

Beyond Controversy: Christian Mission and Communal Religious Violence in Contemporary India

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INTRODUCTION

This paper locates the recent Hindu-Muslim violence in a small Gujrati town called Godhra in North West India in theories seeking to understand violence and, in particular, religion and violence. Taking the recent violent conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims and their aftermath in Gujrat as its case, it presents an analysis of these events before outlining two quintessential examples of the response in such a situation. This paper suggests that the phenomenon of violence associated with religions has more than one centre and involves cultures other than Christians and Muslims and the categories of 'Islam and the West'.

DESCRIPTION OF GODHRA MASACRE AND THE AFTERMATH

Background

Arguably, Christianity, a tiny minority in India today, arrived on the shores of the subcontinent in the 1st century CE and subsequently through a series of Syrian migrations, hundreds of years before the beginning of colonisations and missionary movements. The theory of the Aryan invasion of India has been and continues to be a far more controversial a subject.[1]The histories of the Sindh (in modern Pakistan) describe the invasion and conquest of the North-West frontiers (beginning in the 8th Century CE) by Muhammad b. Qasim as an event that liberated the lower castes from the Aryan or Brahminic tyranny.[2]Some historians and social scientists endorse this view,

whereas, others argue that Brahminism (caste system legitimized religiously by Aryans) was relatively a flexible system, and that Brahmins did not enjoy absolute social and political hegemony. [3]

Indian historians style Muhammad b. Qasim as a raider who was systematically resisted by the present North-Western Indian states of Gujrat and Rajasthan. Some 13th CE works suggest that the early Muslim invasions of the Indian subcontinent did not constitute a great social revolution. Their objective was to plunder the wealth and the desecration of the Hindu holy sites in the name of God, Islam, the Holy Prophet and the Caliph. In many instances, the conversions of temples to mosques were understood by these as symbols of military and religious success. Mass conversions of the Buddhists and the low caste Hindus did take place, but more in line with the principle, 'the common people follow the religion of the powerful.' [4] The majority however, remained affiliated to a great variety of visions clubbed together as Hinduism.

During the Moghul Empire beginning in the 16th century, Muslims from Central Asia dominated much of northern India. Akbar, one of the greatest Moghul emperors, encouraged Hindus and Muslims to live together in harmony. To the ruling elite, the converted masses often represented an embarrassment for their 'un-Islamic' or synthetic beliefs and practices. The *madrasas* (Islamic Schools) were established, partly to equip the civil service for its role in the administration of Empire and partly as instruments of Islamization. The more secular of the Islamic rulers like Akbar attempted to keep these schools amenable to the pluralistic context of the Empire. The clergy who ran these schools played a major part in enforcing conservatism during the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. [5]

Historians suggest that after the decline of the Moghul Empire, the tensions between the Hindus and Muslims were fueled by the 'divide and rule' tactics of the British. The Muslim League was formed in the early 1900's to ensure representation by Muslims in the government alongside the Hindus. In 1940, the leader of the Muslim League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, first proposed the idea of two separate countries- one Hindu and one Muslim. Several organizations led by the Hindu elite wished India to remain united with a

strong Hindu presence. These made a common cause with some Muslim bodies in opposing the partition of India.[6] India was carved out as a secular state guaranteeing religious freedom to the majority Hindus (80%) and the minorities such as the Muslims (12%), Christians (2%), and Sikhs (2%) and the Buddhists. The Hindu organizations saw in Gandhi a traitor and, hence, his murder. Although Gandhi preached religious tolerance, ½ a million people were displaced and thousands of Hindus and Muslims crossing into their newly constructed political boundaries were massacred by zealots on both sides.

The extremist Hindu writings suggest that Islam represents a group of foreign raiders and rulers, who plundered them systematically, converted their peoples to Islam and their sacred spaces (temples) to mosques.[7] To the Muslim mind, the loss of power over the Hindu India represents an aberration to be circumvented through a radical spiritual re-orientation. Islam is a minority faith in India and is perceived by Hindus as actively engaging a pan-Islamic ideology in order to recover the past - something that contributes to the heightening of the Hindu sense of insecurity.

The immediate source of the current Hindu-Muslim violence in the western Indian state of Gujrat is a dispute over a holy site in Ayodhya.[8] In 1992, extremist Hindus encouraged by the cultural organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VSP) and their political division, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP),[9] tore down the 16th century *babri masjid* (Babri Mosque). This mosque, it is claimed, was built by a Mughal conqueror on an original temple commemorating the birth of lord Rama (a virtuous god from the popular Hindu Epic, Ramayana). During the riots which followed throughout India, over 1100 Muslims were murdered and countless injured or mutilated.

The violence relating to the controversy over the mosque site in Ayodhya resurfaced in Gujrat, West India. On February 27, 2002, a train carrying the VHP activists returning from Ayodhya was set on fire by some Muslims at a station called Godhra, killing 58 people. In retaliation, extremist Hindus murdered over 600 Muslims in the state capital, Ahmedabad. Using this communal conflict as an election issue, the BJP won a decisive victory

unprecedented in Indian History.[10]Barring a Catholic Church order, a vast majority of Christians living under these times largely remained aloof.

