
**Power and Contestation: India
since 1989**

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2 | Politics of Hindutva and the minorities

The 1990s are marked by the triumphant onward march of the Hindutva movement. The first peaking of this politics was the demolition, by a mob, of the 400-year-old Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992. This was a mosque built by the Mughal emperor Babur's commander-in-chief Mir Baki, supposedly after destroying a temple that stood there, on the birthplace of Ram, one of the deities worshiped by Hindus. Both these claims – that there had existed a temple that was destroyed, and that this is Ramjanmabhoomi, the birthplace of the mythical Ram – are historically debatable, and are asserted largely as a matter of faith.

The second peak of the movement is the large-scale massacre of Muslims in the state of Gujarat in 2002, while a BJP government was in power there and a BJP-dominated coalition ruled at the center. Since the beginning of the 1990s there have been numerous small and large incidents of violence against Christians and Muslims, increasingly aggressive rhetoric against minorities, and a transformation of the very terms of political discourse on secularism. In villages and small towns, in many parts of the country, endemic daily terror against the minorities has become the norm.

Key features of Hindutva ideology

Hindutva, which means Hinduness, is a form of Hindu cultural nationalism and is the political philosophy of the Hindu right wing. Its founder, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, held that Hinduism is not merely one of the religions of India, but is the Indian way of life. It is through this equation of Hindu with Indian that the BJP lays claim to being truly secular as opposed to the “pseudo-secularism” of other political parties in India, which “pander to minorities.”

As one BJP leader and MP put it, “... BJP is the party of Indian

nationalism, pure and simple ... and since India is overwhelmingly Hindu, under our democratic system this nationalism cannot but have a Hindu complexion” (Malkani 1994:13).

The strength of Hindutva as a political ideology, however, is that it is not restricted to organizations or political parties, and has succeeded in shaping common sense among sections of Hindus who may not necessarily be anti-minority. In fact, it can be argued that in the early decades of the twentieth century, Hindutva merely built on and systematized the prevalent common sense in literate Hindu society regarding “nationhood” and “Islam.” This partly explains the sudden shift to the BJP, from the late 1980s, of large numbers of retired army officers and bureaucrats, who might have been secular in their official positions, but whose world-view, apparently, had been consistent with Hindutva.

Assimilationism Are non-Hindus Indian? Yes, but only if they agree to being “Indianized” and recall that “their forefathers were Hindus” (Ghosh, B. 2000: 1). For Savarkar, one could claim genuine belonging to the nation only if one considered India both the fatherland (*pitribhu*) and the holy land (*punyabhu*). The reference is to the supposed alien origins, holy places in foreign lands (the Vatican and Mecca) and consequently, the assumed divided loyalties of Christians and Muslims (Basu et al. 1993). Hindutva thus has an assimilationist program, in which all non-Hindus are to be “brought back” to the Hindu fold. This is not considered as conversion but as “reconversion,” the assumption being that everyone in India is naturally Hindu. The Hindu Right is thus sharply opposed to proselytization and conversion (which in Hindutva discourse refers exclusively to conversion out of Hinduism). It is because of Hindutva’s claim that Hinduism is the only native religion that Hindu nationalists the world over contest the position that Aryans were invaders or migrants from Europe. For, if that were so, Hinduism too would be foreign and the equation of Indianness with Hinduness would become problematic.

It is in keeping with this assimilationist program that a certain strand of Hindutva, the one closest to its founder Savarkar, is committed to the ending of the caste system, which keeps Dalits and

other “lower” castes from identifying themselves as Hindu. In this view, all other religious communities except the Muslim and Christian – Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists – are sects of Hinduism. M. S. Golwalkar, a Hindutva philosopher and chief architect of the RSS (see below), included even Parsis, India’s Zoroastrians, as members of Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation) because they are fire-worshipping Aryans (Kumar, P. 1994: 47). This understanding is firmly rejected by the communities Hindutva would assimilate. Thus, when the BJP government in the state of Gujarat passed an amendment (2006) to the Freedom of Religion Act (an ironically named piece of legislation that strictly limits religious conversion) classifying Jains and Buddhists as Hindus for the purposes of the act, there were strong protests from representatives of these communities, which claim minority status. While Hindutvavaadis (adherents of Hindutva politics) claim these communities as part of the Hindu mainstream, Jains and Buddhists hold that, on the contrary, many features of modern Hinduism (for example, vegetarianism) have emerged in response to the reformist challenge posed by these newer religions. Hindus in ancient times both performed animal sacrifice as well as ate meat (and many Hindu communities still do so). Thus, they argue, modern Hinduism could be said to have assimilated features of Jainism rather than the other way round (Patil 2006).

