly signals the failure of the Hindu nation to integrate different communities. Chetan Bhatt points out this inherent flaw in Hindu nationalism. Bhatt states that "The major problem that has faced Hindu nationalism since its inception is that its ideology has never been equivalent to the expression of national identity of India or Indians." (210).

One of the cogent alternatives to avoid these bloody sectarian clashes and the ensuing violence is to look for 'options' at precarious times. It is increasingly important to remember that the existence of the Other is essential for the identity of the Self. One is reminded here of Levinasian ethics as mentioned in Richard Cohen's book, *Face to Face with Levinas*: "My ethical relation of love for the other stems from the fact that the self cannot survive by itself alone, cannot find meaning within its own being-in-the-world. ... In ethics, the other's right to exist has primacy over my own, a primacy epitomized in the ethical edict: you shall not kill, you shall not jeopardize the life of the other." (24). It becomes seemingly clear that the Self needs the presence of the Other with its palpable differences in order to churn out a complete identity. The same working national solidarity is also being proposed by Gyanendra Pandey in his insightful book, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*: "'Hindu unity', like 'Muslim unity' appears to be a prerequisite [...] for a larger national unity." (224). This is the alternative that India must choose at this cynical

hour of increased hatred for the Other in order to avoid communal violence. Human lives *cannot* and *should not* be sacrificed. They should not be looked upon, to borrow a term of Zygmunt Bauman, as ‘waste lives’. It is the ethics of coexistence and what Derrida rightly calls ‘living together’ that must be practised, and the Other should be view as a human being. Nationalism *cannot* be a homogenizing thing. It *has* to be a heterogeneous outlook, and it is this heterogeneity that must be sedimented and augmented.

About the Book

The present book raises many major vexed issues: Why should Muslims, or say any other community, be looked upon as a threat to the Indian society? How can this be possible that any particular community be viewed as dangerous, threatening, diabolical or uncivilized, or, why is it that the claims that the Other makes always needs to be looked upon as illegal or immoral? These are the overriding questions that must be examined and overcome in order to achieve solidarity amongst communities and nations. This book seeks to engage with issues which create a proper understanding of how identities and belonging are imagined and constructed in postcolonial India. The contributors in this book have examined various texts and movies to discuss the implicit communal nature of postcolonial India. The attempt of this book is to discuss the different ways in which India is badly plagued by communal politics and terrorism, and to offer a cogent alternative for creating a strong solidarity among different communities in India.

This collection opens with Pramod Nayar’s essay, “Writing Survival: Narratives from the Anti-Sikh Pogrom, India 1984”, which discusses the vitality of survivor’s accounts of Sikh community in projecting its thoughts and feelings about the failure of Indian nation and its democracy, and also in creating a proper understanding of its mental trauma. Drawing on the political thoughts of Manjit Grewal, Jyoti Grewal, Jarnail Singh Michael Nutkiewicz, Michael Rothbergm, and Yasmin Yildiz, Nayar incisively suggests that the survivor’s accounts and memories can play a significant role in creating a congenial environment for the marginalized Other, and exposing the implicit role often being played by the State in undermining their citizenship. Nayar judiciously contends that it is only through the ‘performative’ accounts and memory of the survivors’ that the magnitude of the suffering and trauma of the Other can be understood, and accordingly, efforts can be made for healing their wounds. In so doing, the essay makes a fervent case for the creation of ‘cultural apparatus’ of

Human Rights in India because it is only through this apparatus of knowing and sympathizing and acting towards the right cause that a salubrious atmosphere of human rights for the marginalized and suppressed Other can be created in India.

Faisal Devji's essay, "Speaking of Violence", discusses Gandhi's complex concept of violence. The essay pertinently considers how "himsa" is crucial to the living of all life, whether in the singular or plural. As such, violence cannot not be escaped; it rather has to be engaged, and, if possible, turned into its opposite. An important site of violence, according to the Mahatma, is the historical imagination, which in modern times tries to voice and justify its collective manifestations. Drawing on the thoughts of *The Bhagvad-Gita* and *The Mahabharata*, this essay inquires into Gandhi's critique of historical knowledge as a site of violence.