Godhra and its Aftermath[11]

Godhra houses a large number of Hindu refugees from the Partition of India. Out of its 150,000 residents, half are Muslim. The town has had a history of Hindu-Muslim conflicts.[12]In December 2001, for the first time, the town saw a clash between a group of moderate Muslims and the purists (the Tablighi Jama'at) over the issue of the control of the mosques. The Mosques provide a site where the Jama'at runs a program of Islamization for ordinary Muslims. The Mosques also provide funds for the *madrasas* (seminaries) throughout Gujarat. The emergence of this version is widely perceived by the VHP/RSS as a threat to Hinduism.[13]

The Jama'at is one of the largest Islamic movements of the contemporary times in terms of its size and geographical distribution. It was started by Mawlana Ilyas near Delhi in 1920s upon his graduation from the *madrasa* at Deoband. Scholars writing on the Jama'at speak of it as a quietist movement of ordinary Muslims. Y S Sikand's principal work on the Jama'at links it to the *madrasa* at Deoband.[14]Several recent reports suggest that Deoband is mainly responsible for extremism in the Jama'at.[15]The well known uprising against the British in 1857, called the 'sepoy mutiny' or the 'first war of independence', failed to achieve the objective of freeing India. A group of Muslim religious doctors got together, in the wake of this failed uprising, to establish the *dar al-ulum* (seminary) at Deoband in North India. The principal objective of this *madrasa* was to Islamize Indian Muslims. The *madrasa* opposed both the Muslim League's proposal for the creation of Pakistan and the uncritical 'anglophilia' of the modernist Aglo-Muhammadan College (later Aligarh Muslim University). The involvement of the Jama'at and Deoband in the Godhra arson is bringing to light some of the changes occurring among both the common and elite Muslims of Gujarat. [16]

Some reports suggest that the Muslim attack on the Hindu activists was spontaneous. According to a report, the VHP activists in coaches S-5 and S-6

allegedly refused to pay for the services offered at the tea stall on Godhra railway station. This quarrel rapidly turned into a communal incident when the VHP activists began shouting slogans and vilifying Islam. A young Muslim woman was allegedly dragged on the train and the combination of all these events led to the pulling of emergency chains on the train. By this time an angry mob of Muslims had gathered, which then executed the arson. Some other reports suggest that the Muslim attack on the Hindu activists was provoked. The railway records show that the Sabarmati Express pulled into Godhra at 7-43 a.m., 4.30 hours later than the scheduled arrival time. It left the station at 7-45 a.m. As the train was gradually gaining momentum, the emergency chain was pulled three times, first from S-10 and, then, twice from an unreserved compartment. The time lapse would have been barely 2-3 minutes, which would not have been enough to assemble a 1500 strong mob from the nearby colony of Muslims armed with enough petrol to set coach S-6 on fire. After the event of the coach arson several key accused were found to be at large. A local Tablighi Jama'at activist and religious doctor, trained at the *madrassa* in Deoband, Mawlana Hussein Umarji, reportedly distributed stipends of RS 1500 per month to each family of the accused. For this reason, it is suggested, the entire episode was premeditated and likely linked to a wider extremist network involving the Jama'at and the Deoband *madrassa*. Out of the 1500 people accused, about 100 have been arrested, some of whom said to be key local leaders. The arrest of Mawlana Hussein Umarji - an alumnus of Deoband and a Tabligh activist on 6th February 2003 - is said to be significant. He has been charged with being part of an organized conspiracy to murder the VHP activists on the 27th February 2002. Using the *havala* (money laundering) routes, the Jama'at and Deoband are said to be the major sources of funding for the building of mosques and *madrassas* where extremism breeds.

The testimonies of those arrested tell us a chilling story. A guest house near the railway station, ironically called *aman* (peace), was virtually the base of the operation. The night previous to the actual operation, six key leaders held a series of meetings here. Seven 20-liter petrol cans were bought from a nearby station and stored at this guesthouse. Two of these leaders visited Mawlana Hussein Umarji at night and, upon his direction, informed the others to target coach S-6. Mawlana's links with the Jama'at and Deoband were said to be the sources of his information on the location of the VHP activists on the train. Prior to this, these leaders had already prepared a mob

of 1500 men near where they intended to stop the train. The 140 liters of petrol was transported by cyclo rickshaws to the station and loaded onto S-6 through the vestibule, poured into the compartment, which was then set on fire.

This was followed by the retaliatory killing and mutilation of over 600 Muslims by the VHP/RSS activists in Ahmadabad and some rural regions of Gujarat.[17] In most sites of rioting and murder, Police either connived with the murderers or played the role of a passive observer.[18] Large mobs, some of which 10,000 strong roamed the city dragging Muslims families with children from homes, pouring petrol over them and burning them alive. The response of the BJP government at the center was dismal. Some 900 troops arrived in Ahmedabad, a city of 5 million, 15 % of whom are Muslim, after much of the killings and destruction of Muslims property had already taken place. No one stopped a group of Hindus in Ahmedabad who stood jubilantly around the ruins of a small brick mosque and placed a tiny shrine to Hanuman, a minor god from the legends of lord Rama in the Ramayana.