Hindutva also claims tribal people (called Adivasis, meaning “original inhabitants,” in large parts of peninsular India), as Hindus. The Constitution lists several communities in the Fifth Schedule as “tribes” for the purposes of affirmative action. The term is used to designate a whole cluster of diverse “non-Indic” or “semi-Indic” communities who are mostly non-Aryan and remained outside the Hindu caste system. They are understood to be the indigenous people of India, who lived on the subcontinent long before the Aryans entered, around 1500 BCE. The more than fifty tribes that constitute the Scheduled Tribes speak a multitude of languages. They are also religiously diverse, with some following animism, while others have adopted Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity. The social customs of most tribals distinguish them from the country’s majority Hindu population. The name Adivasi is itself contentious, because it is derived from Sanskrit, not from any of the tribal languages

(and is therefore a Hinduized term), although by now it has come to be used in self-definition by many political movements of tribal people in peninsular India. The term Adivasi, however, is not in use in the north east, where a quarter of the population is tribal. The nomenclature and religious identity of these communities are the subject of heated debate among anthropologists and historians (Baviskar 2005).

Hindutva politics has stepped up “reconversion” drives among these communities during the 1990s. Tribal people who have not converted to Christianity or Hinduism (or more rarely to Islam) follow their own ways of life and worship. Many of these ways have been, over time, incorporated into Hinduism, but whether all tribal religious practices are by default Hindu, or can be translated into Hinduism, is the contentious issue raised by the politics of Hindutva.¹

The unconverted tribals are considered backward and savage by other dominant groups, whether Hindu, Muslim, or Christian. They are also among the most culturally and materially marginalized groups in India. Under these circumstances, the Hindu Right’s “reconversion” campaigns through *Ghar Vapsi* (Returning Home to Hinduism) activities among tribal people provide them with opportunities for upward mobility, while being simultaneously a conversion to the politics of Hindutva. They adopt dominant Hindu practices such as vegetarianism, as well as the Hindutva opposition to Muslims and Christians (ibid.). One could say they become Hindu the Hindutva way.

The large-scale participation of Adivasis in organized violence against Christians in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat in the late 1990s and against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 has been seen by many scholars as “indoctrination” and a distorted form of class struggle for resources (Punyani 2002). As Amita Baviskar points out, however, in a situation of widespread dispossession of tribal people, we are forced to consider the possibility that there are many routes to tribal power, “including the path of affiliating with Hindu supremacists” (Baviskar 2005: 5109). There is also no doubt that Hindutvavaadi organizations have launched creative initiatives among these communities. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, Badri Narayan has traced

the manner in which the RSS and BJP have searched out Dalit heroes of the past, constructing them as “warring identities against Muslim invaders” and relocating them within the broader project of constructing memories of a “Hindu” identity stretching back for time immemorial (Narayan 2006).

Mobilizing women Deftly weaving images available within Hinduism of Woman as both nurturing mother and the fearsome destroyer of evil, Hindutva ideology has succeeded in giving women visibility and agency in the public realm. Both in the Ayodhya Ramjanmabhoomi movement and in the Gujarat violence, both at leadership levels and in mass participation, women are present everywhere in the movement, articulate and active (Basu, A. 1996; Sarkar, T. 1998; Butalia and Sarkar 1995; Sangari 1999). According to Tanika Sarkar, “Older forms of gender ideology are merged with new offers of self-fashioning and relative political equality in the field of anti-Muslim and anti-secular violence” (Sarkar 1998: 104).

A television image from the days of the violence in Gujarat in 2002 illustrates this to chilling effect: Hindu women laugh and chat together in the winter sun on a rooftop, smiling shyly at television cameras as they make missiles and firebombs with homely materials: old saris, stones, kerosene oil from their kitchens. Much as they might get together to make pickles and *papads* at other times.