In "Violence, Gender and Partition in the Narration of the South Asian Nation", Stephen Morton seeks to disarticulate an understanding of home and dwelling from dominant paradigms of national belonging and to 're-articulate a concept of home from the feminist standpoint of South Asian women's lives'. Starting with a critique of the colonial legacy of nationalism, citizenship and partition in South Asia, the essay assesses the relevance and limitations of Giorgio Agamben's account of the 'state of exception' which involves the temporary suspension of the law for understanding genocide, violation and displacement that followed partition. In doing so, Morton suggests that South Asian narratives of home and dwelling are bound up with colonial discourses of citizenship and communal identification. The essay also considers Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Borders and Boundaries* which have variously challenged the interconnectedness of home and patriarchal discourses of honour and cultural purity within a broader framework of nationalism and communal violence.

"Entering the fold: Muslim Terrorism on the Hindi screen and India's entry into a global modernity", Syed Haider's brilliantly analyzed detailed essay on the unprecedented rise of the spectre of terrorism in Bollywood movies in the recent years, is particularly marked by a difference in attitude toward the presence of terrorism; and a difference where they choose to stage their narrative about terrorism. Haider's essay draws on films like *New York* (2009), *Kurbaan* (2009) and *My Name is Khan* (2010) which are set outside of India, while others like *Black Friday* (2004) and *Black & White* (2008) eschew the need to perform some kind of tortured understanding (within the narrative) to account for the emergence of terrorism – the like, for instance of Om Puri's question in *Maachis* (1996): "Aatankwaadi kya khet mein ugate hain?" (*Are terrorists grown in*

fields?) Others like *A Wednesday* (2008) and *Amir* (2008) on the other hand present a new and more frightened vision of the technological sophistication of terrorists which visually and narratively positions central characters in them as distinct from their precursors in films like *Fiza* (2000) and *Dil se* (1998). How this difference should be read is the real thrust of this essay, and to this end it rightly questions the sudden emergence of terrorism in Hindi cinema against the almost complete absence of films representing Hindu extremism and communal riots. This essay strongly argues that terrorism offers an emerging global economic power like India an entry into a global modernity that constructs the “globalised modern terrorist” as its dark Other.

Louise Harrington’s essay, “‘Fragmentary evidence’: the struggle to narrate Partition”, meticulously investigates the major problem of the lack of narration and monuments related to the Indian Partition of 1947 and argues that narration of Partition or Holocaust is ‘difficult and fragmentary’ as it is always underpinned by the ‘limits of language’. The article casestudies several novels and movies to highlight the failure of memory and language in narrating the events of Holocaust.

Belén Martín-Lucas in “‘The most primitive instrument of nationalism’: Diasporic Representations of Communal Violence against Women in India” reviews a considerable number of literary representations of gendered violence appearing in texts by Shauna Singh Baldwin, Anita Rau Badami, Nila Gupta, Rachna Mara and Yasmin Ladha, The essay cogently establishes a dialogue between the diasporic representations of communal violence against women—from the Partition wars of 1947 and 1971 to the ongoing conflict in Kashmir—“from abroad”, and the current feminist work in India around, in Rajeswari Sunder Rajan’s words, the “Scandal of the State”, that is, the historical complicity of the State apparatus in such violence. Lucas brilliantly sums up the transnational solidarity (Mohanty’s term) of Indian women around feminist issues and offers some reflections on the complex and multifarious implications of women in communal violence.

Daniel Rogobete’s “At the Roots of Violence in Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*” meticulously traces some of the sources of violence in the contemporary context of Indian conflicting realities as established by the new theoretical redefinitions of nation and ethnicity, and locates them at the intersection of localism and globalization. The essay discusses the particular forms of narratives of violence in Indian-English fiction. A particular emphasis is placed upon the subtler generators of violence in those cases where individuals, communities or nations get caught between ideological abstractions,

theoretical principles and (post-) national images of identity politics. Rogobete highlights the sources of violence rooted in different aspects of a nation generally depicted as the epitome of tolerance, peacefulness and embrace of diversity. In this essay, Rogobete applies these theoretical coordinates to two of Rohinton Mistry's novels, focusing on his particular means of representing and indicting violence. In *Such a Long Journey* (1991) he operates a dismantling of the articulations of violence, starting from the general type of aggression occasioned by the Indian-Pakistan war, motivated by patriotism and the noble affirmation of national identity though complicated by obscure political interests and corrupted ideals. *A Fine Balance* (1996) represents a further step in the deconstruction of ideologically motivated violence by exacerbating ethno-nationalism and debased forms of communalist violence justified by fundamentalism and casteism; in this case, treachery, intimacy and identity - the roots of violence theorised by Appadurai (1996) - collide engendering new forms of violent responses.