The Press placed a large degree of attention not on the rioting and killings but, on how BJP cashed in on the Godhra and its aftermath to come to power in Gujarat. The strategy adopted by the BJP presented all Muslims as terrorists. Gujarat was said to be potentially under Muslim siege. Muslims were presented as essentially hostile to Hindus and Hinduism and disloyal to India. The Godhra incidence was used as a *mantra* for winning a decisive election[19] BJP headquarters are now debating on how this strategy can be recycled in other states of India such as the Himanchal Pradesh (Himalayan state in North India) and the traditional Congress strongholds of Rajasthan (Western India) and Madhya Pradesh (Central India). [20]

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF VIOLENCE

Violence has been defined fundamentally as a 'physical force' that inflicts or has the potential to harm or injure persons or their property. Mary Jackson expounds this definition further when she makes a distinction between 'actions' and 'injuries'. She speaks of actions including 'corporal', 'written' or 'verbal' factors and injuries including 'physical', 'psychological' or 'material' aspects.[21] Others have made the point that physical injury is one of the

manifestations of violence.[22]Forms of actions such as a piece of writing, words or symbolic acts of destroying or desecrating sacred spaces such as temples, churches, mosques, and sacred icons or images seem violent to believers.

Christians and Muslims in India (as perhaps also elsewhere) are well-known for their polemics against each other. Religious extremists in India are carrying the verbal and written polemics to another extreme of actually physically harming each other and desecrating or destroying each others sacred spaces. The Taliban's destruction of the 800 year old Buddha statue was, in this sense, perceived by the Buddhists as an act of violence.

Extremist religious violence of these types, experienced at many different locations globally, has contributed to a surge in works on violence and religion. D G Brombley and J G Melton's edited volume, for instance, published in 2002 by Cambridge University Press shows that there is a renewed interest among scholars trying to understand violence that is religious and collective in nature.[23] B P Stone's work on religion and violence in films shows how films are increasingly depicting religion as a force for justifying and legitimating violence.[24]

Moderate elements within the world's historical religions do not lag behind.

World Council of Churches organized a conference in Florida, U.S.A.

February 8-12, 2002 where members from five different religious groups Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism expressed concern over the growing violence around the world. They outlined the various types or faces of violence and expressed the need for being self-critical. [25]

After 9/11, Charles K. Bellinger produced a website for teaching and learning in theology and religion.[26]This site offers course modules, electronic texts, electronic journals, bibliographies and Discussion groups on the issue of religion and violence. Rene Girard who published his influential work on this issue in the early 70s features prominently in these resources. Queens University, Canada offers a course titled 'Religion and Violence' under Religious Studies department which shows links between violence and religious beliefs, practices and institutions. This course fundamentally

attempts to analyze violence and religious beliefs, practices and institutions relying heavily on Rene Girard's theory of violence.

Several recent works represent different methodological disciplines and, thus, bring to light newer theories. These theories deal with two basic dimensions of violence: specifically religious violence and violence which may have a religious dimension, but can be better explained in other terms. These theories fall in the larger field of peace and conflict studies.[27]

The theories of violence being intrinsic to religion come to us from the 60s and the early 70s through the works of Rene Girard, Walter Burkert, Jonathan Smith and George Bataille.[28] These scholars built on the phenomenological and psychoanalytical works on the idea of 'sacrifice' in religion. Girard's theory, in particular, when it is viewed in relation to inter-cultural conflicts, has been appealed to in recent studies of nationalistic struggles,[29] ethno-religious violence,[30] and religious terrorism.[31]

Rene Girard's theory puts forward that violence is imitative. It engages 'all against all' and issues from the desire for common objects.[32] Human society begins when violence, thus set off, transforms into the collective sacrifice of a scapegoat. Violence becomes focused on a specific victim who possesses some distinctive weakness. Thus, the cycle of violence is broken and society experiences unity. This effect produces in society a desire to reproduce the experience of the absence of violence through the ritual reenactments of the original murder.

Girard lists four features that characterize the scapegoat mechanism either in mythic textual/rituals or in actual historical persecutions by one group of another: the presence of a crisis; crimes that challenge certain essential differences; characteristics that mark the victim (s) as unusual or weak; and the act of violence itself. He had a clear bias toward Christianity. He believed that the NT story of Jesus undermines the religious basis for persecution and scapegoat. The Bible tells the story of violence from the victim's point of view. His point about the victim's perspective undermining the basis of violence may have parallels in the Minority-Majority, the Dominant-Weak and the Dalit-Upper Caste struggles and the various other liberation theologies. His theory

promises interesting insights into the example of the Hindu-Muslim conflict I referred to above.