Sexuality Anxieties around sexuality are central to Hindutva mobilizing. Images of the virile, aggressive Muslim male, the fast-reproducing Muslim community with four wives to every man, the need for Hindu men to be both disciplined and celibate as well as sexually potent and capable of offering a challenge to the Muslim rival, abound in popular literature produced at various levels (Gupta, C. 2001). The Hindu woman was to be chaste and virtuous while the Hindu male fantasy was to conquer “the Other’s” women, a fantasy played out during the Gujarat violence in particular, by mass public rapes of Muslim women (Agnes 2002; Sarkar, T. 2002).

The Hindutva fear of Muslim fecundity must be understood in the context of modern democracy where numbers matter – what if Muslims breed so fast that they overtake the Hindu majority? These

fears are constantly played out over census figures. For instance, the 2001 census data were released in September 2004 by the Registrar General of Census in such a way that initial reports suggested that in the period 1991–2001 there had been a 36 percent rise in the Muslim population. Compared with the 20.5 percent rise for Hindus, this was startling. After this news had provoked the predictable paranoid and aggressive pronouncements from the Hindu Right, and as other voices joined the controversy, the Census Registrar suddenly announced that the initially reported figures had been “unadjusted,” and that the “adjusted” figures in fact showed a deceleration in the growth rates of Muslims.

As it happens, the 1991 census had excluded the two states of Jammu and Kashmir, and Assam (both of which have substantial Muslim populations), due to the rise in armed insurgency there.² The inclusion of these states in 2001 would naturally show a sudden rise in the Muslim population as a whole. The Census Registrar, an appointee of the previous BJP-led government, had clearly manipulated the release of the census data – the mistake is too elementary – the term “growth rate” cannot be used between two non-comparable data sets (Chatterjee, M. 2004; Ray, S. 2004; Joshua 2004; Menon, N. 2004a).

Organizations of the Hindu Right

The politics of Hindutva is represented by a group of political organizations known collectively in their self-definition as the Sangh Parivar (Sangh Family) after their parent organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Not every organization in this formation refers to itself as “Hindu.” This flexibility in self-designation is precisely the electoral strength of the BJP, which can appeal to both the “Hindu” vote as well the vote of sections of the Indian elite who are not necessarily anti-minority, but see the BJP as a modern, secular party that will not pander to minority-ism.

a) Founded in 1925, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) describes itself as a cultural organization, and is the ideological fountainhead of Hindutva politics. The RSS does not contest elections, but its indirect control, guidance, and pressure decides the policy of the

electoral face of Hindutva politics, the BJP. Many top leaders of the BJP are also members of the RSS. The visible work of the RSS focuses on running educational institutions and other such activities that can be described as social work, but these institutions are also used to propagate rabidly anti-minority views among impressionable young children.

RSS claims of being a cultural organization should not blind us to its identity as an organization drawing inspiration from Hitler, with a commitment to eradicating minorities should they refuse to comply with the Hindutva insistence on assimilation. It is a militaristic, hierarchical organization, and its cadres, dressed in khaki shorts, routinely perform Hindu militancy with martial discipline in public places as a show of strength.

b) The political party that is now the public face of this movement and represents it in national-level electoral politics is the Bharatiya Janata Party. In the aftermath of the Emergency, its predecessor, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, had merged into the Janata Party. After the fall of the Janata Party and its break-up, the BJP spent practically the whole of the 1980s out in the cold. During that period, the party adopted its present name, attempted to stand upon a different platform, and to live down its past as a communal organization.³ It claimed “Gandhian socialism” as its new ideology and raised issues such as price rises and corruption, which it expected to attract broader sections than a Hindutva platform. This shift, however, did not help it achieve any significant growth over the next five years. The change came in the mid-1980s, when some related developments led to the realization that there was greater potential in reviving its Hindutva platform – namely, the Shah Bano issue and the Ayodhya movement, which we discuss later.

The BJP then successfully deployed Hindutva and emerged after the 1989 elections with an impressive tally of eighty-eight seats in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the parliament), where it previously had two.