In the essay, "The battle came to The Delhi Junction": Terror and territory in Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*", Veronica Thompson focuses on Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* - a novel that powerfully evokes the trauma of Partition, and 'in particular the traumatic experiences of women during Partition'. Thompson argues that Badami's novel investigates the correlation between trauma in the homeland and terror in the diaspora, without providing "clear villains or simple victims". The essay discusses the existing causal relationship between "trauma in the homeland and terror in the diaspora".

Shreerekha Subramanian's essay, "Benjamin, Bollywood and The Terrorism Question: Raj Kumar Gupta's Hindi Film *Aamir* (2008)", is situated within contemporary discourse on cinematic representations of the terrorism question and presents a careful analysis of a recent film from India, Raj Kumar Gupta's *Aamir* (2008). Gupta's film seeks to raise larger questions around Muslim subjectivity in an aesthetic and arresting fashion, thus inhabiting the cinematic tradition of Bollywood alongside parallel or third cinema. Looking through Walter Benjamin's tropes of filmic visibility and comprehension of reality, this article unveils the fissures in Bollywood representations of Muslim citizenship, ultimately manifesting new subjections and old binaries.

The essay "Kashmir: Maps for Lost Lovers" by Pascal Zinck extends the concern of communal or sectarian violence as stipulated in this book. Zinck argues rightly argues that Kashmir remains "a contentious geopolitical nexus between India and Pakistan due to the debacle of British decolonization, the unfinished business of partition and the legacy

of four wars between the regional nuclear powers as well as Pakistan's traumatic loss of its Eastern half – Bangladesh''. Likewise, the question of sovereignty and *Azaadi* is so sensitive that India has banned all publications of Kashmir maps. The essay casestudies several Indian novels and Bollywood movies and offers an insightful conclusion as to how Bollywood movies and Indian novels systematically appropriates the Othering and exocitisation of Kashmir.

Finally, Adnan Mahmutovic's insightful essay, "Individualism and Inoperative Community in *Midnight's Children*", tackles the major question of ethnic solidarity by examining Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and his use of imagination in his engagement with the mutual inter-affect of his Indian and European heritages. Facing the question of ethnic and cultural authenticity, Rushdie dramatizes authenticity as a desire for political freedom, which is indeed a pertinent issue for postcolonial studies, but which in his case comes from an exposure to the tradition of individualism. In putting forward the major concern of the volume, this essay argues how Rushdie refuses to choose between communalism and individualism, and experiments with new ways of being singular and yet also part of a community.

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CHAPTER ONE

WRITING SURVIVAL: NARRATIVES FROM THE ANTI-SIKH POGROM, INDIA 1984

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Much has been written in the recent times by scholars of various persuasions of the centrality of stories in Human Rights (HR) campaigns (Ignatieff 2001, Slaughter 2007, Gready 2010, Nayar 2012). By focusing on stories these critics foreground several key themes and concerns. First, they see a narrative foundation to political campaigns for HR. Second, they treat these narratives as possessing considerable political import. Third, with this emphasis on the *public* circulation and consumption of narratives they also move the debates around HR out of the realm of the purely juridical-legal to the cultural. Fourth, the significance of genre – the memoir, the atrocity account, the survivor’s chronicle of horrors – is highlighted for its role in producing a cultural legibility (Slaughter) and cultural legitimacy (Nayar) for larger political concerns about HR. Both cultural legibility and legitimacy imply a publicly recognizable genre in which the atrocity is documented.

This essay takes as its subject of analysis the survivor memoir/account/interview from the anti-Sikh pogrom of Delhi 1984: Manraj Grewal’s *Dreams after Darkness: A Search for a Life Ordinary under the Shadow of 1984* (2004), Jyoti Grewal’s *Betrayed by the State: The Anti-Sikh Pogrom of 1984* (2007), Manoj Mitta and HS Phoolka’s *When a Tree Shook Delhi: The 1984 Carnage and its Aftermath* (2007) and Jarnail Singh’s *I Accuse... The Anti-Sikh Violence of 1984* (2009). What I wish to do here is to develop a frame of reading these narratives before addressing questions of the ethico-political relevance of such narratives, and hence this essay isolates specific features of survivor narratives before going on to their political import. It is less concerned with HR than with the kind of memory projects such narratives entail upon civil society and the ‘version’

of India that emerges as a result of our (i.e., readers') engagement with such narratives.