Among the many others, Girard's theory informs the works of S P Huntington,[33]David Little[34]and Mark Jurgensmeyer [35]who think of the West and Islam as two antithetical civilizations in an irreconcilable conflict with each other. Secularization is perceived by some to be on the ebb and religion is believed to be increasingly dominating societies and transcending national boundaries. These scholars speak of two intrinsically opposing civilizations - West and Islamic. In this context, Huntington calls for the Western preparedness for facing this threat and Jurgensmeyer calls for a greater degree of understanding and restraint. Recently, D Senghass has challenged essentialist assumptions of cultural analyses. He argues that the main fault-lines are socio-economic and not geo-political. More importantly, according to him, these fault-lines act as divisive forces both intra and inter-culturally.[36] Despite its currency, the single theory of Girard cannot give us a complete view of religious violence. This is because some forms of violence may have a religious dimension, but they may also be explained in economic, political or other 'non-religious' terms.[37]Thus, for instance, political authorities or the state apparatus may be a source of violence. In some cases these authorities may cloak themselves in religion to legitimise the extremes of the abuse of power for an ideology. [38]Correspondingly, the minority struggles against these repressive regimes may be framed in religious terms.[39] Religious violence may also be understood in terms of economic development or lack of development on account of globalisation. Globalisation is seen in many countries as a bane for local economies and indigenous cultures. M Hardt and A Negri suggest that there might be a link between conflicts and Globalisation.[40]Their theory is an opposite of Huntington's cultural analysis. In contrast to Huntington, they suggest that a new Empire (with the West leading the way) is not ebbing (as Huntington posited), but is already creating a new universal order of globalization that accepts no borders. This is, according to them, causing the economic and cultural changes across the globe. This Empire challenges the concepts of sovereignty, nation, religion, and people globally. It claims to be 'a new *Communist Manifesto*' and 'the

basis for a truly democratic global society'. The dominant ideological version of Islam, unlike the all-embracing Hinduism, sees itself in an antithetical position in relation to this Empire whose epicenter is understood to be the US or the West and, hence, the conflict.[41]

UNDERSTANDING MUSLIMS-HINDU VIOLENCE IN INDIA

I pointed out above that according to Senghass, fault-lines act both intra and inter-culturally. Thus, one cannot strictly speak in essentialist terms of conflict being between two or more objectified cultures. The reality is that religious violence manifests itself with different intensities at diverse locations on the globe. Even when conflicts spill out of national boundaries and seem to involve particular cultures, not all sub-groups within these cultures participate in violence. Violence afflicts cultures from within and without, even those that are not necessarily global in their vision, such as Hinduism. It is served by a complex mechanism involving both elements essential to religions and those that are extraneous to them. How do we, in this context, understand Hindu-Muslim violence?

Firstly, it is important to note that Hinduism or Indian Islam as a whole is not participating in violent conflicts. The extremist bases within Hinduism and Indian Islam are becoming more visible, but there is still a need to accurately establish that violent conflicts spawned by these are being participated in, actively or tacitly, by a widening number of coreligionists. The evidence from the case study from Godhra suggests that the Tablighi Jama'at, a group of ordinary Muslims, is gradually emerging from its pacifist goal of proselytising and is participating in the wider 'Ulama' inspired extremism. The evidence also suggests that there is internal resistance from a vast numbers of Muslims who practice a more synthetic form of Islam. This Islam does not consider Hinduism as an object of annihilation. It integrates practices and beliefs which meet their needs and does not necessarily see them as 'un-Islamic'. It recognises continuity between Islam and Hinduism and leaves doors open for the mutual crossing over to take place.

Hinduism has been known, up until recent times, as a broad network of religious visions or an umbrella holding a wide variety of rituals and beliefs. In speaking of Hinduism, Gandhi used the flowerbed imagery. He thought of Hinduism being a flowerbed containing different types of flowers (religions and ideologies). The case of Buddhism is often cited as an evidence of Hinduism's tolerance towards dissent and it's all absorbing capacity. The principal reason for the decline of Buddhism in India until B R Ambedkar came into the picture was precisely this trait of Hinduism. [42] Hindu extremism has been on the Indian soil for well over a century. What is unprecedented is the speed with which it has expanded its cultural and

political power through the RSS, the VHP and the BJP. These organizations are generally known to be led and inspired by the elite Hindus, the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas (the two chief castes of the priests and the warriors respectively). The resurgence of the Dalit interest in Buddhism, Islam and Christianity (in this order of priority) is taking place during a period when Brahminism is seeking to overshadow the plurality existing within Hinduism.[43] Buddhism is increasingly perceiving itself as a prophetic force that succeeded in undermining Brahmanism before the Common Era and sees itself as facilitating the same process now. [44] To a large number of the Dalits who consider conversion, besides being considered foreign, Christianity and Islam do not seem equally revolutionary.

Hinduism is being increasingly identified by minorities with Brahminism and is perceived as an instrument of oppression, domination and 'Aryanization'. [45] The term Aryanization is used to denote the forced cultural assimilation of plurality within the vision of the powerful and dominant Aryas, namely the Brahmins. [46] This process gained momentum around the symbolic destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The term 'Semiticisation' is also used often in conjunction with Aryanization. [47] The high caste Hindus ask the question: Why were the Christians and Muslims able to establish Empires? In answer to this question they suggest that this is because they had a belief in One God, One Book, One Church/Umma, and One Founder/Prophet. This analysis leads them to the conclusion that if Hinduism (as defined by them) were to become the sole religion of the land of India, Hindus (the High Castes) would have to redefine Hinduism in the 'Semitic' terms. Thus, Rama is chosen from among millions of personal deities, god-men and god-women as the God and Prophet/Founder of Hinduism and Ramayana is chosen from among a plurality of scriptures as the Bible/Qur'an of Hinduism.