The BJP last formed the central government in the general elections of 1999 in a coalition with a range of parties, most of which did not share the political programme of Hindutva. This development

must be seen in the context of the logic of coalition politics as discussed in the Introduction. Through the 1990s, after the demolition of Babri Masjid, the BJP projected a conservative right-of-center image, which could, if need be, moderate its strident anti-minority stance and would be able to build alliances with regional parties that, given their local equations with the Congress or other rival parties, found the BJP to be the best alternative. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance stayed in power for its full term, being defeated only in the next general elections of 2004 by the Congress-led coalition, United Progressive Alliance.

c) The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), founded in 1964, came into being through the movement to ban cow-slaughter (the cow is sacred to most modern Hindus) and to build a temple at the site of the Babri Masjid. The VHP is a global organization, and its international profile is again one of promoting “Hindu culture,” but both the issues on which it came into being are clearly anti-minority, and both have been used to mobilize violent attacks on Muslims.

The explosive potential of the cow-slaughter issue is evident from the lynching by a mob, in 2002 in the state of Haryana, of five men suspected of cow-slaughter. The five men turned out to be Dalits, from castes whose traditional occupation was leatherwork. People of this community get the raw material for their work from the carcasses of dead cattle that have died of natural causes. In a revealing clarification, the local Hindu right-wing organizations (including the VHP) sought to explain the incident as one of “mistaken identity” in which Dalits were mistaken for Muslims⁴ – the killing of cow-slaughtering Muslims being part of the agenda of Hindutva politics, while the alienation of Dalits would be counter-productive to the project of a Hindu Nation.

Neither cow-slaughter nor the Ramjanmabhoomi movement can be anything other than highly emotive issues to mobilize “Hindu” sentiment against minorities. The Bajrang Dal,⁵ allegedly the VHP’s youth wing, founded in 1984, is openly armed with *trishuls* (tridents that can be used to kill, and are often used during communal violence). As with the RSS, however, links to the Bajrang Dal are difficult to establish, given the high levels of secrecy with which they work.

For example, when Graham Staines, a Christian missionary, was burnt to death with his two little sons in their vehicle by a mob in the state of Orissa in 1999, an incident that provoked nationwide outrage, the killers were well known in the locality as Bajrang Dal supporters, but this fact could never be proved.

d) Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), based on the nationalist slogan of *swadeshi* (of one's own land), a term from the era of the Independence struggle referring to a nationalist economy, was founded in 1991 on a platform opposing "economic imperialism." It takes strong positions against the activities of multinational corporations in India, and against international instruments such as GATT and WTO. It also seeks to build a Hindu value-oriented Indian corporate culture. Often it participates, along with the RSS trade union wing, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, in joint campaigns with Left groups and parties in India against corporate globalization.

SJM and most of the other organizations of the Sangh Combine take strong anti-globalization,⁶ nationalist positions, while the BJP and the Shiv Sena, when in power, back "liberalization" and privatization policies. It is therefore common on the Left to accuse the Sangh Combine of hypocrisy on the issue of globalization. The differences between the two positions, however, must be understood as arising from the different compulsions that act on a political tendency in three different situations – when it is a political party, when it is a trade union or other front organization, and when it is in government. Similar differences in attitudes toward globalization can be seen on the part of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) as the government in West Bengal, the party itself, and its trade union. It is not very useful to assume that there is a pure anti-globalization position on the Left and a necessarily compromised one on the Right. We argue that the responses vary from *government to party to trade union fronts* of the Left and Right, and to collapse the several distinct strands into two homogenized positions is to lose a sense of the textured nature, both of globalization as well as of responses to it. This issue is explored at length elsewhere in this book.

e) Another Hindu right-wing organization is the Shiv Sena, which

is not a part of the Sangh parivar but shares a common strand of Muslim hatred. The Shiv Sena is a regional political party, founded in 1966, active mainly in the state of Maharashtra. It has often been in government in the state. The Sena's ideology is based on a certain idea of Hinduness and *bhoomiputra* (sons-of-the-soil), and the two are not always compatible. In the Sena's politics, both these ideas can be serially deployed as and when expediency demands. All too often, the "sons-of-the-soil" slogan has been interpreted by it as "Maharashtra for the Maharashtrians" and has easily turned even against Hindu migrants from other states. This was truer of its earlier politics. Its initial aggressive anti-non-Maharashtrian politics was modulated in the 1990s to build a Hindu base, delineating the Muslim and non-Hindu in general as the enemy of the Hindu nation, rather than the non-Maharashtrian as the enemy of Maharashtrians (Hansen 2001). This aspect of Shiv Sena politics, however, is always just below the surface and can come up any moment. Thus it successfully mobilizes urban unemployed youth and is able to direct their disaffection in campaigns such as its violence on non-Maharashtrians (including Hindus) appearing for recruitment by Indian Railways in Mumbai in 2003.

