JUXTAPOSE, LAYER, AND DISCARD: HINDU NATIONALISM AND LOCAL MAPS IN INDIAN RELIGIO-POLITICAL CULTURE

by

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(Under the Direction of Carolyn Medine)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents research into the negotiation between the meta-narrative of Hindu nationalism and local maps by religious practitioners in India. By presenting brief case studies of a range of ritual spaces, this paper conveys that India functions as a space of dispersion. Then, this paper traces the development of Hindu nationalism through the 1996 General Elections in India. Paying particular attention to the onset of regionalization in Indian politics, this paper considers when and how the Bharatiya Janata Party, a Hindu nationalist party, has been elected, to conclude that practitioners discard meta-narratives that attempt to colonize their local map.

INDEX WORDS: Bharatiya Janata Party, Hindu nationalism, Meta-narrative, Space/ place theory

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CHAPTER 1

META-NARRATIVE AND THE LOCAL

World-ing is the experience of negotiating incongruities into spaces of clarity—spaces that one defines and redefines into a personal world through a multitude of experiences with the myriad of alternative worldviews. Each individual practitioner constructs her own world, combining stories. Man truly is "a world-creating being."[1] As stated by Mircea Eliade, "If the world is to be lived in, it must be founded."[2] Living in a web of meta-narrative selections, practitioners found their worlds through consideration and election of each meta-narrative choice. Following Eliade, Jonathon Z. Smith observed, "What we study when we study religion is one mode of constructing worlds of meaning, worlds within which men find themselves and in which they choose to dwell."[3] Such "worlds of meaning" are constructed actively, are built by individuals for their individual consumption. Each individual experiences her world in a cyclical process of constitution— "man creates his place in the world as he creates his world; man discovers his place as he encounters the world in which he finds himself."[4] Practitioners come up against a range of meta-narrative options, must encounter the worlds around them and create a space for themselves. Religious practitioners engage in a "distinctive mode of human creativity, a creativity which both discovers limits and creates limits for humane existence."[5] They employ ritual and myth to delineate meaningful—meaning filled—space, space wherein each individual's worldview is developed, employed, and enacted.

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[1] Jonathon Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 177.
[2] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. Willard R. Trask; New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), 22.
[3] Smith, 290.
[4] Smith, 145.
[5] Smith, 291.

In his article "Map is Not Territory," Jonathon Z. Smith speaks to this process of world-ing. He structures his discussion by juxtaposing "map," as worldview, against "territory," as lived experience. In this juxtaposition, Smith approaches "map" as static, comprised of "structures of congruity and conformity"[6] and "territory" as malleable, composed by the shifting structures of actualization. Religion is then the "negotiation and application"[7] of a practitioner's worldview into her "territory." Religion is identified as the play between fixity and livable function. This play coordinates "map" and "territory." As I have previously argued, "although a disjuncture may exist between a [culturally constructed] delineated worldview and an individual's human experience, disjuncture does not exist between an *individual's* map and an *individual's* territory. Rather, an individual's map and territory are in harmonious flux."[8] Individual practitioners do not flounder in the world wisped between delineated worldviews and that which they experience. Through religion, practitioners *make choices*, which delineate the boundaries of their experience, creating "space" in which [they] meaningfully dwell."[9]

These choices lead to the founding of *particular* spaces—spaces that are certainly particular to individuals, alongside spaces that are particular to groups identifying with particular traditions. Post-modern space/place theory seeks to respond to this diversity in founding. Accepting as axiomatic no necessary singularity to the universe, but rather that the universe necessarily exists in an experience of multiplicity, postmodern theorists argue for the presence of "discursive heterogeneity without a norm."[10] In order to account for the uniqueness of each individual's world, postmodern theory emphasizes "the particular, the local and the specific"

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[6] Smith, 292.
[7] Smith, 308.
[8] Raechel Keay Anglin, "Bridging Map and Territory: the Dissolution of Disjuncture through Religious Experience," (submitted for academic credit: The University of Georgia, 2003), 6.
[9] Smith, 291.
[10] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 318.

over and against "the universal and the eternal."[11] As observed by Michel Foucault, in order to understand the postmodern world, "We must place ourselves, and remain once and for all at the level of fundamental *spatialisation*."[12] If one seeks to identify the way in which practitioners world, one must observe the act of world-ing as it occurs in space—even, as it occurs in particular, individual spaces. One must identify the way world is practiced in space.[13] Building from Smith's understanding of the disjuncture between "map" and "territory," through my understanding that "map" and "territory" must be coordinated for each individual, this paper will consider how individuals negotiate *coincident yet disparate*, socially constituted maps of identity.

Working from an understanding that each individual practitioner founds and experiences her world in local spaces, this paper holds that such lived experience is the reality for each practitioner. As observed by Mircea Eliade, "reality is acquired solely through […] participation" [14]— i.e., for each practitioner, the worldview that is real is the worldview that swells from that which is practiced. Through religious practice and the founding of a religious worldview, practitioners seek the "power to relate [their] domain to the plurality of environmental and social spheres in such a way as to guarantee the convictions that [their] existence 'matters'."[15] For each practitioner acting through and in response to her personal map, the world is necessarily centered in the local. The local map encompasses all of that with which a practitioner has direct experience. Her local map is composed in moments of direct experience. A practitioner is unlikely to respond positively to maps of identity that do not

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[11] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), 98-99.
[12] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith; New York: Vintage/ Random House, 1973), x-xi; original stress.
[13] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.
[14] Mircea Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return* (trans by. Williard R. Trask; New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), 34.
[15] Smith, 291.

similarly center upon, or at the very least address, her location. It follows that practitioners would be even less likely to accept social constructions that fail to guarantee that their "existence matters." In order to consider how individuals negotiate coincident yet disparate, socially constituted maps of identity, this paper will consider whether, if offered a social construction, a map of identity, incongruous with a practitioner's personal map, the practitioner will reject that foreign construction. In particular, this paper will consider how practitioners respond to the meta-narrative of nation.

Both the narrative of a personal worldview and the meta-narrative of nation are social constructions. Acting from the standpoint of their local maps, their personal worldviews, how do practitioners respond to the meta-narrative of nation? What if the meta-narrative of nation presented to the practitioner specifically constructs a map of identity presumed to coincide with the practitioner's personal map? Or, what if the meta-narrative of nation presented to the practitioner explicitly constructs a map of identity that intentionally contradicts a practitioner's personal map? How will practitioners respond? This paper queries into such layering, queries into the attempted colonization of local maps by the political nation.

Specifically, this paper will consider the attempted colonization of local maps in the Indian subcontinent by the meta-narrative of Hindu nationalism. India presents an excellent example of people deciding on their own map and living it out in adjacent juxtaposition with other, equally valid, alternative worldviews. The culture of the subcontinent, which is structured through and defined by religious exploration, flux and change, evidences a historical tradition of inter-religious tolerance and of dichotomous groups in simultaneous practice. Since, as Frederic Jameson concludes, "a model of political culture […] will necessarily have to raise spatial issues

as its fundamental organizing concern,"[16] this paper will present a series of disparate experiences with ritual space in India, beginning with historical ritual spaces and progressing into spaces of contemporary practice. As practitioners develop ritual spaces, with boundaries and mythologies, into places of artistic, architectural independence, the diversity of ritual spaces in India serves as evidence for the myriad plurality of local maps. Recognizing that each individual practitioner will of course interact with a given ritual space in a unique way, this paper does not intend to suggest what a ritual space *means* for any given practitioner. However, by presenting brief case studies of a range of ritual spaces, this paper hopes to convey that India functions as a "space of dispersion."[17] Secondly, this paper will discuss the development of Hindu nationalism, a meta-narrative that attempts to present "a total description [which will draw] all phenomena around a single centre- a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape."[18] Finally, through examination of the electability of Hindu nationalists in contemporary Indian politics, this paper will contemplate the relationship between local maps and the Hindu nationalist meta-narrative of nation.

[16] Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 89.
[17] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith; New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 10.
[18] Foucault, "The Archaeology," 10.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL MAPS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY

> We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.[19]
>
> – Michel Foucault

There is a strong tradition of inter-religious tolerance, and even affable acceptance, between divergent religious traditions in India. As explicated by Yogendra Malik, "In the early stages of Indian history, Indian unity was achieved on the basis of […] recognition of multiple diversities, both behavioral and normative, and legitimacy of group identities and autonomies."[20] This "recognition of multiple diversities" is particularly well explicated in space by the Ajanta and Ellora caves. These expansive ritual spaces each present a cliff side carved into a visual poetry of religious juxtaposition. While the Ajanta caves present a progression through Buddhist traditions, the Ellora caves present the temporal overlap of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.

Historical case studies

Historical case study one: Ajanta caves, Maharastra, February 1, 2005

Rising above the flatness of a gorge, river cut. Rising up were the cliffs of Ajanta. Carved out of side, nestled into the rock, are ancient Buddhist monasteries, which compose twenty-seven caves. These caves are adorned with scenes from both Theravada stories and stories of the Mahayana tradition. Rather than a line of monks, archaeologists guard each cave. Famous for their frescoed paintings, these caves exhibit works that date to the 1st and 2nd centuries BC. During the Gupta period (5th and 6th centuries AD), numerous additional caves

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[19] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" *Diacritics* (Spring, 1986): 22. JSTOR, via Galileo, http://www.galileo.usg.edu

[20] Yogendra K. Malik and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 2.

were added to the original group.[21] Many of the caves are structured so that one enters through a carved archway into a large square space, which is ringed around the outside with pillars. The walls are either painted or covered in relief sculptures. In the center of the far wall, Buddha, flanked by two bodhisattvas, is carved back into the depths. Although these caves were abandoned, they still radiant peace. Having explored around the crescent, I turned to capture the far wall in black and white photography. Fewer tourists filled this end of the line cave. From behind me, in the depths of ancient construction, filtered out a chant of Ohm. A baritone and a second soprano, vibrating with the universe, vibrating in connection with this space, joined the tenor voice.

Historical case study two: Ellora caves, Maharastra, February 2, 2005

The Ellora caves are a set of 34 monasteries and temples selected from a valley with 1200 religious caves, carved out of the mountainside. The Ellora caves stretch for more than two kilometers along Charanadari Hill, a high basalt cliff. These caves were constructed in an "uninterrupted sequence of monuments dating from AD 600 to 1000."[22] This site demonstrates the fluidity of religious practice in India's history; how the multiplicity of practices have coexisted together; and how they have respected one another. I suppose to a large extent this site demonstrates how the Hindus simply accepted that Buddhism was a part of their fold, that the Buddha was an incarnation of Krishna bringing his message to another set of people.

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[21] UNESCO World Heritage Center, "Ajanta Caves," World Heritage Organization, http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31&id_site=242 (accessed June 12, 2005).
[22] UNESCO World Heritage Center, "Ellora Caves," World Heritage Organization, http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31&id_site=243 (accessed June 12, 2005).

The Ellora caves were begun by King Asoka,[23] the conquering warrior who once ruled over the subcontinent, and who, upon conquering and killing many, many people, eventually called off war and converted to Buddhism. He then began to patronize the monks in an attempt to spread Buddhism throughout his kingdom. Asoka decided that stone would be his creative legacy and funded the first of these cave dwellings. The first 12 caves on this rock face are Buddhist caves, with both temples and monasteries carved out. These are absolutely stunning spaces where shadows play with rock and quiet. The monks did not want to be distracted by the sunlight, so these caves face west, where the least amount of light filters in. (All the subsequent Ellora caves face west as well.) In the temples, in the back, there is a carving of the Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas. Sometimes the teaching Buddha is depicted, and sometimes the meditative Buddha. Stories of the Buddha's life are carved in the frieze and along the walls. In the monasteries, small cells are carved out of the rock, with rock beds and rock pillows included.

Caves 13-29 are the Hindu caves. They were begun before the Buddhist caves were completed; yet work on the Buddhist caves was allowed to continue. The most striking of the Hindu caves is Kailasa Temple, Cave 16. Kailasa Temple, which is the largest monolithic sculpture in the world, took over 150 years to complete. This entire temple was carved out of the mountain from the top down. In the entrance, on the left, there is a relief sculpture of Ganesha (representing prosperity); on the right, an image of Durga (representing strength); and in front, an image of Lakshmi sitting on her double inverted lotus (symbolizing power.) This temple is for Shiva. We were allowed to photograph the linga because, while there were some practitioners

[23] King Asoka was the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan dynasty. Although the exact dates of his life are not known, he was born around 304 BC and died around 232 BC. While his given name was Asoka, King Asoka took on the title Devanampiya Piyadasi, which means "Beloved-of-the-Gods, He Who Looks On With Affection." King Asoka probably built the first Buddhist monuments in India. For further information see Ven S. Dhammika, “The Edicts of King Ashoka,” DharmaNet, http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html (accessed on June 12, 2005).

here, this is primarily an archeological site. Inside the temple, the pillars depict stories from the Great Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.[24] These depictions include several of the most graphic sexual images I have ever seen.

Caves 30- 34 are Jain caves, and unlike the Buddhist and Hindu temples and monasteries, they are not really open to the front. Rather, the Jains built a smaller, tighter jumble of caves, constructed so that, while there is light inside, one cannot really see out. The Jain carvings are the most intricate and delicate on the mountain.