Secondly, one can recognize the important insight Girard's analysis gives on the issue of Hindu-Muslim conflicts. [48] Girard lists four features that characterize the scapegoat mechanism in mythic texts/rituals or in actual historical persecutions by one group of another: the presence of a crisis;

crimes that challenge certain essential differences; characteristics that mark the victim (s) as unusual or weak; and the act of violence itself.

In the presence of a perceived crisis, the dominant castes see themselves as the representatives of Hinduism. This may explain why the Brahmin/Khshatriya led RSS, VHP and BJP see themselves as representing all Hindus. The crisis is understood largely in terms of Islam, although Christians often get caught in the crossfire. The general perception of Muslims is that they are looking outwards to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Their true loyalties lie out of India to an idealistic version of Islam, which recognizes no political boundaries. Pakistan is a sworn traditional enemy of India. Muslim loyalty to Pakistan is seen to be expressed through simple gestures such as celebrating Pakistan's victory in a Cricket match. The Hindu elite are acutely aware of over 500 year long history of Muslim raids, desecration and destruction of its sacred spaces and the domination of India through the Sultanates and the Mughal Empire. The spread of the Pan-Islamic ideology through the agency of the ever increasing number of *madrasas*, mosques and other Muslim organizations is creating in the Hindu mind a sense of a looming crisis.[49] This crisis is exacerbated by the fact of mass migration of the Bangladeshi Muslims into Indian territories.[50]

Anything Muslims (and Christians)[51] do or say that may suggest their extra-territorial loyalties or their distinctiveness heightens the Hindu sense of crisis and, consequently, a sense of insecurity. Thus, the celebration of Pakistan's victory in Cricket, their manner of dressing and grooming, the architecture of their mosques, *madrasas*, offices or homes, and a local riot or a skirmish is immediately seen in Pan-Islamic terms.

These Hindus do not tire to suggest that Islam is a minority religion in India; as such it is no threat to the Hindus. In a bid to increase their power in majority-minority terms, the RSS, VHP and BJP combined devise an ideological form of Hinduism, which seeks to define the plurality within Hinduism through the 'Semitic' categories of One God, One Book and One God/Founder. This sort of imposition raises the Dalit protests and conversions, but they are tolerated as long as the conversions remain confined to Buddhism. The reactions either through re-conversions or passing

of bills banning conversions are often swift when there are conversions to Islam or Christianity.[52]Conversions of the Dalits to Islam and Christianity are perceived as ways in which Muslims and Christians are seeking power *from within* the Indian soil and, hence, legislations banning it, re-conversion drives or overt acts of violence at the slightest grounds. The enemy is defined in a very unspecific and totalitarian manner. For this reason, the retaliatory violence against the Godhra killings was not felt necessary in Godhra, but in Ahmedabad.

The Muslim initiative in choosing to attack Hindu activists on Sabarmati Express is based on the confidence the community is appearing to gain through the spread of Islamism. Islamism involves a belief about all Muslims forming a single and undifferentiated *umma* (pan-Islamic community), and the Hindus forming a unified group of the enemies of Islam. The fact is that Muslims, like Christians and Hindus, do not form a single community; there are different types of fault-lines within what is holistically referred to as Islam. Islamism assumes that an essential unity of all Muslims already exists. It seeks to enable the coreligionists to realize this unity by sensitizing them to the belief that there is a severe crisis of faith within Islam and a rising coalition of anti-Islamic forces (Hindus) outside Islam.

This sense of unity accords those who subscribe to Islamism a tremendous sense of power and, thus, the certainty that the anti-Islamic forces, however strong they might seem outwardly, cannot stand against it. Based on these beliefs, Islamism tackles the inward and outward crises in two ways. Firstly, it deal with the inward crisis through pro-active campaigns of Islamization of Muslim masses (the kind of work that Tablighi Jama'at is currently doing worldwide). Islamization seeks to standardize the foundational Islamic practices, beliefs, and symbols that it believes, characterize Islam. This identity essentially serves to over-ride the factual diversity of language, race, tribe, and ethnicity. It also enables Muslims to transcend the consciousness of their local and national identities, thereby giving them a sense of unity with a larger brotherhood. Secondly, Islamism deals with the outward crisis by calling for a waging of holy wars against the perceived threats from the enemies of Islam. In those regions, however, where Islam is numerically or

politically less powerful (as in India), the ideology justifies the bursts of periodic violence as a means of undermining the enemies. The fear, shock or panic these generate fuel the ideology and, hence, the need for it to be repetitive.