Below we discuss two key issues around which the BJP, and Hindutva forces in general, mobilized from the late 1980s through the 1990s.

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) debate

In 1985, Shah Bano became the name around which the BJP was able to revive its Hindutva agenda, and today her name remains a symbol the BJP invokes in order to establish its "true" secular credentials and its commitment to women's rights as opposed to the "pseudo-secular" Congress Party. Shah Bano was a Muslim woman who claimed maintenance from her divorced husband in the Supreme Court, under section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC), which applies to all citizens of India. Her husband claimed that under *shari'a* or Muslim personal law, it was not necessary for the husband to pay maintenance beyond three months after the divorce. The judgment held that there was no inconsistency

between the *shari'a* and section 125, and granted maintenance to Shah Bano, arousing strong protest from some leaders of the Muslim community, who held this judgment to contravene Muslim personal law. There was equally vocal support for the judgment from large sections of the community, however, including public demonstrations by Muslim women. Ignoring this voice, the Rajiv Gandhi government passed an ordinance to overrule the judgment, later passed as the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights Upon Divorce) Act, removing Muslim women from the purview of section 125 Cr.PC (Kumar, R. 1993).

As we noted in the Introduction, by the early 1980s the Congress had started on a path of instrumentally using communal sentiments for political gains. In the late 1980s to early 1990s, we see a series of capitulations by this government, to the sectarian interests of one community and then the other.

The Shah Bano issue enabled the BJP to press its general argument of “appeasement of minorities,” and to renew its demand for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). But we also need to understand why the Shah Bano judgment provoked such an outcry from sections of Muslims, when in two earlier judgments (1979 and 1980) the Supreme Court had upheld the right of Muslim women to maintenance under section 125 and there had been no reaction.

The debate over the UCC arises from the tension in the Constitution that pits women as individual citizens against religious communities that have the right to their personal laws. Since these personal laws cover matters of marriage, inheritance, and guardianship of children, and since all personal laws discriminate against women, the women’s movement had made the demand for a UCC as long ago as 1937, long before Independence. The UCC, however, has rarely surfaced in public discourse as a feminist issue. It has tended invariably to be set up in terms of National Integrity versus Cultural Rights of Community. In other words, the argument for a UCC is made in the name of protecting the integrity of the nation, which is seen to be under threat from a plurality of legal systems, while the UCC is resisted on the grounds of cultural rights of communities.

Thus the BJP can stand unambiguously for a Uniform Civil Code, for underlying its national integrity argument is the explicit assump-

tion that while Hindus have willingly accepted reform, the “other” communities continue to cling to diverse and retrogressive laws, refusing to merge into the national mainstream. Indeed, such an understanding marks not only Hindu right-wing arguments but is part of nationalist judicial common sense more generally. The judgment on Shah Bano, for example, having ruled that the *shari’a* and Section 125 were mutually consistent, went on, contradicting itself, to urge a Uniform Civil Code on the grounds that “it will help the cause of national integration by removing *disparate loyalties* to laws which have conflicting ideologies” (ibid.: 163, emphasis added).