Contemporary case studies[25]

Case study one: Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, January 20, 2005

According to Mr. V. Sivaprakasam,[26] Executive Engineer of Agriculture for the Government of Tamil Nadu, there are at least one thousand and eight temples in this town, ranging from some large temples down to very small ones. Of particular interest is the Mahamakham Tank. Surrounded by twelve temples, which are white on the top and have cage like bottoms, this tank is believed to swell with holy water from the Ganges and other holy rivers once every twelve years. This last happened in 2004. During this festival, a million people come to the tank to perform puja in the water. Nine temporary temples are established in the water, and people perform a "holy dip." These nine temples represent the nine planets, with the sun in the middle surrounded by the moon, fire, water, two hidden planets and then two additional ones.

Nageshwara Temple, in Kumbakonam, is dedicated to Shiva in the guise of Nagaraja, the serpent king. In this temple, one cannot see the god from the street. I entered into a courtyard

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[24] Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, "Ellora Caves," Holiday Ideas, www.tourismofindia.com/hiwhh/elloracaves.htm (accessed on June 12, 2005).

[25] I recognize that by offering these descriptions I am walking the line of Orientalism and objectification. However, I seek only to present my experience of these spaces, my observations of and inquiry into the ritual practices at each location. In order to do so, I will present in first person narrative my experience of each place, alongside historical and mythological data about each place.

[26] Vijay Sivaprakasam, Interview by author, Kumbakonum, Tamil Nadu, January 20, 2005.

and walked through white pillars with an elephant ("all temples will have an elephant")[27] and then turned left to enter the temple. All Shiva temples face the east for the rising of the sun. I walked into a dark space with tall dark stone pillars, each of which was topped with a dragon. These dragons stem from ancient mythology and inhabit the crossties. It is very cool and quiet. I had to walk around a large pillar that obstructs the view of the god in order to come into Shiva's presence. There are four holes in the ceiling that filter in a little bit of natural light where the congregants stand. There were also three cathode ray tubes on each side of the central aisle; the priests would not install electric light because they believe that natural light would distract from one from looking at god.

In Nageshwara Temple, god is represented with a linga made of sand and a pasting material. The story goes (as depicted in ten images painted on the wall) that Shiva was going to destroy the world and so Brahma placed some life seeds into a pot. Then when the world was covered in water and destroyed, the pot survived on top of a mountain. After the water drained away, Shiva sought to destroy the pot, so he shot it with an arrow, spilling its contents out and repopulating the world. The stone of this pot was ground up and became the linga worshiped in this temple. Here I performed puja for the first time, placing rupees onto a plate, and taking a white powder, which I wiped onto my head, and also some flowers. Then came the agni; the tray of fire was lifted in a circle about the linga three or four times. The priest then brought the candelabra of fire forward, and everyone grappled toward the gate leaning in to bathe themselves in the smoke. Lastly, I placed the red mark of blessing on my forehead. A devotee of Shiva, a very short man with his hair pulled back in a low knot, who had three white stripes on his forehead and also a red dot, led us around. He was wearing a low-slung white cloth.

We attempted to visit Sarangapani Temple, but it was closed. Sarangapani Temple is the

[27] Sivaprakasam.

temple to Vishnu here. At this temple, I learned that the temples in Tamil Nadu are surmounted by layered sculptures with the lowest layers representing man on earth today, and then the learned from older days, and then older days all the way up to deities. The gods are enshrined at the apex. Also, between the sculptures there are air holes so that the wind can pass through undisturbed. The wind is believed to change directions every six months from north easterly to south westerly and should not be disturbed in its passage. In the representations of deities with multiple arms, only two of the arms are literal arms, or arms with physicality. The other arms are imaginary arms. In four-armed figures, the two imaginary arms are fighting sin and evil. Since Kumbakonam is a coastal area, all of the stone for the temples had to be brought from the rocky hills about 100 kilometers away. They were transported by bull cart, and then carved and established. Outside of this temple, I saw a massive stone cart (juggernaut) for transporting the god around town. The idea is that 364 days a year, a practitioner goes to the god, but one day a year, the god comes to visit the practitioner. Moving the juggernaut requires several oxen and several hundred people all-pulling at the same time. This represents the community spirit necessary for a proper relationship with god.

Kumbeshwara Temple, the largest Shiva temple in Kumbakonam, appeared at first glance to be thatched. However, it was actually undergoing restorative painting of the stones. This temple had four entrances, one on each cardinal direction. Inside Kumbeshwara Temple, there was a carved five-headed serpent. The serpent is transported around the city prior to the god being transported around, in order to clear the way. In here, I looked at two small statue areas. One had Saturn, who is the god-planet that doles out misfortune. This statue is black because the god has bad karma for causing so many other people misfortune. He has come to this Shiva temple to ask Shiva's forgiveness and protection so that he will not have to suffer so much for inflicting

suffering on others. According to Hindu cosmology, there are twelve-year cycles of climate. During each cycle, one's star will fall once under Saturn and then one will pay for one's misdeeds. People come to the temple to ask Saturn to touch them lightly. While no one can escape paying for one's sins, one can only hope to lighten the punishment. Next to the representation of Saturn were nine statues, representing the planets, configured in three rows of three, with the sun at the center. These were black statues, made black with oil, and each was adorned with a swatch of cloth about its middle. Coming away from the statues, on the ground of the temple was a small channel used to remove the holy water in which the deities are washed. People circumambulate about the statues and also leave offerings of fire. Here I first saw two giant door guards with their large, stone, bulging eyes. There were also statues of seven horses that represented the rays of the sun. Outside, in a separate building, there was a music school where boys were learning to play two-reed instruments.

Case study two: Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, January 21-24, 2005

Today (January 21), I visited Sri Brahadeeswarar Temple, known as the Big Temple; a museum of manuscripts; and then the old Chola empire palace. Each building was massive and striking and full of an earth polished peace. The Big Temple, which was built by Raja Raja I in the 10th century, is for Parvati and Shiva and had artists' names inscribed on the walls. The stones were moved into their current locations with the same techniques that were used in the construction of the Pyramids.

Then, later that afternoon, Dad and I decided to go for a walk to find the brightly colored temple we had spotted from our penthouse view hotel room. Upon approaching the temple, we hung outside and peered in at the puja. A man with Elvis hair and soot roots came out and told us that this was a temple to both Shiva and Vishnu, and that having a combined temple was very

unusual. He said that puja was performed here once every fortnight, and that that fortnight fell on a Saturday, it was particularly auspicious. It was Saturday. My father and I took off our shoes and went inside to see the god. We entered a mass of women, and Shiva was revealed from behind his curtain, encircled in agni. We then saw the encasement of Vishnu. As my father went outside to put his shoes back on, I circumambulated with some little girls, three times around small statues, worshiping god at the end, under the direction of an elderly man. Then, my father and I headed back to the hotel.

On the way, we stopped and checked out some appliances, including a grain grinder. Walking back to the hotel, dad thought we should check out the Oriental Hotel Wedding Hall. A ceremony appeared to be in progress. When we approached the door just to peer in, a young woman splashed us with water and ushered my father into the room. She then fixed a red dot on my forehead and had me put a flower behind my ear. We learned we had entered an engagement celebration. We watched as the priests prepared, and prepared, and prepared (for hours). The two priests sat virtually motionless, murmuring mantras and looking down at their hands. Engagement decorations were placed all around the priests, huge designs constructed out of flowers. Suddenly, the man with the Elvis hair entered and was very involved in the preparations. Later, he came over and talked to my father for a long time, and the sister of the groom came and introduced herself to me. She lives in Detroit. Eventually, all the men all sat down one side of the room, and the women gathered on the other, and out came the stunned looking bride to be. She was fed and bejeweled behind three cameramen. Then, the groom entered with an entourage. He approached the stage and sat on a bench next to his bride-to-be. Neither fiancé looked at the other. All of the men older than the groom gathered on the stage to bless the couple, offering them a gift and placing yellow and red dots of blessing on the

foreheads of the bride and groom. Apparently, it is considered auspicious to have a foreigner at one's engagement party, and so I was invited to bless the couple as well, although I was the only non-male, and only individual younger than the groom, to participate. However, I approached the couple and blessed them. After the crowd returned to their seats, the bride was whisked back out of view and the ceremony concluded.

Case study three: Mysore, Karnataka, January 24-26, 2005

When visiting the Maharaja's Palace, I of course encountered an architecture of political construction, with private and public audience halls constructed with wide open spaces and viewing galleries along the walls. This building was completed in 1912 and is a testament to extravagance (and the various uses for gold and inlaid marble in interior decoration). The silver doors were particularly notable. Within the palace grounds are a set of Hindu temples, and when on tour of the Maharaja's personal effects, there were a multitude of paintings of the gods. Also, there was a large shrine to Ganesha that was decorated with jewels.

Chamundi Hill is a pilgrimage site for Hindus seeking the blessing of Pavarti, and secondarily, the blessing of Shiva. In order to begin the ascent, I traveled outside of town in an auto-rickshaw decorated like a love boat, complete with kiss stickers on the rearview mirror. At the base of Chamundi Hill, a cream colored stone archway frames the first stairs. The front of each stair is painted with white and red squares in sequence. A few stairs up, there is a small space off to the right for offerings. I watched as an elderly woman placed white flowers onto the stone and lit a candle of ghee. She then turned slowly in a circle, chanting with a lilting voice as she raised her pressed together hands ever closer to the sky. She then turned to the first step, knelt down, touched the step with her hands, stood up, climbed one step, and knelt again in ablution. It appeared as though she would continue performing ablutions all the way up the Hill.

I started to climb. The sun was not yet strong overhead, but nevertheless, it was quite warm.

The ascent up Chamundi Hill has 1001 stairs, of precariously varying depth and width. On the way up, I met a little ten-year-old girl named Lakshmi, whose hair was looped into two braided pigtails with flowers. She and her girl friend climbed with me for a while, running ahead and then waiting for me to catch up. Dad climbed ahead of me, talking to a group of young men. About one third of the way up there is a five meter high Nandi (Shiva's bull vehicle), which was carved out of solid rock in 1659. I felt like I was on a Nandi tour, having just come from Tanjore. This Nandi was garlanded and black from a flaky black coating of coconut-husk charcoal, mixed with ghee. Pilgrims were gathered around offering prasad to the priest in attendance and then photographing the monkeys. At the 600th stair, there was a gentleman selling cucumbers and pineapple, which I could not eat, but which the young men bought. We all took a water break, and then climbed on.

Looking back over my shoulder, Mysore, city and crops, were tiny below and stretched out into the distance. Around stair 950, there was a school, with boys outside playing cricket. At the top of the Hill rose Sri Chamundeswari temple, which is topped by a towering, seven-story, forty-meter high gopuram (the soaring pyramidal gateway tower of Dravidian temples). The top of the gopuram had seven gold points book ended by the golden horns of Ganesh. Pilgrims lined up around the temple for entrance. Further up the hill was a smaller temple to Shiva. I moved inwards through three rooms, each with ever decreasing light (the first room had open sides leading into a covered courtyard). The doorway to the innermost room was guarded by relief sculptural statures. Three men sat silently on the floor. A family entered and approached the priest, who performed agni in exchange for their offerings. The temple was damp along the floor and walls, and the candles offered to deities along the sidewalls had all gone out. There was

nothing to distract from the darkened creviced where Shiva would be revealed, if only for the briefest moment.

In Devaraja Fruit and Vegetable Market, Hinduism is enacted through the presentation of physical gifts, in the exchange of the tangible for the intangible blessing of the gods. This exchange comes with the scent of incense, burning pungent at the gods' feet. As such, incense is a needed commodity. When lost in the Devaraja Market, I met a young boy who's family ran an oil and incense business. He showed me how to make an incense stick.

When checking my email at the Cyber Line, I met a 28-year-old clinical pharmacology student named Vinu who invited my dad and me to his home to meet his family. He lived with his mother and father, two brothers, their two wives, and two sons (one son each). His sister in law told me that she only attends temple for big festivals. In the corner of their "typical Indian kitchen" there was a small shrine with pictures of their ancestors and the only artifact of their heritage, their great grandfather's sword, which was decorated with three dots in a line, yellow, red, and then white. The red dot was over three small white stripes. When I inquired about the dots, Vinu just said, "That's our custom."[28]

Case study four: Sravanabelagola, Karnataka, January 27, 2005

Sravanabelagola, which means the "Monk of the White Pond," is "one of the oldest and most important Jain pilgrimage centers in India."[29] Sravanabelagola was established as a Jain ritual site in the 3rd century BC when Chandragupta Maurya came here with his guru, Bhagwan bhadrabahu Sawmi, after renouncing his kingdom. Bhagwan spread his disciples throughout the south, firmly cementing Jainism into southern religious practice. Later, Jainism "found powerful patrons in the Gangas who ruled southern Karnataka between the 4th and 10th centuries, the

[28] Vinu, Interview by author, Mysore, Karnataka, January 25, 2005.
[29] Sarina Singh, *India* (Melbourne: Lonely Planet Publications, 2003), 866.

zenith of Jainism's influence."[30] Sravanabelagola is now site of the huge seventeen-meter high naked statue of Gomateshvara (Bahubali), a Jain deity.[31] This is said to be the world's tallest monolithic statue, and it crowns Vindhyagiri Hill. The statue was commissioned by a military officer serving under the Ganga king, Racamalla, and was carved out of granite by Aristemeni in 981 AD.[32]

In order reach Gomateshvara, I drove around 2.5 hours in the second most harrowing experience of my life. Not to be melodramatic, but the first most harrowing experience has become the drive back to Mysore. Reaching Sravanabelagola (luckily), I left my shoes in the car and began day two of climbing in pilgrimage. The ascent to Gomateshvara is composed of 614 rock-cut steps. While these steps were considerably more regular than the steps at Chamundi Hill, the ascent is over bald-faced, curving rock. A little way up the climb, there is a small Jain temple with a smiling, watchful Jain priest. The top of the climb reaches into a light-filled white granite temple complex. There are some relief sculptures on the walls, primarily of animals (often fish). Some Hindu images are included as well. One must circumambulate Gomateshvara through a corridor of walls in order to reach his massive feet. Vines are depicted snaking up Gomateshvara's legs, in order to depict his total detachment from the world. In an underground gallery beneath Gomateshvara, there are many smaller images of Jain *tirthnkars*. These statues were flush against the far wall and separated from practitioners by a wooden rail. Jain pilgrims were circumambulating around the gallery, trailing rice along the railing.