Survivor Narratives as Sentimental Literature

Jyoti Grewal opens her *Betrayed* by speaking of memories of occurrences that have “traumatically fractured what people knew to be their life”, of the “disturbing nature of some historical episodes”. Victims, she writes, “prefer to walk away” from such memories and “the emotions they evoke”. However, she says, we – it is unclear if she is referring to the victims or those who come later – cannot walk away from these memories because they “invoke a consciousness of belonging – to groups, communities, nations, and the world” (1-2). Grewal, one notes, mixes emotions with memories and consciousness, and all three with the sense of belonging, and identity. Kushwant Singh’s Foreword to Jarnail Singh’s *I Accuse...* opens with a description of the ensuing narrative as “a shocking book that should shame every citizen of India ... a searing account ... a scathing indictment” (ix).

I propose that such dramatic narrative openings constitute an important strategic ploy. They call upon the reader to be prepared for trauma. The horizons of expectation here are of suffering, victimage and cruelty. But to say that this is sentimental does not do enough, I believe. In the remainder of this section I want to develop a framework for reading the sentiments.

Michael Nutkiewicz (2003) examining survivor testimony sees a constant dynamic between personal and corporate pain, between private and public space. Survivor narratives, Nutkiewicz notes, often document pain as a collective condition, and is expressed almost always in the first person plural (5). This also means that individual suffering, anguish and trauma cannot be made to tell a different story from that of the collective. Individual stories reflect the stories and experiences of the collective. More importantly, the dead occupy what Nutkiewicz calls the “historical centre stage” of all survivor narratives (8). Speaking of his decision to become a member of the Longowal assassination squad, Gian Singh opens with references to the public acts of Sikh-humiliation, calling the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord “a mockery of the humiliations heaped on the Sikhs” (Manraj Grewal 21). What Gian Singh foregrounds is not an individual sense of humiliation, but a participation in a collective emotional disturbance at this betrayal of a community. This is the corporate pain experienced as a result of being a member of a community.

Yet immediately after documenting this corporate pain, Gian Singh narrows the focus: “It’s like someone kills your father today, and you

make friends with him a week later!” (22). Gian Singh’s speech draws attention, I propose, to the psychodynamics of emotion and trauma where personal and corporate pain merge. For instance, Prabeen Singh makes common cause with the Muslims, “now the Sikhs became what the Muslims had been all these years, dispensable” (Jyoti Grewal 116). She says this *before* she speaks of what happens to her and her family (117-120). This pattern of shifting between corporate and personal/private pain is visible in all Sikh narratives of 1984.

Related to the dynamic of sentiment what I have proposed here is the nature of atrocity and dehumanization. The anti-Sikh pogrom, like the Holocaust, instituted a *public* dehumanization of the individual. Families, individuals, entire colonies of Sikhs were publicly humiliated, tortured and killed, as Manjit Grewal, Jyoti Grewal and Jarnail Singh document. This constitutes a different dimension to trauma itself. Nutkiewicz observes that such a public dehumanization is a “reversal of most trauma victims’ experience” (5). Relatedly, every victim is also a witness to a “collective assault” and “at one time or another its victim” (5). As Jyoti Grewal notes, the emotion of anger and anguish are in some cases directed at the humiliation of the Panth: “the anger she could not express at her personal loss was expressed in defense of her Panth” (89). It is the collective’s suffering and humiliation that the individual finds unacceptable.

Harjit Kaur notes “someone else had been killed right in front of our house. I had seen that. They had iron rods in their hands, they would hit twice or three times with the iron rods right on top of the head, the person would fall down right there” (Jyoti Grewal 81). Inderpal Singh, who saw his father beaten to death and his brother hacked to pieces “even today ... starts to shake when he remembers” (Singh 55).

Witnessing public humiliations and massacres of this sort, I argue, induces corporate pain and suffering, and this becomes the larger narrative within which personal pain and anguish have to be located. This also means that a framing narrative, of collective pain, exists that predetermines the sentimental nature of whatever your narrative might be. Individual pain, anguish and trauma of the survivor are constantly engaged with two irreducible facts: that the individual survived, and the individuals they were seeing being beaten did not. That is, the sentimental narrative of the survivor has to account for a personal tragedy of having experienced torture or suffering but also the shame, guilt and anguish of having survived it, whereas hundreds of others did not (this has been documented and examined in several works on the Holocaust). In other words, no survivor can only speak of her/his suffering without also mourning, or

being angry about, an Other who suffered, but did not survive. It is this tension that characterizes the Sikh narratives.