Later judicial pronouncements on Muslim personal law, too – for instance an Allahabad High Court judgment on triple *talaq*⁷ (1994) and a Supreme Court judgment in the Sarla Mudgal case (1995) – made this argument explicitly. For example, the 1995 judgment stated: “In the Indian Republic, there was to be only one nation – the Indian nation – and no community could claim to remain a separate entity on the basis of religion” (Agnes 1994b).⁸ But as one feminist group put it, the judiciary consistently raised the demand for a UCC only in the context of cases dealing with Muslim personal law, and never in dealing with cases of gender discrimination in Hindu Law (Gangoli 1996: 9).⁹

By the mid-1980s, the growing presence of organized Hindutva politics and a general legitimacy for it was becoming evident. The Shah Bano judgment too was hailed by the media as a victory against Islamic obscurantism. Hence the knee-jerk reaction of the self-styled leadership of the Muslim community to the judgment. But the Shah Bano judgment and, subsequently, the legislation overturning the judgment, mark also, for a different set of reasons, the beginning of the rethinking in the women’s movement of the demand for the UCC with its implicit legitimizing of the national integrity argument. It was becoming increasingly clear that “integrity” always came with a majoritarian cast.

Positions within the women’s movement, even those that reiterate the need for state legislation, now prefer terms such as “common,” “gender-just,” or “egalitarian” codes over the term “uniform.” This disavowal of uniformity in the 1990s is significant in that it marks the women’s movement’s recognition of the need to rethink both

the nation as a homogeneous entity, and of the legitimacy of the state-led social reform.¹⁰

The UCC debate is exemplary from the point of view of understanding the way in which Hindutva works in a democratic polity such as India. By emphasizing “equal” and “similar” treatment of all communities, the BJP is able to use some aspects of liberal democratic thinking to suggest that any recognition of difference is necessarily contrary to the principles of secularism. Since “Hindu” has already been equated with “Indian,” Hindu practice, by definition, can never be one of many different practices in India. All “difference” to be eliminated is thus, necessarily, difference from the Hindu/Indian norm.

Ayodhya, Babri Masjid and Ramjanmabhoomi

In early 1986, the Faizabad District Court ordered the opening of the locks on the Babri Masjid, permitting Hindu worship of the idol of Ram inside. The controversial issue had been on the back burner for decades, so this move was widely perceived to be an effort by the Congress government to recover lost ground with Hindus after the Muslim Women’s Act.

Although Babur’s commander, Mir Baki, is supposed to have destroyed a temple to build the Babri Masjid in 1528, the first conflict at the site erupted three centuries later, in 1853, with an attack on the mosque by a sect of Hindu ascetics. As a compromise, the British government permitted Hindus to worship at a small platform close to the mosque, called *Ram chabootra*, believed to mark the birthplace of Ram, which had become an object of worship in the late eighteenth century. Then, in 1949, someone broke into the Babri Masjid and placed an idol of the infant Ram (Ram Lalla) inside, in what was hailed as a miracle by Hindutva activists. Firm action was taken by Nehru, however, and the mosque was locked, ending all worship there. This did not lead to any counter-mobilization and the issue lay dormant until 1984, when it was revived by Hindu organizations at different levels, backed by VHP, building up mass movements to “liberate” the birthplace of Ram. And then in 1986 came the court order permitting Hindus to worship the idol of Ram inside the mosque. This development, however, only gave fresh im-

petus to the Hindutva demand for a temple to be built at the site (Jaffrelot 1996).

Christophe Jaffrelot offers us a densely documented and vivid account of this period. In 1990, the VHP relaunched the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, without much support initially from the BJP, which at the time was supporting the V. P. Singh-led National Front government. But when V. P. Singh decided to implement the Mandal Commission Report, the BJP found itself having to move more clearly into the VHP camp. It could not endorse the Mandal Commission reservations without alienating its traditional support among the upper castes, and in any case as a party of Hindu nationalists, it is opposed to highlighting divisions among Hindus. On the other hand, it could also not afford to alienate the OBCs, 52 percent of the Indian population. Its solution was to urge reservations based on economic criteria rather than caste, while it simultaneously launched its campaign to build Hindu solidarity on the emotive Ramjanmabhoomi issue. Within a month, Lal Krishna Advani, President of the BJP, had launched the *Rath Yatra*, traveling ten thousand kilometers in a Toyota vehicle designed to depict an epic chariot, departing from Somnath temple in Gujarat¹¹ and planning to cross eight states before reaching Ayodhya in October to inaugurate *kar seva* (voluntary work) to begin construction of the temple there. It was an extraordinary mobilizational move, imaginative, visually striking, leading to delirious crowds all along the route. And all along the route, expectedly, there were planned attacks on Muslims – the route of the *yatra* was marked by blood.