Since the Jains support a variety of charity project, my dad and I left a donation. After

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[30] Singh, 866.
[31] "Bahubali's father was the great Emperor Vrishabhadeva, who became the first Jain *tirthankar* (revered Jain teacher), Adinath. Bahubali and his brother Bharatha competed fiercely for the right to succeed their father but, on the point of victory, Bahubali realized the futility of the struggle and renounced his kingdom. He withdrew from the material world and entered the forest, where he began to meditate in complete stillness until he attained enlightenment." Singh, 866.
[32] Singh, 866.

leaving a donation, the temple workers, who were very friendly before, became almost ridiculously so and allowed us to go up behind the statue and see his naked back, usually accessible only once every 12 years during the Mahamastakabhisheka ceremony, during which Bahubali is anointed with thousands of pots of coconut milk, yogurt, ghee, gananas, jaggery, dates, and saffron. This ceremony takes place every 12 years because it took 12 years to carve the statute. During the ceremony period, Sravanabelagola swarms with Jain pilgrims.

Next, I visited a small Jain temple in the village, which had amazing relief sculptures around the frieze and was also very peaceful and filled with light. Then, I visited Chandragupta Basti on Chandragiri Hill, which I reached by climbing approximately 240 steps. I saw rock inscriptions in old Karnataka script. Finally, I visited the 2000-year-old temple complex, which had nine temples, with three Jain deities represented thrice each. This site is under the architectural protection of the Indian government. Sitting at one of the temples and looking out over the landscape, I saw Ghandari Basti, a Hoysala-style temple in the southeast corner of town. This temple was originally constructed by Hindus and has Hindu gods carved around the outside, but has now been re-appropriated by the local Jain population. It is Sravanabelagola's largest temple, and as it is in Hoysala-style, it is low to the ground and curvilinear.

Case study five: Bangalore, Karnataka, January 30, 2005

With Venkataraman Temple, today saw an accidental occasion of god and community. As I hiked across Bangalore, big city and imminently crashing traffic, toward the Tipu Sultan's Palace, I passed an absolutely delightful temple. Venkataraman Temple, located on Avenue Road, is an ornate temple dedicated to Vishnu. Rows of child-sized, white carvings inhabit the pillars, and lions guard the temple entrance. As I photographed the architecture, Vishnu paraded past, led by a horn player and a woman carrying a torch, and ferried by four men Maharaja style

(supported by two poles on shoulders). Then, the grounds filled with people who formed orderly seated corridors along the ground. The Dravidian priests handed out banana leaf plates and began serving the people. There was still, joyous communion.

Following Venkataraman Temple, I set off in search of the Bull Temple. Walking about four kilometers, I passed at least five wedding ceremonies (it was a Sunday). The Bull Temple was "built by Kempegowda in the Dravidian style in the 16th century."[33] Inside, I encountered Nandi for the third time. Whereas the Nandi sculptures of both Tanjore and Mysore were housed under a small roof or in the open air (respectively), here, I passed through a narrow hall of white pillars and into the shadowed space holding Nandi in his Bull Temple. As with the other Nandi statues, there was one Dravidian priest in attendance. This Nandi was painted into a fierce facial expression, his eyes glaring out. Behind Nandi rested a statue of Ganesha, and in a small crevice tucked and hidden in the wall, was Shiva's linga. I watched as five men came around the back of Nandi's massive legs and prayed, lips in motion, to Ganesha and then to Shiva. Many of the temples I have visited so far convey how small practitioners are in comparison with god and the surrounding world through open space and the interaction between light and dark spaces. However, the Bull Temple impressed smallness upon the practitioner because each practitioner was inescapably close to the deep size of Nandi. There was very little space between the sculpture and the wall space. The space ordered ritual by directing each practitioner around a tight pathway. In order to see Shiva, I had to lean down—one has to move, to act; there can be no complacency of practice here.

Case study six: Aurangabad, Maharastra, February 2, 2005

Daulatabad Fort, a hilltop fortress, is surrounded by five kilometers of wall and tops a mountain originally named Devagiri, the Hill of the Gods. When this fort was first constructed,

a Jain temple was built on the premises. As with other Jain temples I visited, this temple is composed of an open courtyard with columns around the very edge. After passing through the courtyard, I entered a forest of delicately carved pillars. As this particular fort was taken over by the "Muslim invaders" and subsequently occupied for several hundred years, the Jain temple was converted into a mosque-- simply by adding a small white dome atop the center ceiling over the pillars. Now, the mosque has been converted into a "secular" space, which is managed by the government architectural foundation. In accord with the secularity here, a mother goddess figure, "mother of the earth," has been placed into a crevice on the back wall, among the pillars. The local Hindus worship this mother goddess figure. As we watched, a family came through and rung the suspended bell by lightly pressing against the clapper. They then proceeded to pray.

The Shiva temple outside of Aurangabad is one of twelve in India where practitioners believe the linga sprung from the earth. Our guide (who was obviously excited) explained that if a Hindu visited all twelve of these linga during his lifetime, his sins would be erased, and he would be freed from the cycle of rebirth. This particular temple was very small and in a fury of activity. In order for a male to enter the temple, he must remove his shirt along with his shoes. This was no clean and airy place. The walls were blackened and damp. My feet squished along the sticky, damp stone floor. The linga was low to the ground; it seemed flattened into the earth. The air hummed with prayers as the Hindu practitioners, almost exclusively men, knelt before the linga, placing their hands and foreheads onto its base, kissing the ground, and murmuring. There was so much incense; I could see the smoke in the air. The priest was applying honey mixed with yogurt onto the linga and allowing the mixture to drip down onto the floor. The floor was stained with petal color, from wetted, smashed flowers left in offering. Holy water

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[33] Singh, 843.

seeped over my toes. Then a Hindu grandmother, who moved to America in the 1960s and now lives in Missouri, who was on my tour, touched me on the shoulder and said, "Don't be frightened, dear. God is still one." She led me out of the temple (I helped her up the steep stairs out of the lowered space), and she continued, "You know, when you visit a Buddhist temple, everything is clean. But here, that is just their way. There is a lot of faith there. All these myths..." she laughed and shook her head. Then she looked over at her husband and proclaimed-- "He didn't even take his shirt off to go in, and he got blessed! [She gestured toward the bindi on his forehead.] I went in with offerings, and the priest didn't even bless me! Men."[34] She chuckled and ushered me out of the complex.

Case study seven: Mumbai (Bombay), Maharastra, February 4, 2005

Walking the streets of Mumbai, my lungs filled with a smog that seemed to create a film layered right under my chin across my throat. There are skyscrapers and a financial district. There are street hawkers, and people primarily stay in their lanes when driving. This is a serious, big city. I had pizza for dinner. And the only moment of religiosity I came across was a man praying through a grated window into a locked, gated temple, tucked into the jumble of industry.

Case study eight: Udaipur, Rajasthan, February 5, 2005

In Udaipur, I visited the Hindu temple, the “heart of the town” as stated by our hotel owner, the younger brother of the ex-Maharaja. The streets were a jumble of up and down, mud slicked poverty. Here, the open sewers gathered little fly clusters, while small shops hung their reflective draperies out the windows. Medieval narrow passages thickened with head butting traffic, and everywhere was an advertisement. And then the lake. After four seasons of non-monsoon, the lake was a prairie of light vegetation and mud scooping water buffalo. Plastic rubble was windblown careless. The lake palace and city palace, and even the on looking

[34] [Doe, Jane], Interview by author, Aurangabad, Maharastra, February 2, 2005.

monsoon palace, peering from its mountain apex, sanded with a missing glory. The glimmer here had come unclean. Our auto-rickshaw driver said that if the monsoon did not come soon, did not come strong this year, they would have to move. This community had developed into a tourist town, and the tourists were after natural splendor. While the mountains still circled in soft, purpling beauty, the industry would move off without water.

When we reached the temple, it rose up out of the street with steeply vertical steps. At the top of the stairs, we were flanked on both sides by a curvilinear structure that reminded me of early Buddhist stupa structures. In the front, the temple was rectilinear on the bottom and then angled up like most other southern temples. I left my shoes with my father and walked into a hall filled with seated women. Practitioners were circling the outside of the seated congregants to worship Shiva. A priest sat on the ground and led the women in ritual. He blessed a coconut. Then all of the women stood up and faced the god figure and began to sing. Their singing was sweet-- not like the haunting Anglican chant of my childhood. I watched for swaying, but everyone stood very still. Only two grandmothers slowly (and inaudibly) clapped their hands. Bells rang periodically.

Case study nine: Ranakpur, Rajasthan, February 6, 2005

In order to reach Ranakpur, my father and I hired a car and set off at 8:30 am. With a brief stop at a fort, which was speckled with Hindu temples, including one with a life-sized Shiva sculpture, we arrived at Ranakpur around 1:30 in the afternoon. This Jain site has 114 intricately carved marble pillars, no two of which are alike. To enter the temple, I walked through a narrow alleyway lined in pillars. Above, a metallic grid work with Christmas ornaments hanging from each intersection shimmered with the small breeze. These metallic grids were spread across ceiling because the temple was decorated for an upcoming festival. Everything else was white.

The signage outside of the temple proudly declared that this structure was designed to allow for a natural flow of air and a natural integration of darkness and light. Essentially, the space was divided into quadrants, with four doors, only one of which is open at a time. Over each doorway there was a unique carving, one of which was a large Ohm composed of layers of little Ohms. Along the back wall, there was a secluded alleyway in which the Jain teachers were depicted, in sets of three, one larger sculpture in the center with a smaller sculpture on either side. Each of the teachers were depicted seated in mediation, naked, and with these pop eyes—glass oblong eyes that seemed lined in seductive mascara. In the center of the back wall, there was a large sculpture of an elephant. On the right side of the temple, there was a tree 600 years old, cut from the original tree under which the Jain's first teacher gained understanding. In the center of the temple, there was a four-sided shrine with a seated sculpture of a teacher set into each side. Two priests, in white robes with their mouths covered, tended to the "gods," blessing them with a forehead-stinging holy power in ochre yellow. An elderly couple sat in front of the open door side of the shrine giving their offering. They took a pile of sand and with their right index finger moved the sand so that it formed a swastika beneath a crescent moon with a dot in the center. The woman then took a flower and placed it on the swastika and a coconut and placed it on the half moon. They then appeared to become uncomfortable with my watching them, so I moved off. Inside the temple, the stones were all very cool. Within the temple complex, there was a dormitory of sorts and also two smaller temples.

Case study ten: Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, February 12, 2005

Sarnath, which adjoins Varanasi, the Holy City for the Hindus, is one of the most holy pilgrimage sites for Buddhists. In Sarnath, the Buddha gave his first teaching in the Deer Park. King Asoka built a stupa where the Buddha addressed the ascetics, marking the spot where the

Noble Eight-Fold Path was revealed. Today, this pilgrimage site consists of a vertically stretched dome, surrounded by trees. A tiny, elderly Indian Buddhist nun led me up the footpath to the stupa (which has been reinforced with outward brick layers), and then unlocked the gate and led me up onto the roof. Standing above the treetops, the nun anointed out the rooftops of viharas established by monks from Burma, China, Thailand, and Japan. After climbing down from the stupa top, I visited Dharmek Stupa, the ruins of a monastery and temple complex established by King Asoka. Here, under wavering prayer flags, three saffron clad nuns circumambulated the stupa, which was plastered with individual spots of gold leaf. They ran the tips of their right hand fingers along the wall, and they walked in silence. The stupa was very cool to the touch, and the rock had smoothed with touching. Finally, I visited a contemporary temple, where a golden representation of the teaching Buddha sat in an open-faced temple. A little stream runs in front of the temple, over which a triangular footbridge has been constructed. The temple abuts a modern Deer Park, where pilgrims come and see the deer, which are corralled into a viewing habitat.