But there is one more dimension to the public dehumanization theme and corporate pain-personal pain tension. Some forms of dehumanization are, in cases of atrocity, performed in private space – rape is an instance of such an act. Survivors, as Nutkiewicz has noted, rarely talk about this private component of their experience. Somehow, this private story gets erased from the public document of atrocity and suffering, and the individual chooses silence over articulation, perhaps because it seems inarticulate or even unacceptable when public-corporate suffering has entailed a larger atrocity: death. This condition of silent trauma that defies articulation but whose scars and emotional upheavals are no less intense years later is complicated by certain kinds of humiliation that have a peculiar resurgence in the public sphere.

Gurdip Kaur was gang-raped during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Her testimony was recorded but not cited in, nor addressed by the Nanavati Commission report (Mitta and Phoolka 70-2). The silence that critics like Nutkiewicz see inherent in survivor testimonies is not quite the silence of Gurdip Kaur. (It is important, I think, to note that in her case the rape is not a private act of violence: it was done in public view.) I argue that the corporatization of pain that Commission Reports and the public discourse around 1984 create ironically seeks to silence individual stories. Is there, therefore, only one way of speaking of 1984 and the massacres? Is sexual violence to be kept out of the purview of the debate? Should there be a “veil of silence”, as Mitta and Phoolka put it, over the subject? (67). Gurdip Kaur’s intensity of suffering that she recounts in Mitta and Phoolka’s account (she speaks in her own voice here) is of course, now available in the form of this volume (Mitta and Phoolka devote an entire chapter to the issue, 67-73). In addition, documents such as “Who are the Guilty” by the People’s Union for Civil Liberties and the People’s Union for Democratic Rights refer to reports of gang-rape of Sikh women. The Report puts it clearly:

It was a continuous spree of arson, rape and murders after that, Later enquiries conducted by a senior police official revealed that at least four women, their ages ranging from 14 to 50 were gang raped. Later seven cases of rape from Trilokpuri were officially reported by the J. P. Narayan Hospital, Delhi. (<http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Religion-communalism/2003/who-are-guilty.htm>)¹

But that is not the point I am seeking to develop. What I see occurring here is a sentimental narrative whose very inception is in *not* possessing a

narrative voice or narrative frame. This brings us to a particular set of dilemmas in reading these narratives.

Does the articulation of corporate pain and suffering constitute the dominant narrative mode in atrocity and survivor writing? Are particular acts of atrocity and humiliation such as rape – guessed at, implicitly acknowledged – outside the purview of these narratives? If so, what happens to the sentimentalization of public culture? It appears as though the entire survivor writing genre is overdetermined by generic conventions of what kinds of trauma are to be documented, and how.

There is one more component to the survivor's sentimental narrative. In almost all cases the Sikh victims mention good Samaritans and even complete strangers who come to their aid. Kuldeep Kaur and Jagrup Kaur mention how Hindu families took them in (Jyoti Grewal 70). Phoolka, recalling the first day of violence, records how a Hindu on the road warned him that there was Sikh-specific violence ahead and suggested he take a different route back home, even calling him ‘brother’ (Mitta and Phoolka 93). In some cases a few policemen helped the Sikhs ‘‘while a majority of their colleagues abdicated their responsibilities, or worse, connived with the mobs’’ (74). It is possible to see these humanitarian gestures as something more. They constitute, as in sensational fiction or drama, a *deus ex machina*, where an unnamed individual often comes to the rescue of the beleaguered. This is also the point at which the sentimental merges with the sensational. In the midst of life-threatening conditions, a Samaritan appears and saves (but not always) the threatened individual(s). But what is more significant is the role such a sensational *deus ex machina* plays in terms of a cultural narrative. In the Sikh narratives, such *deus ex machina* indict the state for its inaction. The isolated cases of rescue and help offered by such *deus ex machina* are witnesses to the failure of the police, the judiciary, the various Ministries of the Governments of India and Delhi, and the army. Where the army officers and the police are ordered not to participate in rescue missions for the Sikh victims or arrest the perpetrators – as each of these narratives points out – it is the ‘unknown citizen’ who performs acts of mercy and compassion. In other words, the isolated individual or volunteer who warns, rescues or protects the Sikh victims functions outside the norms established for the law-enforcement agencies during this crucial period, but within the spirit of Indian democracy and social order. The ‘sensational’ here is not simply of the timely arrival of the *deus ex machina* but our recognition of the fact that where the State had failed the Sikhs, individuals very often did not: they were at the right place at the right time.