Much more blood was to be shed, including the blood of some *kar sevaks* in firing by security forces in Ayodhya, and their deaths (“martyrdom” in Hindutva mobilizing) were to fuel more bloodshed in violence against Muslims along the route of processions bearing their ashes, organized by the VHP. The entire campaign was to culminate two years later in that stunning image that shook the foundations of secular India – cheering men atop the dome of the Babri Masjid, saffron flag fluttering, some hours before the ancient mosque was reduced to rubble with the most primitive of hand-held implements. Violence followed all over the subcontinent, killing thousands (Jaffrelot 1996; Ludden 1996).

The paradoxical aspect for the BJP of this dazzling success was that it could not openly claim the credit for the demolition, as a party in parliament bound to uphold the Constitution. Indeed, the BJP leadership continually asserted that the actual demolition had not been pre-planned, and that it was a spontaneous act in which people's emotions had overtaken them. As a party that had to fight imminent elections, it had to assert its democratic and constitutional character, while the political gains of the demolition would be harnessed by other members of the Sangh parivar.

BJP in power: the National Democratic Alliance

After its inability to build up sufficient alliances to stay in power for more than thirteen days in 1996, the BJP perfected its skill of coalition-building. When it won the highest number of seats in the 1998 general elections, it was in a position to put together the National Democratic Alliance, a twenty-four-party coalition with regional parties, most of which were decidedly anti-communal. These parties were motivated to join the NDA not for ideological reasons but because of the logic of the political configuration in their states – for instance, the Trinamool Congress opposed the Congress and CPI(M) in West Bengal, Telugu Desam the Congress in Andhra Pradesh, and the MDMK and DMK in Tamil Nadu were in rivalry with the other Dravidian party in the state, the AIADMK, whose withdrawal of support to the previous BJP-led government had led to its fall. Thus by the mid-1990s, the logic of regional politics had come to be decisive in government formation at the center. Indeed, the coming into power of the UPA in 2004 can partly be seen as the result of the Congress having successfully learned the BJP strategy of building and maintaining coalitions (McGuire and Copland 2007; Adeney and Saez 2005).

Soon after assuming power, in May 1998 the NDA crossed the “nuclear threshold” and tested the nuclear bomb. In doing so, this government ended the policy of “nuclear ambiguity” that had hitherto been the hallmark of Indian policy, which involved “both affirming and denying” that India had nuclear weapons capability (Bidwai and Vanaik 1999: 69). Within a month Pakistan also tested a nuclear bomb. In less than a year, the first military conflict in thirty years took place in Kargil, now between two nuclearized states,

brought to an end under pressure from the USA. South Asia would henceforth be “on a short fuse” (ibid.) and increasingly susceptible to US control.

While the other constituents of the NDA were not adherents of Hindutva politics, nevertheless, their participation continued unabated even as the stakes were gradually and alarmingly raised. The BJP launched a program of rewriting history textbooks produced in the 1970s by historians of worldwide repute, following the explicit agenda of redressing what is claimed to be a distortion of the past. In this redressal, the declared aim was to valorize “Hindu” achievements and to present the “Hindu” community as one that has existed from time immemorial, and one that has always been and continues to be egalitarian. The attempt was to evoke a homogeneous community that basically looks like the nineteenth-century, north Indian, upper-caste version of Hinduism, with all its taboos and beliefs presented as eternal, but with caste inequality carefully excised. The other aspect of this project is the assimilation of all religions other than Islam into the fold of Hinduism, and the representation of Islam and Christianity as alien and inimical to Hindu civilization.