Case study eleven: Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, February 13-14, 2005

As the Holy City, one must expect that Varanasi would be brimming with religious fervor. In order to prepare to visit Varanasi, I tried to psych myself up for rotting cow corpses roadside and the floating of bodies in the Ganges. I saw neither of these things. In fact, Varanasi was much cleaner than anything I had read suggested. I was, however, completely overwhelmed by how much activity of practice. I was in Varanasi during a festival to Sarasvati. For the first day, people were setting up canopies all around the city—large, rectangular, yellow-and-orange stripped tents—with loud music blaring forth and massive sculptures of Sarasvati in the back. Each tent seemed manned by only three or four men. Throughout Varanasi, temples were tucked

into corners. Of course, there are neighborhood shrines all across India, but Varanasi was brimming. And it is a tangle of ramshackle streets, dark and dripping in the evenings, particularly when the lights flip off all over the city. But the shrines are everywhere— up alleyways; encircled by shops. I wound through the old city toward the Golden Temple, which I was not allowed to enter as a non-Hindu, but into which I was allow to peek. I entered the large temple complex next door. Here, there were many levels of floor and many small alcoves, all with burgundy and deep brown painted walls and priests in yellow sitting. In the center, there was a temple for Shiva, and practitioners struck the bell and knelt and stood again. The shrine was hung with heavy draperies, and it was difficult to see far enough into the space to find the god. Other smaller shrines were more approachable. One of the priests watching a shrine with lots of small figures tied red and yellow thread about my right wrist and then smeared my head with white, placing a red bindi on my forehead.

Further into the complex there was a shrine to Kali, which was frightening. The screaming face, tongue protruding, was looked after by a boy of about twelve. I left quickly, as there were only men in this part of the temple, and when they prayed they crossed their arms across their chest and then sort of chopped into their upper arm with their opposite hand before moving on to the next statue, which was intimidating. The alleyways outside were also lined with temples—small ones with many images nestled between shops selling flower garlands and incense. Back outside of the temple alleyway sat many military guards. These specific guards were searching for cameras and cellular phones, but there were officers throughout the old city. One particularly well-armed location was the Great Mosque, as the BJP have identified Varanasi as one of their two next hits.

On my second day in Varanasi, I drove through the pre-dawn unlit to the Ganges, where I

hired a boat to take me along the ghats. Early in the morning, I was rather amused to find that most of the people to be seen were other groups of tourists on boats floating down the river. The laundry men were beating beating clothes upon tilted flat stones in the water, slinging the cloth above their heads and then slapping it down. Soon, though, the Ganges became a river of bathing, with girls perched on the side carefully combing out their dripping hair; with grandmothers sinking into the water; and with boys brushing their teeth to spit water back out into the Ganges. There were men swimming laps and cold women lifting cups of water and pouring them back into the river. And of course, there were the burning ghats. At the principle burning ghat, there were just piles of logs for burning. We saw two bodies on stretchers covered over with gold shining cloth, and piles with smoke. The sun came up over the opposite bank, where the maharajas of India could watch it rise from their Ganges lining palaces.

Back on land, the streets were filled with parades of young men dancing behind processions of Sarasvati. The young men were going to the Ganges. My auto-rickshaw driver told me that over 1000 statues would be placed into the Ganges that day. The boys wore bands around their foreheads, some groups in red and others in yellow. They played drums and horns and danced in the streets. The traffic moved on, nose to fender as always, crowding through the road and inching past the processions, as through nothing was out of the ordinary.

Nothing was out of the ordinary, and yet simultaneously, everything about this place was out of the ordinary. It is difficult to write about the use of ritual space when everywhere is a ritual space, where space is enlivened ritual. Here religion was danced into life creative. It was, as my dad said, a form of good clean fun—well, as clean as one could hope with holy water. One of the Sarasvati street parties involved boys on the ground doing an Indian version of the worm. All amid open sewers and poverty: such joy.

My auto-rickshaw driver also took me on a hunt for Hanuman and Rama. The temple to Hanuman was a simple rectilinear structure with a shrine on a raised central dais. Around the block, there was a large temple complex to Rama. I entered though a large courtyard where the monkeys are. Off to the left, a couple was having their ring exchange ceremony. Apparently, they were having their ceremony in public in order to garner cash blessings. Inside the temple, there was a nice shrine to Rama, with lots of paintings all around it, and people reading from religious text, sitting cross-legged on the ground. There was well with a long spillway from which local people came to get holy water and take it home to drink. In a back room, there was a shrine to Krishna. In a side room off from there, there was a bed, where apparently during some ceremonies, Krishna's statue gets to recline. There was also a small bakery in the front of the temple where people could get small sweets and bread.

Case study twelve: Agra, Uttar Pradesh, February 2, 2005

In Agra, we saw the Taj and went to Agra Fort, which were both nice, and then from there we went to see Akbar's Tomb, which we chose not to enter after seeing all the Indians walk in without any ticket and then having the guards attempt to corral us into buying a two dollar ticket. So instead, our auto rickshaw driver took us to his Sikh temple. This was a new temple, built to a large extent as a place where people could come for free food (they feed over a 1000 people a day) and people can stay there for free—people of any religion. Before entering the temple, we covered our heads and then took off our shoes and ritually washed our hands and feet. The practitioners then knelt and kissed the stairs going up into the temple, or just bent and touched the doorframe. Inside, two congregants were reading from their holy book, praying for all the people in the world. There were paintings and photographs of people, but no statues. In the back there was a stand with weaponry, "ammunition" because of when the Muslims and the

Sikhs were fighting. We went into the food kitchen where long double row of volunteers were sitting and making chapattis.

Case study thirteen: Shimla and McLeod Gang, March 2-7, 2005

Shimla, as an ex-British hill town, has a large Christian church, which belongs to the Church of Northern India, part of the Anglican Communion. The structure is yellow and rather bare bones. Only four of the windows have their stained glass in place. The pews are wooden, and there is a designated section where the children sit. Other than Christ Church, Shimla is a line of business and shoddy restaurants caught mid cascade down a hill. We walked to the polo grounds and down to where there appeared to be a temple, but it was locked up, although highly decorated on the outside.

McLeod Gang is where the Tibetan Government in Exile is located. We visited the Tibetan Library and Archives where the remaining 40 % of Tibetan literature, as undestroyed by the Chinese government, is stored. The Dalai Lama was teaching which I was there. He taught twice a day and held a question and answer session at night. I had to go and get a security pass, and then go through a security check, in order to enter the courtyard where the practitioners are gathered for instruction. The Dalai Lama sits at the front, surrounded by several rows of seated monks, and then behind them sit all the other people, a good deal of whom are westerners. One can listen to the teachings through an FM radio that plays simultaneous translations of the teachings. These sessions last for four hours each. During the sessions, the monks come around and offer bread and water to the crowd. It is very crowded, but very orderly. McLeod Gang is filled with prayer flags. They fly and sell everywhere. I went on a pony ride up into the mountains toward the snow line (it is actually quite warm there) and passed two small temples to Durga. In McLeod Gang, there are lots of westerners—by far the highest concentration that I

have seen in India. The roads are always being walked by red-robed monks and also by Hindu beggars. It is a problem here because all of the tourism goes to the Tibetan refugee population and the Indians are just getting poorer and poorer. There are, of course, monasteries along the hills.

Case study fourteen: Hill town tribes, Orissa, March 22-26, 2005

When traveling among the hill tribes in Orissa, I spoke with practitioners of a wide variety of indigenous, shamanic traditions. The Bondo tribes, who live in protected tribal territory that tourists cannot visit without a permit to pursue anthropological research, come down from their villages once a week on Tuesdays to engage in commerce. Bondo tribes' people are animistic. I also visited with the Dongrias tribes, who live in the Niyamgiri Hill range. The Dongrias worship the mother earth, Dharani Penu, in the form of a wooden vertical carving situated in an open, swept dirt courtyard. The Dongrias sacrifice animals to Dharani Penu; prior to colonization by the British, the Dongrias practiced infant sacrifice.

Case study thirteen: Golapur-on-sea, Orissa, March 27, 2005

The fishermen had pulled the net ashore, arm over arm, leaning backwards, arm over arm, up and backwards, and now the sliver fish were settled on the sand. Women and children and men in de-sleeved t-shirts bent toward the nets for sorting. Jellyfish were handed to a little girl; she dropped them into cups. A moray eel was flicked back into the ocean, alongside a narrow sea snake. It was hot by the water. No one spoke. Fish were collected into dishes. Two boys ran by with a volleyball, streaked in purple, with acrid dye dripping from their clothes. The fishermen did not look up. They were sorting.

Red color dripped from my forehead into my eyelashes. It stung a little. It was Holi. I was colored. An old man asked my father for his shirt. In his shirt was a ball of color, of red

powder for celebration. It was his ammunition. My father did not give the man his shirt. A grandmother reached into the powder and for a little girl. She rubbed red into the child's face. The pigtailed little girl winced slightly. She went and collected a jellyfish. The grandmother laughed. She grabbed for more powder and rubbed it into the little girl's face. The color became liquid and red dripped onto her nose. I wiped red from my eyes; they were stinging. Out in the ocean, Indian tourists and hotel employees with the day off washed the color from their skin. They sat in the water with the sea snakes. Five boys came up, and I was colored. They streaked green into my hair. They did not sprinkle it.

The hotel manager held out a silver tray with small plastic bags of color. He stated that this was an Indian tradition; I must try it. There were colors dripping into my eyes. The hotel staff was all wearing white. They were wearing crisp, uncolored white, but in the movies, they would have been colored. When I started the shower, my skin ran with racing tempera. I became a salt scour blue. The tile floor was blue. The blue color washed to the drain. The tile walls splashed with blue. The fishermen put their nets on the shore. The inner rims of my fingernails kept a red chemical streak. By two o'clock, it was illegal to color. The white Ambassador car pulled up unmarred. My tour guide explained he was allergic to the colors. To some colors. To the "bad" colors; the ones that stung. In some cities, the coloring becomes a splash of acid in a tourist's face. At Golapur-on-Sea, I was sheltered in the country.

CHAPTER 3

CONSTRUCTION OF A NATION

The idea of nationalism, identified with a politically unified state, is a rather new development for the Indian subcontinent. Such nationalism is a post-independence construction, developed as Indian political leaders and intellectual elites "engaged in a broad-based discussion on the nature and the functions of the state, the potentials and the limits of political authority, the basis of political legitimacy, and the definition of national identity."[35] These leaders faced an artistic challenge: the challenge of catalyzing and developing a *new* social construction. As observed by Rajni Kothari, India's historical culture has evidenced "an intermittent, unstable, and discontinuous political centre."[36] Thus, while the construction of nation would be layered onto the myriad of other previously existing sub-continental social constructions, the development of Indian political unity required innovation and creativity. How would the construct *nation* relate to pre-existing social constructions? Would such political unity represent a shared cultural ethos? Who would determine which, if any, ethos was "shared"?

The framers of the Indian Constitution, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, were primarily Western educated political elites, and as such, they drew inspiration from Western political constructions and drafted a republic with a representative democracy. Democracy in India was properly inaugurated on January 26, 1950, when the Indian Constitution came into effect.[37] However, the seeds of representative democracy had been evolving in the subcontinent over the previous half-century of British colonial rule. Early nationalists began demanding more representative councils in the late 1800s. The British responded to their agitations when "the principle of

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[35] Malik, 3.
[36] Rajni Kothari, "The Crisis of the Moderate State and the Decline of Democracy" in *Democracy in India*, ed. Niraja Gopal Jayal, 115-116 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

elected representation was first introduced at the level of municipal councils and rural bodies through Lord Ripon's resolution of 1882."[38] This was a placating move by the British, as the municipal councils and rural bodies had very little financial resources or power. Lord Ripon's resolution was probably motivated by a desire to levy further taxes—taxes that would be legitimized by the presence of Indian elected officials. Then, between 1862 and 1892, the Governor-General's Executive Council had forty-five Indians nominated to it. Although these nominees were primarily rulers of princely states or wealthy merchants, Indians were building a preliminary political presence. The formation of the Indian National Congress pressured the British toward constitutional reform. When the 1892 Indian Councils Act continued to deny Indians the right to vote on budgetary matters, the Indian National Congress "raised the slogan of eighteenth-century England, viz. 'No taxation without representation,' and also demanded self-government within the British Empire, on the Canadian and Australian model."[39]

While the Government of India Act of 1919 introduced direct elections for ministers at the provincial level, this act restricted voting rights to less than 3 percent of the Indian population—those who paid income tax or land revenue, rents, and local rates. Although the Government of India Act, 1935, liberalized the property qualification and established literacy as a requisite for the vote, whereby enfranchising some women, the vast majority of India's population remained politically disenfranchised. Jawaharlal Nehru campaigned vigorously to expand political participation throughout the subcontinent. As observed by Niraja Jayal in *Democracy in India*, "By 1946, even limited democracy in India, as it stood at the threshold of

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[37] Legal Informatics Division, "About Us," The Ministry of Law and Justice, http://lawmin.nic.in/About.htm (accessed on May 20, 2005).
[38] Niraja Gopal Jayal, "Introduction" in *Democracy in India*, ed. Niraja Gopal Jayal, 20 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[39] Jayal, 20.

independence, included 40 million voters, the second largest electorate in the non-communist world."[40] Nehru stated:

> The fear of the police and secret service vanished for a while at least and even the poorest peasant added to his feeling of self-respect and self-reliance. For the first time he felt that he counted and could not be ignored. Government was no longer an unknown and intangible monster, separated from him by innumerable layers of officials, whom he could not easily approach and much less influence, and who were bent on extracting as much out of him as possible. The seats of the mighty were now occupied by men he had often seen and heard and talked to; sometimes they had been in prison together and there was a feeling of comradeship between them.
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> At the headquarters of the provincial governments, in the very citadels of the old bureaucracy, many a symbolic scene was witnessed […] suddenly, hordes of people, from the city and the village, entered these sacred precincts and roamed about almost at will. They were interested in everything; they went into the Assembly Chamber, where the sessions used to be held; they even peeped into the Ministers' rooms. It was difficult to stop them for they no longer felt as outsiders; they had a sense of ownership in all this, although it was all very complicated for them and difficult to understand.[41]

As evidenced by this passage, from Nehru's perspective, the enfranchisement of the sub-continental populace into the political process liberated the colonial repressed. For Nehru, this liberation provided a voice to people who had long been denied self-representation, self-determination, and liberty.