More research needs to be done to determine the manner and extent to which this ideology is spreading among common Indian Muslims. This is a research that I am currently engaged in. The description of the Godhra violence however, suggests that Islamism is making its presence felt in India both through the mass movements like the Tablighi Jama'at, and the religious schools like the Dar al-Ulum at Deoband. The 'Ulama' trained in these schools serve as the evangelists of Islamism. The Tablighi Jama'at's networks of common Muslim preachers throughout the Indian subcontinent, East and West Asia, and the UK, enhances the effect of the ideology through engaging the common Muslim masses. This ideology provides a sense of being one in faith and purpose with brothers elsewhere on the globe and, hence, the motivation to take on the enemies of Islam, the Hindus.

BEYOND CONTROVERSY

After the demolition of the Mosque at Ayodhya, the *India Today* published an issue dedicated to the views and sketches by individuals drawn from the various walks of life and ages. What was common to all of these was a sense that something terrible had happened. The demolition of the Mosque undermined all that post independence India stood for - its secular ideals, democracy, its traditional tolerance, respect for all religions and life and freedom itself. These individuals expressed through poetry, prose, sketches and paintings how they saw '*aman*' (harmony) could reign again. That issue of the *India today* exists in libraries. The reality is different. Years after the demolition, society still has not been able to come to a consensus on how to undo the symbolic and actual damage done then, and since then, several other times, including the ones at Godhra and Ahmedabad.

Many churches in India acknowledge that Church's mission ought to be holistic.[53] Few however, appear to be proactively seeking to cross the

cultural, ethnic and theological disjunction between and within religions with a view to catalysing reconciliation. Yet, Indian Christians are generally recognised for their pacifist attitude. According to a well known journalist, Vir Sanghvi, nothing has affected Indians as deeply as the burning alive of the Australian Christian, Graham Stains, and his two sons in India. [54]The impact of the murder of these was enhanced by the public statements of Gladys Stains (wife of Graham) and Esther (daughter) who saw the deaths of their beloved as 'a sacrifice for the Nation of India' and this painful experience eliciting not curse, but a peaceful and forgiving attitude. [55]

Christian pacifism aside, a vast number of Christian institutions and Churches are widely perceived as having inherited from foreign missions vast areas of property, educational institutions, hospitals, and imposing Church buildings in prime locations throughout India. The average Christian is poor, but, Churches and the Christian institutions appear to be prosperous and powerful beyond their means. The extent of their dependence on the West is known to the government and the Hindu cultural organizations. Whilst the inflow of funds is regulated, the use of these funds is not. Christian dependence on the West and the gap in the knowledge of the precise manner in which the funds are used contribute to the depiction of Christians as those whose loyalties rest with the 'Christian West' whose agenda they appear to be furthering. This characterization is not entirely askew. What appears more consistent with the Christian ethos is sacrifice, examples of which are, at least at the present time, rather rare.

Churches and Christian organizations did indeed engage in providing relief to victims in Gujrat, but it was largely reactive. Christians did not have any significant part in actually doing something for the people as they were being murdered. The missionary role models of Indian Christians have largely been argumentative and controversial. This approach to Christian work was in line with the enlightenment apologetics of the missionary movement of the 19th century. Some missionaries like the Henry Martyn however, were slightly ahead of their time in recognizing that controversy was not the best way to 'reach out to the soul' and, hence, nurtured the desire to 'burn out' and 'forsake everything' for God and people they served. Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, in a

recent lecture, characterizes Henry Martyn as a Martyr for willingly enduring hardships as he sought to bridge cultural and linguistic divides beyond the cosy comforts of the company territories.[56]This is different from the pathological elements in the martyrdom sought by those who die killing the 'enemies of God' or invite death foolishly by choosing to abuse the cultural, ethnic and religious wealth of the people of other faiths.

Among possibly several others, two examples of sacrifice without any other ulterior motive than to further reconciliation and peace come from the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) in Hyderabad, India and St. Mary's Dominican Hospital in Ahmedabad, India will suffice.

Post-6 December 1992 saw a string of violent clashes between extremist Muslims and Hindus in several towns of North India and Hyderabad in South India. Often the victims were innocent men, women and children lacking protection in contexts where police neutrality is a rare commodity. The HMI, true to its commitments to reconciliation, put together a peace corps called the '*aman-shanti* forum'. [57]The forum obtained special permits and roamed the old city, the epicentre of violence, and assisted and rescued those wounded and affected by the riots whilst it was actually sweeping through the heart of the city. Since then the HMI has not only expanded its proactive peace effort through actually establishing itself in centres (wedged between Hindu and Muslim communities) associated with violence in the old city, but has also incorporated conflict resolution as a proactive in-house and external training programs.

Another example comes from the Spanish Dominicans who run St. Mary's Hospital in Ahmedabad.[58]Sister Lucia Carabias and her colleagues gave refuge to over 6,000 Muslims fleeing angry Hindu mobs in the city. The St. Mary's compound which includes a hospital and a Mahila Shikshan Kendra (training center for women learning handcrafts) is surrounded by Muslim homes. After pleading with the local police for several days to provide security for the frightened Muslims seeking refuge in their compound, the nuns finally convinced the police to come and patrol the gates, protecting the Muslims inside from mobs of angry Hindus. People responded to this act of courage, mercy and sacrifice by sending money to St. Mary's to help feed the refugees.