Survivor Writing and Dramatic Memory Citizenship

Survivors are performing acts of memory that situate them within a particular relation to not only the past but also to specific communities and individuals from that past. I am not here seeking to revisit the memory *versus* history debates that have haunted discussions of Holocaust or any kind of atrocity writing. Instead, what this section seeks to do is to explore these Sikh narratives as exercises in “memory citizenship”.

First, Michael Rothberg and Yasmin Yildiz (2011) propose that memory has often functioned as ‘ethnic property’. Second, they argue a case for a migrant’s “memory citizenship”. Rothberg and Yildiz define memory citizenship as performances of memory that are also acts of citizenship. These acts of citizenship are beyond the norms of citizenship and regardless of formal citizenship status. They define new ways of belonging.

In each case of the Sikh survivor the individual consciously alerts us to the communitarian nature of their identity (“we are *Sikhs*”) as well as of the violence directed against them. Here the memory is specifically of being Sikhs who suffered violent attacks, dehumanization and humiliation. Memory here constitutes their very identity, even decades after the events of 1984. Memory, in other words, is a tragic way of belonging for the survivor.

Jyoti Grewal documents the number of times the survivors lapse into silence, unable to go on with the articulation of their memories of the events of 1984. When talking about her conversation with Harjit Kaur, Grewal notes “our conversations were interrupted by long silences, about which I shall desist from commenting” (78). So the entire Harjit Kaur oral narrative in Grewal’s volume has breaks marked out with comments like “a long silence” (80) and “silence again” (81).

I propose that these are caesurae – punctuations – in the memory narrative that render it dramatic. What constitutes dramatic remembrance is the set of silences that punctuate each individual’s account. These black holes of their narrative into which all else flows is the staging of survival too. By “staging” I am referring to the incorporation of elements that lend the narration not only authenticity but also a certain dramatic completeness (I am appropriating and modifying here Linda Marie Brooks’ work on *testimonio*, 2005). Staging here is the inclusion, willed or unconscious, of the gaps in the narrative which, ironically, lend the air of completeness. It also authenticates the act of recording these narratives: where the editor’s physical presence in the midst of victims is validated by her marking out the moments when the narrative loses coherence and continuity.

It can further be argued that these silences are memory acts which do not articulate particular memories and the emotions connected with those are kept within the bounds of expressibility. It becomes, I suggest, a form of memory performance where particular events are recalled but not voiced. By punctuating the narrative with such silences the survivor enacts her or his belonging to a community that carries such memories within itself and which the community has never, or has ceased to, articulate(d).²

To ‘remember’ is not only about recall but about becoming a member (re-member) again of a community, of becoming a citizen. When individual pain merges with corporate pain, when the private and public spaces of suffering conflate and when silences punctuate an individual recall of the events of 1984, we see the individual enacting her/his memory citizenship, merging her/his individual memory with that of the collective’s.

This also implies, of course, that when memory citizenship is so dramatically staged individual memory contributes to a larger collective and cultural memory. Writing about the Holocaust, scholars have argued a strong case for including the survivor’s memory within the normative histories of the events. That is, to borrow James Young’s formulation, it is essential to ask “how will the memory of survivors enter (or not enter) the historical record?” (49). There might be some inaccuracies in the survivor’s memory that cause the historian to reject the memory *in toto* as inauthentic and unreliable. But, as Young points out, one needs to understand that “the ways misapprehension of events and the silences that come with incomprehension were part of events as they unfolded then and part of memory as it unfolds now” (53). Survivors recall events with incomprehension and silence, even as their experience of the events was itself, then, incomprehensible. What is striking about many of the Sikh narratives the editors document is the stark terror but also incomprehension about why these horrific events were happening to them. If Young is accurate in his interpretation, it is this same incomprehension that characterizes their memories of the times. This does not in any way make their memory less authentic (indeed one could argue that it suggests a certain authenticity to their memory when incomprehension is their key route into that memory).

We can conclude that the memory citizenship the Sikhs stage in their narratives as indicates the following:

- (i) individual memory and grief merges into corporate pain,
- (ii) these acts of memory situate the individual within a citizenship of the entire community,