The Indian Constitution was adopted with an almost unanimous support for universal adult suffrage. Simultaneously, the Indian Constitution opted for direct election to the legislatures. This electoral methodology was selected against Gandhi's vision of decentralized village-level democracy, with indirect elections. While the Indian nationalists agreed almost unanimously upon the implementation of universal adult suffrage, that unanimity did not extend to method of election for the cabinet government. Religious minorities like the Sikhs and Muslims, hoping to ensure minority representation within the Indian government, "supported the system of an indirectly elected ministry, with a directly elected head of state. Arguing that

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[40] Jayal, 21.
[41] Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, [1946] 1989), 369-370.

political parties in India represented religious and other communities rather than ideology, they proposed the introduction of a Swiss-style system, based on proportional representation, in which representatives of every party in the legislature would be part of the ministry."[42] However, the Nehruvian nationalists resisted the introduction of a Swiss-style system. As stated by Nehru, "We must have it clearly in our minds, and in the mind of the country that the alliance of religion and politics in the shape of communalism is a most dangerous alliance and it yields the most abnormal kind of illegitimate brood […] It is a very difficult thing to deal with, a psychological thing, which cannot be dealt with superficially."[43] Nehru felt that proportional representation would reify and further entrench caste divisions and communal loyalties.

In any heterogeneous society, a tension exists between those who identify with a majority opinion and those who identify in the minority. In culturally homogenous societies, individuals are likely to switch between being in the majority and being in the minority, depending upon the issue in discussion. However, in heterogeneous societies in which majority and minorities are determined by racial and/or religious identifications, the majority and minorities "have relatively fixed identities, and their proportions do not vary significantly."[44] It follows that those who are in the majority then will stay in the majority and those who identify in the minority similarly will remain there. In a government structured around the principle of majority rule, such a rigid social hegemony consistently privileges a set majority of people above the minorities. This assumes that people will side consistently with those in their racial and religious groups when voting, and that most or all issues up for discussion will be of a non-secular nature, which certainly is not the always the case. Nonetheless, "important questions such as the rights of

[42] Jayal, 23.
[43] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Independence and After: A Collection of Speeches, 1946–195*0 (New York: John Day Company, 1950), 246-247.
[44] Jayal, 33-34.

minorities to their own way of life, and guarantees against discrimination, are necessarily rendered vulnerable if they depend upon the pleasure of a majority which owes allegiance to a completely contrary and even hostile world-view."[45] Yet, Nehru felt that overt recognition of communal loyalty would hinder the development of national unity. As stated by Niraja Jayal, "The virtue of direct elections was seen to lie in the fact that they made possible the creation of a new national identity superseding the parochial and caste identities of people."[46] Under the leadership of Nehru, the nation of India was intentionally structured into a representative democracy formed through the liberal pluralist model. Each individual voter was to be afforded an equivalent vote, an equivalent ability to voice her opinion, an equivalent stake into the political process. However, while the Nehruvians opted for direct elections into the legislatures, they simultaneously supported the substantive value of democracy—each individual would be afforded an equal vote, but minority individuals would certainly receive support and protection. Expressed in the words of Nehru in the Constituent Assembly Debates, "The ultimate objective is […] building up an organic nation not necessarily a uniform nation."[47]

According to Charles Heimsath, "Having at its base an anti-traditional, liberal democratic, secular and politically oriented concept of the nation," Indian nationalism "could properly encompass all Indian cultures and religions."[48] The Indian nationalists desired to separate themselves from the cultural heritage of the Hindus.[49] This is to say, that by constructing an idea of nation for the Indian subcontinent that was secular, the Indian nationalists distanced themselves from the vigorous religious cultures of the subcontinent. "Exercises of

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[45] Jayal, 33-34.
[46] Jayal, 22.
[47] S. Rath, "Nehru and Constitution Making in India," in *Jawaharlal Nehru: The Nation Builder and Architect of India's Foreign Policy*, ed. S. Rath (Meerut: Anu Books, 1992), 27.
[48] Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reforms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 139.

social engineering [are] always innovative;" [50] the Indian nationalists invented a secular discourse for their nation. Yet, as clarified by Christophe Jaffrelot, "Secularism, here, is not a synonym for the French word 'laïcité', which implies a form of separation between the State and the Church ; it rather designates the equidistance of the State vis-à-vis all the religions and an equally positive attitude towards them all."[51] In order to "*properly* encompass all Indian cultures and religions,"[52] Indian nationalism sidestepped religious practice, attempting to construct a nation defined by boundaries and space, wherein people could practice and behave as they would. "Unity, defined territorially and geographically and not in a religious or cultural manner, was the most essential characteristic"[53] of nation. While all minorities would be given voice, the underlying basis for their minority status, i.e., their religio-cultural identifications, would not be addressed (or at least, would be addressed as seldom as possible). Still, the rights of religious minority groups were certainly protected. Consider, for example, how the constitution promises in Article 25 that "all persons are equally free to profess, practice and propagate religion" and in Article 30 that "all minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions."[54] The Nehruvian concept of nation would be spun like an encompassing dome over the land, sheltering and identifying the Indian sub-continental diversity. The Indian nationalist concept of nation would not reach into the lives of the people and become muddied by religious allegiances, would not knit groups together on the

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[49] Here, *Hindus* indicates the people of the subcontinent, who include but are not limited to those practitioners who ascribe to the religion referred to Hinduism.

[50] E. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

[51] Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims in the Communal Era," The International South Asia Forum, http://insaf.net/central/insaf-old/sp2.html (accessed June 1, 2005).

[52] Heimsath, 139. Emphasis added.

[53] Government of India, *Constituent Assembly Debates, November 13 Volume 1* (New Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1946).

[54] "The Indian Constitution." Quoted in Christophe Jaffrelot in "Hindus and Muslims in the Communal Era," The International South Asia Forum, http://insaf.net/central/insaf-old/sp2.html (accessed June 1, 2005).

basis of their previously constituted social constructions. The Indian nationalists understood that India, as a unified entity, as a nation, would be a new thing.

CHAPTER 4

THE RISE OF HINDU NATIONALISM

> In the history of the world, the Hindu awakening of the late twentieth century will go down as one of the most monumental events in the history of the world.[55]
>
> -"Hindutva: The Great Nationalist Ideology"

On the eve of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar warned:

> On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social […] life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social […] life, we shall, by reason of our social […] structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value… How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social […] life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.[56]

It seems that Dr. Ambedkar recognized that the equality of "one-man-one-vote" allowed by democratic government would be limited in scope and value unless the Indian nation worked toward social equality. In the subcontinent, groups *do* align with ethic and religious identities. These identities structure the hegemony of sub-continental society; groups do not have a horizontal social relationship. Rather than confronting the social inequalities in India, the Nehruvians were intentionally ignoring those inequalities. Yet, these pre-nationalist social structures continued to persevere in South Asian culture and in the twentieth century sprung into the discourse of nation.

Hindu nationalism arose in response to Indian nationalism,[57] proposing a "foundation of Indian self-image that would not humiliate the country's majority of Hindu inhabitants."[58]

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[55] "Hindutva: The Great Nationalist Ideology," BJP Philosophy: Hindutva (Cultural Nationalism), http://www.bjp.org/philo.htm (accessed on June 15, 2005).
[56] B.R. Ambedkar, "Speech on the Adoption of the Constitution" in *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents*, vol. IV, ed. B. Shiva Rao, 944 (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Adminstration, 1949).
[57] Subsequent to the leadership of Nehru, the Congress Party operated with an Indian nationalist platform.
[58] Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), 60.

Hindu nationalism holds that any idea of nation constructed as a geographical casing hung on a lattice of secularization is a Western imported ideal foreign and false for the Hindu cultural community. Rooted in the Hindu cultural revival of the nineteenth century, Hindu nationalism proposed: "the concept of Indian national identity was indistinguishable from Hindu identity."[59] This idea of "Hindu identity" is a two-fold construction. Hindu nationalists have argued that "Hindu" refers to the community that lives beyond the river Sindhu, or Indus.[60] In 1923, when Hindu nationalist ideology was first codified by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his work *Hindutva, who is Hindu?,* Savarkar defined Hindus as individuals living in Hindustan, the area between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. However, Savarkar was not arguing for a territorial idea of nation. Rather, Savarkar was arguing that the inhabitants of Hindustan were united together through a primordial "Hindu identity."[61]

The advertised face of "Hindu identity," a concept hereafter referred to as *Hindutva*, is a constructed idea in which all of the people of the subcontinent share a common cultural ethic. According to proponents of Hindu nationalism, this ethic has "molded and provided a common underlying bond between different Hindu sects and schools. It had also shaped and indigenized such alien religions as Islam and Christianity."[62] *Hindutva* is presented as an ethic of acceptance and preservation of diversity, a diversity that is *cultural* rather than religious. The propaganda of *Hindutva* suggests that "despite their different origins, belief systems, and social structures, all Indian communities […] share common "ethos" or "spirit" and were bound together by deep *civilizational* bonds."[63] These civilizational bonds, this pan-Indian value system, centers around

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[59] Malik, 3.
[60] Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[61] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[62] Bhikhu Parekh, "Nehru and the National Philosophy of India" *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 5-12, 1991, 42. Quoted in Yogendra K. Malik and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 10.
[63] Parekh, 10. Emphasis added.

the core "recognition of multiple diversities, both behavioral and normative, and [the] legitimacy of group identities and autonomies."[64] Indeed, the subcontinent has "over the centuries achieved a remarkable degree of cohesion and held together different sub-systems in a continental-size society."[65] As such, one might understand Hindu nationalism as a social movement solely against Westernization, a movement wherein the proposed goal of government differs very little from the Indian nationalist conception: to develop a unified identity for India. One might conclude that Hindu nationalism simply roots the nation constructed by Nehru into the cultural milieu of the subcontinent.

Yet, in a second breath, the Hindu nationalists redefine their usage of the terminology *Hindu.* Rather than solely utilizing the term *Hindu* to identify a group of people living in a specific place, the Hindu nationalists shift their definition to specify that this group of people ascribe to a set of traditions identifiable as Hinduism: "The brilliant and specious claim of Hindu nationalism is that all minorities in India are in fact based in a single, cultural tradition and are thus all *Hindu* at heart. When presenting this claim, Hindu nationalists simultaneously mean that all the people in of the Indian subcontinent are united in Hindu cultural tradition and that all the people of the Indian subcontinent can trace their *religious* practice back into a primordial Vedic Hinduism."[66] Critics of Indian nationalism espoused: "However secular the Indian state might pretend to be, it could never transcend and avoid being structured by the "spiritual" ethos of the civilization in which it was deeply embedded."[67]

According to Hindu nationalists, nation, for the subcontinent, should swell out of textual Brahmanism. Textual Brahmanism expressly links the rising of an Indian identity to the historio-

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[64] Malik, 2.
[65] Rajni Kothari, "Integration and Exclusion in Indian Politics," *Economic and Political Weekly* (1998), 2223.
[66] Raechel Keay Anglin, "Hindu Nationalism: A Discourse Built on Space" (submitted for academic credit: The University of Georgia, 2004), 7-8.

cultural period in which the *Vedas* and the *Upanishadas* were written. By linking textual Brahmanism to the *Vedas* and the *Upanishadas,* Hindu nationalists wield the "re-discovery, revival, [and] re-constitution of pre-existing elements" [68] in sub-continental culture toward a redefinition of the Indian nation. As stated by Ashis Nandy, his psychological research into the development of an Indian national identity suggests, "Brahmanism provided, for the first time, a basis for collective identity, which was more open to new ideas and less fettered by primordial allegiance and fragmentation of the myriad folk cultures of India."[69] Mr. Nandy's observations highlight several of the fallacious claims by Hindu nationalists about Brahmanism and/or *Hindutva.* Brahmanism is by definition fettered by primordial allegiance. Savarkar identified Hindus as those who "can claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race descended from the Vedic fathers."[70] Brahmanism is a "basis for collective identity" *constructed out of* a created sense of primordial allegiance—allegiance not only to certain cultural values but allegiance to specific texts. Brahmanism can claim to be "less fettered by […] fragmentation of the myriad folk cultures of India" only because Brahmanism claims that such folk cultures do not truly exist. Each folk culture is simply a vein of Brahmanical practice that has gone awry in some way and can be brought back into the fold of "traditional" Brahmanical practice. The most honest observation by Mr. Nandy is that whatever was being provided by Brahmanism was being provided "for the first time." Brahmanism, as the "overarching framework that served to provide ideological coherence for the idea of a primordial nationalism" was "primarily defined

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[67] Parekh, 10.
[68] A. Smith, "The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed?," *Millennium Journal of International Studie*s 20, no. 3 (1991): 356-357.
[69] Nandy, 57-58.
[70] V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is Hindu?* (Bombay: SS. Savarkar, 1923), 85.

through an invention of archaic Vedic Hinduism," and this invented tradition "mainly gained force from the nineteenth century."[71]

In contemporary politics, Hindu nationalism serves as the platform for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP was established in 1980 as the political mouthpiece of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS- Association of National Volunteers). Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, who was an admirer of Savarkar, founded the RSS in 1925. Golwalkar succeeded Hedgewar as chief of the RSS in 1940. Golwalkar's 1938 book, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* reconstituted Hindu national ideology for the RSS party, calling on religious minorities "to pledge allegiance to Hindu symbols of identity as the embodiment of the Indian nation."[72] Later, Golwalkar refers to those "who do not subscribe to the social laws dictated by the Hindu religion and culture"[73] as *mlecchas*, or foreign barbarians. The BJP was born to represent such Hindu nationalist ideology.