Several other sent money to help rebuild the homes of Muslims, which were totally razed to the ground by the mobs.

CONCLUSION

This paper analysed the recent Hindu-Muslim violence in Gujrat within the framework of theories of violence and religion falling in the rubric of Conflict and Peace Studies. It gave two examples of institutions which too the risk of being present and doing something positive during the two related episodes of violence.

As part of the wider significance, this paper suggests that violence associated with religions is a complex phenomenon. Its understanding requires a multi-disciplinary approach because it is wider than the categories of 'Islam and the West' and manifests at more than one centre, both intra and inter-culturally.

Notes:

i[1] See D E Singh, "Collective Distress and it's Management through Rituals" in The NCCR, CXXI, 6, July 2001, 471-486; N S Rajaram and David Frawley, *Vedic Aryans and the Origins of Civilisation: A Literary and Scientific Approach*, (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1997); S S Misra, *The Aryan problem: A Linguistic Approach*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers pvt. Ltd., 1992)

i[2] http://members.tripod.com/~INDIA_RESOURCE/sindh.html

i[3] http://members.tripod.com/~INDIA_RESOURCE/social.htm

i[4] Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun (b.1332 CE) says this in his *Muqaddimah* tr. F Rosenthal vol. 2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1958)

i[5] http://members.tripod.com/~INDIA_RESOURCE/mughal.html

i[6] The famous Deoband Seminary in North India (established after 1857) understood that the partition of India on the basis of religion was bound to hurt Muslims

i[7] See for details M.Th. Thesis by Abraham Peddiny on the selected Hindu writings targeting Muslims as the object of 'the Hindu rage' presented to the Serampore University, 1999. This work was done entirely at the Henry Martyn

Institute, Hyderabad (HMI) and a copy of the thesis is available in the libraries of the Henry Martyn Institute, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Serampore University.

i[8] A temple town in the Northern Gangetic plains of India, revered as a holy site where lord Rama was born

i[9] See more on these collectively called 'the sangh parivar', J Locktefeld 'New Wine, Old Skins: The Sangh Parivar and the Transformation of Hinduism' in Religion 26, 1996,101-118

i[10]Naqvi and Kang report in December 23, 2002 issue of *The Outlook* that the BJP won 125 out of the total seats of 182

i[11]The following description is based on reports appearing in two major fortnightlies in India. See Praveen Swami 'Godhra Questions' in FRONTLINE Volume 19 - Issue 06, March 16 - 29, 2002 and Uday Mahurkar 'Terror's Mask' *India Today* February 24, 2003 59-60; The photograph of the burning train is from FRONTLINE Volume 19 - Issue 06, March 16 - 29, 2002; for more details see <http://www.rediff.com/news/godhra.htm>

i[12] The town has had a history of violence beginning with the year of the partition in 1947 and then in 1952, 1959, 1961, 1965, 1967, 1972, 1974, 1980, 1983, 1989, 1990 and again in 1992, immediately after the Babri Masjid's demolition. The Muslim community of Godhra has always been the main victim of violence; see more at

http://www.fisiusa.org/fisi_News_items/Godhra/godhra0108.htm See Myra Macdonald, 'Hindu Campaigners Combat Christian Conversions' Yahoo News, March 11, 2003

i[13] James Hough, *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, 5 vols (London, 1845-60), IV, p. 90.

i[14] See for instance, Barbara Metcalf, 'Islam and women: the case of the Tablighi Jamaat' at <http://shr.stanford.edu/shreview/5-1/text/oldmetcalf.html>

i[15] Y S Sikand, 'The Origins and the Growth of the *tablighi jamaat* in Britain' in ICMR, vol. 9, no. 2, 1998, 171-92

i[16] For a reported link between terrorist networks in Pakistan and Deoband see, Amir Zia, 'Al-Qaeda's Growing Local Ties - a Threat to Pakistan' Yahoo News, March 18, 2003

i[17] Bharat Desai 'killings spread to rural Gujarat' *Times News Network*, Saturday, March 02, 2002; the following pictures are from <http://www.geocities.com/gujratburns/modiland.html>

i[18] See Luke Harding 'Gujarat killings: hints of police connivance' in *Dawn* March 4, 2002

i[23] Darshan Desai, 'Modified Mood Swing' in *Outlook* 16 December 2002, 42-52

i[20] See for fuller reports Saba Naqvi Bhaumik and Bhavdeep Kang 'Modi's Gujrat' in *Outlook* 23 December 2002

i[21] Mary Jackman 'Licence to Kill: Violence and legitimacy in Expropriative Social Relationships' p. 443 in John T Jostand Brenda Majors (eds) *Psychology of legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice and Intergroup Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2001)

i[22] <http://eec1.scedk12.com/edu/ap/SSTAConfernece/sld004.htm> and <http://workplaceviolence.ca/forums/Consultant/posts/19.html>

i[23] *Cults, religions and Violence* ed. D G Brombley and J G Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002)

i[24] B P Stone, "Religion and Violence in Popular Film" *Journal of Religion and Film* Vol. 3, No. 1 April 1999

i[25] <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd39-09.html>

i[26] <http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/sept11.htm>

i[27] See for more information <http://csf.colorado.edu/peace/>; see for the Journal on *Peace and Conflict Studies* at <http://www.tcnj.edu/~psm/pcs/> and a list of other journals in this field, <http://csf.colorado.edu/peace/journals.html>; for research centers at <http://csf.colorado.edu/peace/orgs1.html> and <http://www.ipcs.org/ipcs/index.jsp>

i[28] G Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (New York: Zone Books 1989/1973); *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1977/1972)