The political rhetoric of the BJP demonstrates how Hindu nationalism operates through a system of redefinition and double-speak. The BJP's use of "secularization" is particularly telling. First, the BJP has criticized the Congress party as selectively secular. The primary basis for this accusation rests in the Congress Party's protection of religious minorities— i.e., when the Congress Party protects a minority group, the Congress Party has shown favoritism toward that religious sect and has thus behaved in a non-secular manner.[74] According to the BJP, "social and political institutions will always have to keep in mind that all religious experiences are to be equally respected. This is the positive aspect of secularism and is synonymous with the Indian

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[71] Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 10.
[72] Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[73] M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Jagarana Prakashan, 1966), 62.
[74] Runa Das, "Encountering (Cultural) Nationalism, Islam and Gender in the Body Politic of India," *Social Identities* 10, no. 3 (2004): 16. Academic Search Premier, via Galileo, http://www.galileo.usg.edu

tradition of *sarvadharma samabhava* [equal respect for all religions]. It is in this essence that the BJP has accepted positive secularism."[75] The meaning of "positive secularism" depends

> on a large part to the meaning given to equality. If equality is understood in a formal sense, i.e., treating likes alike, then secularism will insist on treating India's various religious communities alike. By contrast, if equality is understood in a more substantive sense, i.e., addressing disadvantage, then secularism will allow for an accommodation of difference between religious groups and the protection of rights of religious minorities. Indian secularism under the Congress has been to a large extent based on a more substantive approach to secularism, which has allowed for the protection of religious minorities. But under the BJP's formal approach to equality, the majority becomes the norm against which all others are to be judged.[76]

Here, the principle behind secularization, the ability for each religious group to practice of its own accord separate from governmental control and regulation, fades away. The BJP seeks a democracy in which only the majority counts. Such secularization requires the assimilation of minorities into a Hindu *rastra* (nation). [77] R. Kapur states, "Any protection of the rights of religious minorities is cast as appeasement and a violation of the free spirit of secularism. Religious minorities are to be treated the same as the majority."[78] Although the BJP claim they wish to "defend the unity and integrity of India," and that they believe "India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari is one country and all Indians, irrespective of language, caste, or creed are marks of the Indian culture, which is a unique multihued synthesis of the cultural contributions made over centuries by different peoples and religions,"[79] the BJP's version of secularization expressly

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[75] Bharatiya Janata Party, *Bharatiya Janata Party Pamphlet: No. 6*1 (New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party Central Office), 14. Quoted in Runa Das, "Encountering (Cultural) Nationalism, Islam and Gender in the Body Politic of India," *Social Identities* 10, no. 3 (2004): 383. Academic Search Premier, via Galileo, http://www.galileo.usg.edu. Emphasis in original.

[76] Das, 16.

[77] R. Kapur, "Two Faces of Secularism and Women's Rights in India" in *Religious Fundamentalisms and Human Rights of Wome*n, ed. C.W. Howland (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 144. Quoted in Runa Das, "Encountering (Cultural) Nationalism, Islam and Gender in the Body Politic of India," *Social Identities* 10, no. 3 (2004): 384. Academic Search Premier, via Galileo, http://www.galileo.usg.edu

[78] Kapur, 144.

[79] Bharatiya Janata Party. *Bharatiya Janata Party Pamphlet: No. 4*4 (New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party

does not protect that "multihued synthesis." According to Hindu nationalists, there can be no difference between secularization and *Hindutva* in Indian politics, as secularization requires majority rule, and the majority in India is qualifiedly Hindu. When conjoined with *Hindutva*, secularization is "twisted almost beyond recognition."[80]

The BJP even incorporates its definition of secularization into the Hindu national concept of *Hindutva*. The *Bharatiya Janata Party Pamphlet: No.* 1 states, "Secularism does not merely imply that there should be no tolerance among different religious groups. More positively, it also means distillation of common moral values, whether derived from different religions or from other historical […] experiences, […] which always remained integral to the Indian civilization and culture."[81] By promoting the "distillation of common moral values," the BJP promotes cultural majoritarianism. As demonstrated by the BJP's *Hindutva* version of 'secularization,' "a modernist and progressive ideology such as secular, multi- ethnic, and multi-religious pluralism may itself become the vehicle for visiting new forms of domination on minorities and peripheries within one's own country. [82] *Hindutva* ideology constructs a particularly brilliant form of domination over minority groups in India. The BJP simultaneously argues that secularization allows for absolute dominance of the Hindu majority and that only the Hindu majority exists. As stated in the *BJP Today*, "There is no difference between Hindutva and *bharateeyata* [Indianness], since both are expressions of the same *chintan* [thought]. Both affirm that India belongs to all, and all belongs to India […] For centuries, both have synonymously pointed to

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Central Office), 1-2. Quoted in Runa Das, "Encountering (Cultural) Nationalism, Islam and Gender in the Body Politic of India," *Social Identities* 10, no. 3 (2004): 381. Academic Search Premier, via Galileo, http://www.galileo.usg.edu

[80] Kapur, 144.

[81] Bharatiya Janata Party, *Bharatiya Janata Party Pamphlet: No.* 1 (New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party Central Office), 36. Quoted in Runa Das, "Encountering (Cultural) Nationalism, Islam and Gender in the Body Politic of India," *Social Identities* 10, no. 3 (2004): 383. Academic Search Premier, via Galileo, http://www.galileo.usg.edu

[82] S. Krishna. "Methodical Worlds: Partition, Secularism, and Communalism

our national identity."[83] The BJP need not talk about "appeasement of minorities or their elimination, or their subjugation" since all religious minorities owe allegiance to "their national heritage--- having its roots in Hindutva." [84]

Enfranchising meta-narrative selection

This paper will now consider the extent to which the people of India have bought into the BJP's construction of *Hindutva*, into a historicized national culture rooted in textual Brahmanism. In order to do so, this paper will consider the trends of the BJP in contemporary electoral campaigns through the Eleventh General Election in 1996. Since meta-narratives of nation are charged and legitimized by election in democracies, by considering how, when, and whether the BJP has been elected, this paper will consider how, when, and whether Hindu nationalism has aligned with or co-opted local maps of identity in India.

The Congress party led Indian national politics from the establishment of an Indian nation through the Eleventh General Election [Eleventh Lok Sabha] in 1996. During this period, the Congress party pursued a secular agenda, protecting religious minorities and allowing them relative autonomy.[85] The mighty Congress party officiated over a government structured to a large extent by "centralized power-broking."[86] However, beginning in the mid-1980s, Indian political culture began to evidence a broader diversification of political actors and political stances within the states. Indian politics entered into a period of regionalization, wherein

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in India," *Alternative*s 27 (2002): 198.

[83] Bharatiya Janata Party. "Let Us Celebrate and Strengthen Our Indianness," *BJP Toda*y 12, no.2 (January 16–31, 2003). Available at http://www.bjp.org/philo.htm.

[84] Das, 16.

[85] Consider, as evidence of the limited autonomy of religious groups, the entitlement of religious minorities to their personal law. "The religious minorities, the Muslims (12.12% of the population in the 1991 census) and the Christians (2%) were also entitled to use their personal law - based on the Shariat in the case of the former - for regulating their community life, whereas the Hindu majority (82%) was submitted to the Hindu Code Bill which, in the 1950s reformed the traditional practices regarding divorce, inheritance and adoption in the light of the western law, something the most militant Hindus still regard today as an unbalanced treatment." Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"

"distinct regional political dynamics […] circumscribed the potential space and authority of dominant political parties at the national level."[87] Such regionalization required that the Congress party move toward coalitional politics. On an ideological level, the Congress party, as a party of following a tradition of Indian nationalism, had long stood against the entrenchment of regional identities. Still, as a secular party bent on protecting minorities, the ideology of the Congress party might allow coalitional politics as long as each coalition supported the construction of a unified, industrializing and modernizing nation. Still, faced with widespread accusations of corruption, division over the social and political mobilization of the lower-caste,[88] alongside the development of regionalization, the Congress party underwent a "segmentation and protracted collapse."[89] Enter the BJP.

As previously discussed, from its earliest founding through the RSS in 1980, the BJP pursued a Hindu nationalist rhetoric. While compared with the RSS, the BJP has sought a greater balance between ethno-nationalist themes and pragmatic policies, the BJP's rhetoric is still extremist in nature. The BJP seeks the construction—or in their eyes, the rehabilitation—of a primordial, singular nation. The BJP works through universalism, promoting an idea of national religious unity. Given the Hindu nationalist position that Hindu nationalism is destined to encompass all of India, the RSS had worked from a very early stage to establish "a network of *shakhas* (local branches), which organized daily physical training and Hindu nationalist propaganda sessions in urban neighborhoods and villages. The RSS's ultimate ambition was to

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[86] Thomas Blom Hansen, "Introduction," in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*," ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.
[87] Hansen, "Introduction," 7.
[88] The Congress party underwent further division and experienced additional derision from Hindu nationalists when the central government decided to implement the Mandal Commission Reforms, which were "[…] an affirmative action program that created reservations at universities and in government jobs for the backward castes and tribes of India." South Asia Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "The Role of Hindutva in Indian Politics," *The South Asian Monitor*. no. 55 (February 1, 2003), http://www.csis.org/saprog/sam55.pdf (accessed on May 21, 2005).

reach all the cities and villages of India in this way."[90] The establishment of *shakhas* fueled the growth of the RSS from 10,000 members in 1932 to 600,000 members in 1951 to an estimated 2 million members in 1999.[91] Still, in a country of 1,080,264,388 people,[92] 2 million members in a political party certainly did not indicate a national consensus.

Throughout the 1980s and into the mid-1990s, the BJP sought votes through mass demonstrations organized by the Sangh Parivar, "the family of the Sangh," i.e., the RSS. These demonstrations ranged from the *Ram Shila Pujans* to the *Janadesh Yatra.*[93] Beginning in 1984, "the [Vishvah Hindu Parishad] VHP started a movement claiming the retrocession of the Ramjanmabhoomi (birthplace of Ram) to the Hindus."[94] The *Ram Shila Pujans*, which were organized by the Vishvah Hindu Parishad (VHP)[95] in 1986, sought to stir up communal pro-Ram temple sentiments. Bricks, which were to be used in the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, were transported to thousands of towns and villages to have them consecrated by *sadhus*. The BJP officially joined the VHP's Ayodhya movement when the *Ram Shila Pujans* demonstrated the growing popularity of the Ayodhya issue among the Hindus of North India. Prior to the *Ram Shila Pujans*, the BJP had ascertained very little political success. However, once the BJP began centering its rhetoric upon the reclamation of Ayodhya, "it registered a significant electoral advance (eighty-eight seats as opposed to only two in 1984), which was further strengthened in 1991 (119 seats, of which six were won by "modern gurus").[96]

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[89] Hansen, "Introduction," 7.
[90] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[91] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[92] CIA, "India," *The World Factbook.* http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/in.html (accessed June 3, 2005). Estimated population for July 2005.
[93] Hansen, "Introduction," 6.
[94] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[95] The VHP, or World Hindu Council, is a subsidiary group of the Sangh Parivar, established to bring together different Hindu sect leaders and to establish a centralized structure for Hinduism.
[96] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"

The RSS further promoted grassroots campaigning through the funding of yatras. Yatras are essentially traveling political campaigns. The BJP's first yatra was LK Advani's *Ram Rath Yatra* from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990.[97] Following the *Ram Rath Yatra*, much of the BJP's political campaigning focused upon the Ayodhya issue. Still, not all yatras were specifically Ayodhya oriented. In the *Janadesh Yatra*, which occurred in 1993, the BJP sought to stir up sentiment against the Constitution 80th Amendment Bill and the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill. BJP politicians felt these pieces of legislation were after "the dual purpose of banning religion from public life as well as denying political space to the BJP."[98] It is particularly telling of BJP double-speak rhetoric that the BJP denounced these bills as "minority appeasement" and yet went on to quote Atal Behari Vajpayee saying, "My party and I not only recognize but celebrate the plural, multi-religious, multi-regional, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic character of India."[99] During this yatra, "Advani set off from Mysore, Murli Manohar Joshi from Porbandar, Kalyan Singh from Calcutta, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat from Jammu."[100] The yatra commenced on September 11 and concluded on September 25 in Bhopal.[101] During this period, BJP party leaders traveled through 14 states and 2 territories, taking "the debate on the 'religion Bills' from the antiseptic drawing rooms of Delhi to the dusty villages of Bharat."[102] Reaching out through grassroots politics, the BJP hoped to knit its rhetoric into the lives of the Indian people.

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[97] Deccan Herald, "Advani juggernaut set to roll," March 9, 2004.
[98] BJP, "Somnath to Mumbai - A tale of five yatras, *BJP Today* (May 16-31, 1997). Quoted in The Hindu Universe, *HinduNet.Inc.*, http://www.hvk.org/articles/0597/0265.html (accessed May 12, 2005).
[99] BJP, "Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra: "Yatra Fever"." *The Observer* (June 2, 1997), http://www.bjp.org/leader/sjry27.html (accessed on May 25, 2005).
[100] BJP, "Swarna"
[101] BJP, "Swarna"
[102] BJP, "Somnath to Mumbai."

The BJP's political strong hold has always been the within the high castes of northern India. Hindu nationalism first spread in the north and "is still largely confined to this area."[103] As Hindu nationalism espouses the "sanskritization" of the subcontinent, promoting the hierarchal caste culture characteristic of Indian society, Hindu nationalism has often been considered a political stance for the upper-class elite. It makes sense that a party promoting textual Brahmanism would be identified as a brahmanical party. Northern India is populated by a comparatively high proportion of high-caste Hindus, many of whom gravitate toward "sanskritization" because "with its emphasis on social organic unity, it seems well-equipped to protect them from the rising power of the low castes."[104] Additionally, Hindu nationalism sits well with in the north because "sanskritization" promotes Hindi as the national language of India. Savarkar first argued for the linguistic unity of the subcontinent in *Hindutva: Who is Hindu?*, suggesting that Sanskrit is "the referent for all sub-continental languages."[105] Thereafter, Hindu nationalist ideology has called for Hindi, which is the closest vernacular language to Sanskrit, to serve as the mother tongue for the nation. Since Hindi is the predominant language in the northern "Hindi-belt,"— i.e. the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand, as well as the national capital territory of Delhi—it follows that Hindu nationalism would find a home there.[106]

That being said, when Hindu nationalism is espoused by Hindi-speaking, high-caste Hindu elites, Hindu nationalism aligns with their local map. Hindu nationalism constructs a world in which high-caste Hindu elites maintain their cultural prestige and socio-economic

[103] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[104] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[105] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[106] "Hindi belt," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi_belt (accessed May 29, 2005).

advantage. Thus, by adhering to and promoting the "sanskritization" of India, brahmanical North Indians are adhering to a meta-narrative that constructs nation as they *choose* to see it; their "map" and "territory" are in harmony. However, if a practitioner is not a Hindi-speaking, high-caste Hindu elite, Hindu nationalism is much less likely to align with that practitioners' local map. Even within the Hindi belt, groups of practitioners ascribe to worldviews that are markedly divergent from the worldview professed by Hindu nationalists. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, Muslims constitute about 15% of the population.[107] Since Muslims are the constructed Other for Hindu nationalism, it might be odd for an Indian Muslim to adopt a Hindu nationalist worldview. In Uttar Pradesh, Hindi served as the sole official state language from Independence until 1989, when the Congress state government declared Urdu as the second official language and allowed Muslims to educate their children in Urdu rather than Hindi. By legislating the use of Urdu by the Muslims, the Congress party was clearly courting the Muslim vote.[108] The desire of the Congress party for the Muslim's vote indicates the notable presence of an alternative worldview within the Hindi-belt. Of similar importance is the nomenclature ascribed to the northern part of India—the Hindi-*belt*. This very title indicates that there are sections of India that are non-Hindi, as is certainly the case. While Hindi is the national language, it is the primary tongue of only 30% of the people. There are 14 other official languages: Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Sanskrit.[109] The variety of tongues spoken in India emphasizes the multi-

[107] "Uttar Pradesh," Indian Travel Destinations, http://www.indiantraveldestinations.com/states-of-india/uttar-pradesh.html (accessed June 5, 2005).
[108] Jaffrelot, "Hindus and Muslims"
[109] CIA, "India."

culturalism that defines the sub-continent, emphasizes the diffusion of local maps and suggests a diffusion of worldviews across the sub-continental space.[110]

When the BJP took advantage the Congress party's decline to win the 1996 elections, it did so by normalizing its ideological rhetoric. While initially "the spectacular growth of the BJP in the political field since 1989 could be accounted for as transient protests against the corruption and intransigence of the established parties […] as well as an emotional wave energized by the Sangh Parivar's systematic reactivation of anti-Muslim stereotypes and memories of communal clashes and violence,"[111] this growth by the BJP was never enough to oust the Congress party from control. Although the RSS and the BJP had worked through grassroots promotion of Hindu nationalism, Hindu nationalism had not co-opted the majority of local maps in the nation. Militant Hinduism and the extremist rhetoric of the BJP did not align with the local maps of the majority of people in Indian, and therefore the BJP did not previously receive their vote. In contrast to the yatras of the 1980s and early 1990s, prior to the 1996 elections, the BJP developed a more centrist and moderate political stance. Early in the 1996 campaign, Advani launched his March *Suraj Yatra*. However, this *Suraj Yatra* did not elicit much enthusiasm and therefore was quickly discontinued. In fact, "while entering Uttar Pradesh from Bihar, Advani could attract only a few hundred people for the meeting he held in Gorakhpur. Similarly meager crowd attended the meeting he organized at Ayodhya a few days later."[112] Yet, the BJP was successful in the 1996 election campaign. When the BJP cancelled the *Suraj Yatra*, it convinced the RSS to canvas in favor of party candidates. Traditionally, the BJP had spoken out against the Congress party's candidate-centered politics, preferring to promote its ideological platform move

[110] See *Chapter two-- Local spaces in close proximity* within this paper for further argument toward the diversity of local maps in India.
[111] Hansen, 10.
[112] Hansen, 6.

than any individual candidate. However, as Vijay Sivaprakasam said, "In India, we elect a person, not a party."[113] Even though the BJP's 1996 election manifesto focuses on *Hindutva* and Ayodhya, the party selected Vajpayee as the party's main campaigner and promoted him as a moderate leader.[114] This infused the BJP's campaign with vibe of temperance. Still, just convincing the RSS to "project its most acceptable and liberal face"[115] would not have allowed the BJP to ascertain enough seats to replace the Congress' parliamentary majority.

Whereas the Congress party struggled under the increasing regionalization of Indian politics, in 1996 the BJP maneuvered into a politics of accommodation and alliance. In the 1980s, the armed insurgencies in Punjab, Assam, and Kashmir were perceived as threats to the unity of the nation of India, and as such, a great deal of political emphasis and debate focused upon regionalization. While the nation held, the "regionalization of Indian politics seems to be a long-term tendency inextricably linked to the differential regional histories and local dynamics of Congress in various states, and reinforced by the emergence of distinct vernacular public spheres since the linguistic reorganization of the states in the 1950s."[116] Although the rhetoric of Hindu nationalism requires that the BJP approach India as a unified entity, in order to win the 1996 elections, the BJP compromised its ideology in negotiation with regionalization. The BJP united with the Shiv Sena, a state-based party in Maharashtra, with whom the BJP had established a tradition of seat adjustment. Additionally, the BJP "entered into new alliances with parties which had no ideological affinities with Hindu nationalism, the Samta Party in Bihar and the Haryana Vikas Party of Bansi Lal in Haryana."[117]

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[113] Sivaprakasam.
[114] Hansen, "Introduction, "6.
[115] Hansen, "Introduction," 6.
[116] Hansen, "Introduction," 8.
[117] Hansen, "Introduction," 6.

The BJP wielded its political coalitions in order to address the specific concerns of specific states and also to seek the votes of lower-caste Hindus. Since the BJP was seen as a party for Brahmins, and in the tradition of "sanskritization" was hindered from promoting low-caste candidates, the BJP utilized the Shiv Sena to recruit support among the intermediate and low castes. The 1990s had seen a vast political awaking of low-caste Hindus, and in 1996 the BJP needed to respond to their mobilization. While the BJP continued to seek a "social system based on compassion, cooperation, justice, freedom, equality and tolerance,"[118] in which the caste hierarchy would remain intact, the BJP conceded that the educational and economic quotas established by the Congress party for the Scheduled Castes and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) could not be questioned and certainly not removed.

Since the BJP was founded in Maharastra "and most of the senior leaders in the movement were for decades recruited from among the Maharastrian Brahmins, especially Chitpavan Brahmins,"[119] the BJP was certainly vexed by the mobilization of the OBCs in their Maharstraian birthplace. The BJP could not make direct concession to the lower-castes here without rendering severely vulnerable its upper class vote bank. Still, noting the importance of votes from the OBCs in Maharashtra, the BJP became the "political junior-partner to a movement, the Shiv Sena, whose public style and political practices have more affinities with the "Congress-culture" than with the ideals of austerity, discipline and ideological devotion nurtured by the RSS."[120] Although Shiv Sena-BJP performance in the 1996 General Elections was far from a landslide victory, with a joint percentage of votes at 38.5 per cent and the Congress party claiming 34.9 per cent of the vote, the Shiv Sena-BJP coalition was able to claim thirty-three out

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[118] Bharatiya Janata Party, *For a Strong and Prosperous India—Election Manifesto 1996* (New Delhi, 1996), 5.
[119] Thomas Blom Hansen, "BJP and the Politics of Hindutva in Maharastra" in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), Hansen, "BJP and the Politics of Hindutva in Maharastra," 122.

of forty-four parliamentary seats, with the Congress party taking only fifteen seats. The results of the 1996 General Election indicated both the weakened state of the Congress party and that "the BJP, at the price of concessions to the Shiv Sena, had consolidated its standing in the state considerably and had broken out of its urban higher-caste core-constituencies."[121] Through its alliance the Shiv Sena, the BJP received mass support from the urban slums and from sections of the peasantry. The Shiv Sena works for the BJP by "providing a regional version of [its] ideology,"[122] (re)presenting Hindu nationalism so that it has a deep resonance with the local history of the state.

The BJP utilized its alliance with the Samta Party and the Haryana Vikas Party toward similar ends. Whereas in 1991 the BJP had polled only 16 percent of the votes in Bihar, winning a mere five seats, in 1996 the party won eighteen seats. Standing alone, the BJP represented a party of the upper class—the upper class who intentionally and socio-structurally oppressed the OBCs. However, when united with the Samta Party, the BJP was able to make inroads among the lower classes. Likewise, in Haryana, "the BJP, whose influence has traditionally been confined to the urban dwellers, and especially the Punjabi refugees, did not make an alliance with the OBCs but with a party rooted in the countryside."[123] By aligning with the Haryana Vikas Party, the BJP was able to win four seats in a state where it had not won a single seat in the previous election. To reiterate, "Bihar and Haryana were among the states where the party registered its best results in terms of valid votes respective +5 per cent and +11 per cent: these

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[120] Hansen, "BJP and the Politics," 121.
[121] Hansen, "BJP and the Politics," 159.
[122] Hansen, "Introduction," 18.
[123] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Sangh Parivar" in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India,* ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 69.

were the states where it had made new alliances with regional parties commanding a complementary base among intermediate and low castes."[124]

The coalition of the Akalis and the BJP in Punjab presents what is possibly the most striking and surprising of the BJP's coalitions. The Akali Dal (Badal) [AD(B)] is the premier political party representing the Sikhs in India. When the BJP emerged as the largest single political party in the eleventh Lok Sabha elections, the Akali Dal (Badal) was the only regional party to make a public declaration in support of the BJP's claim to its first ever national government. One must wonder whether there is not "something fundamentally irreconcilable in Sikh agitation [which the AD(B) had supported] for the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR) with its call for political autonomy and the BJP's national agenda for Hindutva."[125] In order to understand this political alliance, one must consider the ways in which each party constructs the other. For Hindu nationalists, Sikhism is simply a militant vein of Hinduism. A BJP resolution in 1984 declared:

> The Sikh Panth was born to protect Hinduism and the venerable Gurus sacrificed themselves and their dear children to protect Hindu honour. The Sikh contribution to the strength and prosperity of India is magnificent, and the nation is truly grateful.[126]

Since Hindu nationalism does not recognize a religious separation between Sikhism and Hinduism, the BJP need not shift from their ideological platform in order to include Sikhs within their fold. From a Hindu nationalist stand point, Sikhs need no conversion. Since Hindu nationalism incorporates Sikhism as a vein of Hinduism, Hindu nationalist rhetoric stands fiercely against Sikh efforts to establish a unique Sikh identity. The BJP "is vehemently opposed

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[124] Jaffrelot, "The Sangh Parivar", 69

[125] Gurharpal Singh. "The Akalis and the BJP in Punjab: From Ayodhya to the 1997 Legislative Assembly Election" in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 228.