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- i[29] Childester, David, *Shots in the Street: Violence and Religion in South Africa* (Boston: Beacon Press 1991)
- i[30] Appleby, R Scott *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Maryland Rowan and Littlefield 2000)
- i[31] M Jurgensmeyer *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (Berkeley: University of California Press 2000)
- i[32] Taoism achieves peace through balancing good and bad in Yin and Yang; see
<http://www.mckinnonsc.vic.edu.au/la/sose/history/Mhis8g/china/myths.htm>.
Hinduism seeks to achieve peace between gods and demons by symbolically subjugating the demons under the gods' authority through rituals of perpetual sacrifices and actual recurring historical subjugations of the dark-skinned Dalits
- i[33] S Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1996)
- i[34] D Little 'Religious Militancy' in A Chester Crocker et al. (eds) *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press 1996)
- i[35] M Jurgensmeyer, *The New Cold War: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1994)
- i[36] D Senghass *The Clash within Civilizations: Coming to Terms with Cultural Conflicts* (London: Routledge 2002)
- i[37] See for details A R Omar 'Towards a Polycentric Theory on Religion and Violence' in *JHMI* 21, 1, 2002, 63-83
- i[38] Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq is perceived by a vast section of the press in the West as just that; see for details on Max Weber's theory on this sort of domination, "Political and Hierocratic Domination" in *Economy and Society* (eds) G Roth and C Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press 1978).
- i[39] Student ferment in Iran is perceived by many as a minority struggle against the Ayatollahs; the Mahdist movements in Africa and the Indian subcontinent; see for instance, Muhammad Sa 'id *al-Qaddal, al-Imam al-*

Mahdi: Muhammad Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah (1844-1885) (Beirut: Dar al-Jil 1992) and DE Singh "Sainthood and Revelatory Discourse" chapter 4 in PhD Thesis, University of Wales, 2003.

i[40] M Hardt and A Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2000)

i[41] DE Singh, "Abu al-Ala Mawdudi's Political Theory," in *Transformation* 17, 1, 2000, 6-13

i[42] A Dalit leader who led the Dalits' conversion to Buddhism in the middle of the 20th century; see more at <http://www.ambedkar.org/p1.htm>

i[43] Som Wadhwa and S Anand 'Choosing their Religion' in *Outlook* November 18, 2002, 44-48; See also the documentary, produced by I Kostka and J L. Pudaite "Untouchables Vs. Aryans: the Battle for the Soul of India;" It was screened for discussion at the Newport Beach Film Festival, Thursday, April 10, 2003, 11:00 AM

i[44] See K. Jamanadas, 'Strife between Buddhism and Brahmanism' in *Tirupati Balaji was a Buddhist Shrine*, 1991 at <http://www.dalitstan.org/books/tirupati/tiru01.html>

i[45] See <http://www.ambedkar.org/gail/BuddhismAnd.htm>

i[46] See

<http://www.smartsurat.com/hinduism/Unity%20in%20diversity/accommodation.htm>; and http://ignca.nic.in/ls_03016.htm

i[47] See for more on 'Semiticization' J Locktefeld 'New Wine, Old Skins: The Sangh Parivar and the Transformation of Hinduism' in *Religion* 26, 1996, 101-118

i[48] His theory receives further support from the theory of myth-belief constellation in psychology of religion

i[49] See articles by Karan Singh in the *Hindustan Times* January 20, 2003 and Khushwant Singh *The Time of India* 31 January 2003

i[50] See 'Migrant World' in *Times of India* February 4, 2003 and 'Police Eviction of Migrants' in *Times of India* February 1, 2003

i[51] Although, Christian pose less of a challenge because of their pacifism and insignificant numbers; for this reason, globalization is not deemed to be a threat.

i[52] Myra MacDonald 'Hindu campaigners combat Christian conversions'
March 11, 2003, Yahoo News

i[53] Samuel Jayakumar Mission Reader: Historical Models for Wholistic
Mission in the Indian Context (Delhi/Oxford: ISPCK/Regnum 2002)

i[54] On January 23rd of 1999; see Vir Sanghvi *A Kill before Dying in Rediff on the Net* 8 February 1999 at <http://www.rediff.com/news/1999/feb/08vir.htm>;
see more on how they were burned alive and their pictures at
<http://www.wogim.org/stains.htm>

i[55] See <http://www.wogim.org/stains.htm>

i[56] See HMC homepage for his article titled 'Martyn and Martyrs: Questions for Mission'

i[57] See more on HMI at <http://www.hmiindia.com/>

i[58] <http://www.serrv.org/newsletter/stmarys.html>