[126] Quoted in Gurharpal Singh. "The Akalis and the BJP in Punjab: From Ayodhya to the 1997 Legislative Assembly Election" in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, 230. Quoted in Jaffrelot, C., *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925-90s* (London: Hurst and Company, 1996), 345.

to the [Sikh] claims of political separatism. Throughout the 1980s the BJP followed a hard line against Sikh militants waging an armed struggle for Khalistan."[127] Seeing as Hindu nationalist ideology seeks a religiously unified nation, wherein each vein of Hinduism recognizes and accepts its place within the social hierarchy of the nation, the BJP must stop any veins of Hinduism from escaping. So, why would the AD(B) join with the BJP, when the AD(B) desire an independent identity for the Sikhs?

While the AD(B) represents the Sikh desire for an independent identity, it is a pragmatic party. As observed by Gurharpal Singh, "Historically, the Akalis have had a long tradition of making alliances with ideologically opposed parties: Congress, Communists, Jana Sangh and the Unionists."[128] The AD(B) recognizes that it represents a political minority, and as such, works in concert with larger, more established parties, out of political necessity. The AD(B) has received its most stern criticism from Sikh radicals and militants who feel the AD(B) is compromising their ethnic identity by entering into alliances with ideological others. However, particularly in its cooperation with the BJP, the AD(B) hopes to shelter the Sikhs so that they may do as they choose under the umbrella of the nation. The AD(B) seems to accept that there is very little possibility of an independent Sikh homeland. The Punjabi population has developed a strong sense of anti-Congress sentiment because the Congress party squelched Sikh separatism; this anti-Congress sentiment fueled the AD(B)'s coalition with the BJP. It seems the AD(B) hopes that the BJP, once empowered, will allow Sikhs to continue their unique practices and way of life unhindered in Punjab. If, as was suggested in *The Sunday Tribune*, there truly is a "growing recognition within the BJP leadership that the objective of coming to power in New Delhi cannot be achieved until the party is ready to constructively integrate regional sentiments and

[127] Singh, "The Akalis," 230.
[128] Singh, "The Akalis," 230.

aspirations,"[129] then, as noted by Singh, "regional sentiments will also determine the degree of accommodation as well as the BJP's agenda."[130] This is to say that, by supporting the BJP, the Punjabi Sikhs are not adopting a Hindu nationalist worldview. Rather, the AD(B) has simply recognized that the BJP's worldview should allow Punjabi Sikhs to operate with their local maps under the auspices of a Hindu nationalist regime. Through alliance with the BJP, the AD(B) seeks "to establish regional political ascendancy alongside the restoration of Sikh pride";[131] i.e., the AD(B) believes that support of "the BJP offers the best hope for maintaining a distinct Sikh identity and achieving maximum political autonomy within the Indian Union."[132] This pragmatism in cooperation on the part of both the AD(B) and the BJP resulted "landslide victory for the AD(B)-BJP alliance."[133]

Since the BJP had not established a strong coalitional base in the southern states of India (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu), its prospects in these states "[remained] wretched."[134] As stated by James Chiriyankandath, " much of southern and eastern India, as well as religious minorities and the majority of lower-caste Hindus throughout the country, remain either hostile or indifferent to the appeal of *Hindutva.*"[135] Of these southern states, the BJP had the greatest success in Karnataka, where it received 24.85% of the vote, winning six seats out of twenty-seven. Of the six seats won by the BJP, two were won from the coastal belt "where the composition of society differs markedly from mainstream Karnataka; one seat came from

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[129] *The Sunday Tribune*, 23 February 1997. Quoted in Gurharpal Singh, "The Akalis and the BJP in Punjab: From Ayodhya to the 1997 Legislative Assembly Election" in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[130] Singh, "The Akalis," 242.
[131] Singh, "The Akalis," 242.
[132] Singh, "The Akalis," 242.
[133] Singh. "The Akalis," 228.
[134] James Manor. "Southern Discomfort: The BJP in Karnataka" in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 163.

Bangalore South; and the other three seats came from "mainstream *maidan* (plains) constituencies: Bidar, Davangere and Dharwar North," areas where "their dissatisfaction with Congress-I and especially with the Janata Dal […] helped the BJP." [136] While these election results might indicate inroads of Hindu nationalism into the south, they certainly do not indicate a breakthrough into southern politics. James Manor suggests, "[the BJP's] prospects of scoring the kind of breakthrough that it clearly needs in the south on any future occasion are still open to serious doubt. A strong revival of the Congress Party in Karnataka during the year following the election of mid-1996 raises further questions about the BJP's future prospects there."[138] Working from Manor's research, one can conclude that the meta-narrative of Hindu nationalism had not rooted into or enveloped mainstream Karnataka. Rather, votes cast for the BJP were primarily votes cast against the incumbent party.

Table 1: Party-wise results of the 1996 Election in Karnataka[137]

Party	Seats	% of Vote
Janata Dal	15	34.91
BJP	6	24.85
Congress-I	5	30.29
Karnataka Congress	1	3.11

Kerala's reaction to the rise of Hindu nationalism is of particular interest to this paper.[139] In densely populated Kerala, a state with more than 30 million people, more than two-fifths of the population is non-Hindu. The population of Kerala includes strong presences of Scheduled Caste and Tribe groups, Muslims, and Christians. Additionally, Kerala "features a powerful

[135] James Chiriyankandath. "Bounded Nationalism: Kerala and the Social and Regional Limits of Hindutva" in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 202.
[136] Manor, 200.
[137] Table excerpted from Manor, 199.
[138] Manor, 201.

sense of regional (Malayali) identity, a Hindu population for whom caste identities have been politically significant for nearly a century."[140] Since the Malayali have been working toward caste equality for so long, the entrenchment of the caste system promised by "sanskritization" is certainly unlikely to be popular among Malayali practitioners. The worldviews of practitioners in Kerala clearly differ from the worldview set out by Hindu nationalism. If the BJP had been voted into power in Kerala, then one would have to conclude that, sometimes, practitioners adopt meta-narratives of nation that differ sharply from the meta-narratives of their personal maps. In Kerala, the BJP has worked to project itself without caste affiliation. The BJP has also attempted to develop "regionally sensitive channels of expression,"[141] to minimal avail. Although the RSS has worked in Kerala for more than half a century, Kerala has "never elected a parliamentary or state assembly representative belonging to the BJP or its predecessor, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS)."[142] Therefore, one can conclude that the practitioners in Kerala are sticking with their local meta-narratives of choice.

While the BJP arose from the 1996 elections as the party with the largest majority of seats, the important lesson of the 1996 elections was *not* that Hindutva rhetoric had swept the nation of India. The BJP "has an established electoral presence in only a handful of states" but it has been "able to build coalitions with regional parties."[143] As discussed by Taimoor Ashraf of the Center for Strategic and International Studies Islamic Studies Program in Washington, DC:

> Following the results of the 1996 elections, the BJP realized the importance of tactical compromise and seeking minority votes, and this has led to its encouraging Muslims and other minorities to join the BJP, and to its milder attitude and tone towards the

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[139] While I had intended to include a case study of ritual space in Kerala, I was unable to visit Kerala in January 2005, out of respect for those affected by the tsunami.
[140] Chiriyankandath, 203.
[141] Chiriyankandath, 226.
[142] Chiriyankandath, 203.
[143] Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The Role of Hindutva in Indian Politics" *The South Asian Monitor*. no. 55 (2003).

> construction of Ram Temple, the uniform civil code, and the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.[144]

In order for the BJP to achieve political success, it chose to mediate its rhetoric through regional voices, to pay attention to regional concerns, and to accept a more centrist position. Thus, the primary lesson learned from this election was that, in order to be successful in contemporary Indian politics, national parties must work through coalitions with regional parties.

[144] Taimoor Ashraf, CSIS Islamic Studies Program, "The BJP in India: Religious Fundamentalists or Practical Politicians?" vol. 3, no. 1 (summer 1999).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The success of coalitional politics for the BJP indicates that Indian practitioners most easily digest ideas of nation when these ideas are mediated through regional, *local* interpretation. Where Hindu nationalism has succeeded, Hindu nationalist ideas have either aligned with the local maps of constituents, or the rhetoric of Hindu nationalism has been diluted and subsumed beneath regional politics. Although the coalition between the Sikhs of Punjab and the BJP might be misinterpreted to suggest that the BJP has succeeded in subsuming this religious minority group into its fold of "sanskritization," in truth, the Sikhs aligned with the BJP not only because their resentment against the Congress' heavy-handed politics was so strong, but also because the umbrella of Hindu nationalism may allow Sikh practitioners relative autonomy. Since many Sikhs protested against the coalition, suggesting that the AD(B) was compromising their ethno-religious identity, it is clear that the ethic of Hindu nationalism has not rooted into Punjabi society. Unless the BJP develops further coalitions in the south, it is unlikely that the BJP will gain any political prominence outside of northern India. Even in the improbable event that the BJP develops further coalitions in the south, if such coalitions follow in the footsteps of the BJP's original alliance with the Shiv Sena, such alliances will not indicate a swelling of Hindu nationalism. I have offered as evidence against the conceptual basis of *Hindutva* the series of explorations into contemporary ritual space in India presented in Chapter 2. The diversity of these ritual spaces, their incongruities, their *separateness*, all point to the errant basis of *Hindutva* ideology. The meta-narrative of Hindu nationalism sits well only with those individuals who can see the tenets of Hindu nationalism working positively in their local spaces, in their particular world.

The regionalization evidenced in Indian politics speaks to the state of the post-modern world: rather than identifying with a constructed, temporal meta-narrative of the primordial nation, Indian practitioners, on the whole, identify with the local narratives that compose the spaces of their individual lives. These are spaces found in nooks of mountains and out on the ocean, where ritual is created and myth is lived. These are spaces in which the practitioner can select her narratives of choice, freely rejecting any meta-narrative that she finds to be coincident, yet unacceptably disparate. So goes the rejection of universalism by those practitioners who find that the experiences of their lives are in no way universal; so goes the rejection by many of Hindu nationalism.

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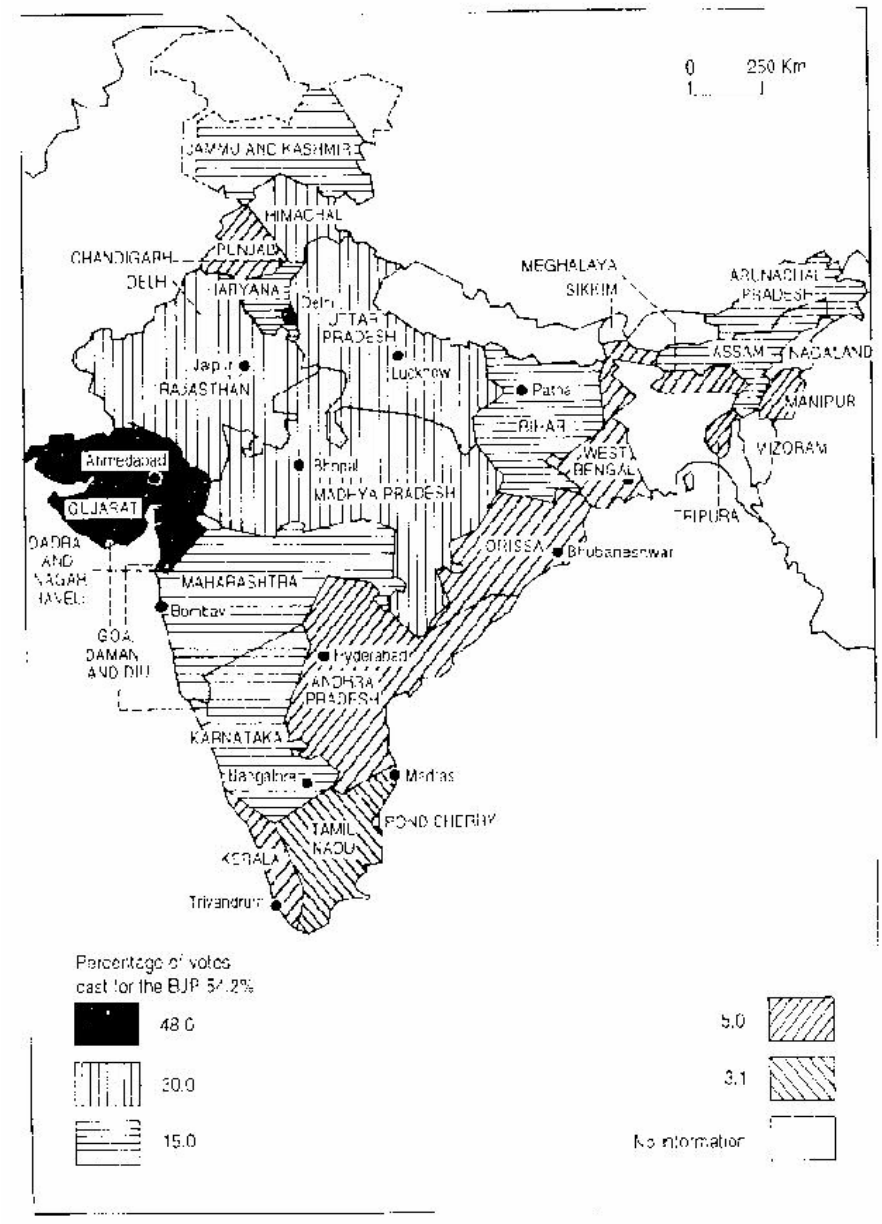
APPENDIX A

"Votes Won by the BJP during the 196 Lok Sabha Elections (State-wise)"[145]



[145] Map excerpted from Hansen, "Introduction," 17.