One of the most significant moments of the NDA rule was the state-sponsored massacre of Muslims in Gujarat in February–March 2002. In what amounted to a virtual ethnic cleansing exercise, Muslims were driven out of their homes in villages and massacred in towns. In the language of Hindutva it was a necessary step to remind the Muslims of their true place in India – an essential part of establishing Hindutva and its assimilation/elimination programme. Thus, Gujarat under BJP chief minister Narendra Modi during this period was openly hailed as the “laboratory of Hindutva.” This ethnic cleansing was justified by the Hindu Right as a spontaneous reaction to an attack by Muslims on a train at Godhra station in Gujarat, carrying *kar sevaks* coming back from Ayodhya, in which a bogey of the train was set on fire, resulting in several deaths. Later, in 2006, the report of an inquiry committee under Justice U. C. Banerjee confirmed what several other investigations since 2002 had suggested: that the fire had begun from inside the bogey and not from outside, where the “Muslim mob” had supposedly collected.¹² There is no doubt that the pogrom had been planned in advance, and awaited a pretext for

setting into motion. And yet, so successfully has the Hindutva campaign interwoven “Godhra” and “Gujarat” in the public mind, that even secularist critique of the Gujarat violence often uses the term “Godhra riots” or “post-Godhra riots,” thus legitimizing both the supposed provocation as well as the idea that these were spontaneous riots instead of pre-planned, targeted violence.

Indeed, most “riots” in India are far from spontaneous and involve what Paul Brass has called “institutionalised systems of riot production,” which are activated during political mobilization or elections (Brass 2006: 65). Gujarat was no different in this sense, but it is unprecedented in some others. The violence against Muslims and their property was not simply perpetrated by specifically politicized sections of the population; it was conducted at a generalized level. A vast cross-section of the Hindu population, including Dalits and Adivasis, were involved. Not surprisingly, in the elections held immediately after the violence, Narendra Modi, the chief minister who presided over it all, came back to a two-thirds majority in the state assembly with about 50 percent of the votes.

At this crucial juncture, too, the NDA remained silent while the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat was conducted, under the umbrella of the blatantly partisan BJP state government, police, and other state machinery (Vardarajan 2002; Menon, N. 2002). Some of them, such as the Telegu Desam and the Trinamool Congress, did make some oppositional statements in parliament, but they decided to stay with the coalition right through the months of crisis.

A second feature that marks Gujarat as a landmark in communal politics in India is the fact that, unlike other places that go back to some degree of normalcy once the crisis passes, Gujarat’s once prosperous and confident Muslim community now lives a ghettoized and insecure existence (Jha 2006).

The last general election (May 2004) that routed the BJP-led NDA alliance has certainly dealt Hindutva a blow, but it would be a mistake to understand it simply as a vote against communalism. As we have seen, the states of India have different dynamics and political configurations, separately reflected in the contests in each state. Thus the final tally does not necessarily reflect a countrywide trend. Further, different considerations come into play during national and

local elections. It is noteworthy that a mere three months after the general elections of 2004, when the Congress won the Lok Sabha seat from Junagadh in Gujarat, the BJP swept the municipal corporation elections, capturing thirty-five of the fifty-one seats.¹³ It would be an oversimplification, therefore, to derive any one lesson from the overall result of the general elections.

Indeed, some sections of the Hindu Right have taken away from the election results the lesson that their defeat proves that the people have rejected, not Hindutva, but its “dilution” by the BJP. This dilution is naturally to be countered by renewed communal mobilization. One recent instance is a series of violent incidents in coastal Karnataka in October 2006. For some years now, Hindutva forces have been very active in the region, and the MP from the area is from the BJP, as are most of the local MLAs. Economic factors, such as competition between Muslim and Hindu traders and disputes between some sections of the fisherfolk and Muslim traders, have been used by Hindutva forces to whip up anti-Muslim sentiments and consolidate their presence. Investigative reports say that the violence is believed by many locals to be planned; that BJP and Bajrang Dal leaders, including some occupying top positions in the present Karnataka government, have played a leading role (Sikand 2006; Taneja 2006). Indeed, the worrying recognition is emerging that Karnataka may be the next Gujarat.

The BJP–RSS link had frayed somewhat since the electoral defeat. The RSS is the more recognizable Hindutva organization, while the BJP has tried in the past, and continues to hope, to be accepted as a moderate right-of-center party. As we have seen, within the world-view of the BJP it is entirely possible to be a party of the Hindus while simultaneously espousing the language of abstract citizenship. Within this framework of abstract citizenship, it is easy to claim that it is “communal” to raise the issue of religious identity at all, and casteist to assert caste identity.¹⁴ The pressures of electoral-democratic politics always push the BJP toward emphasizing the aspect of its politics most appealing to a section of the elite. For the RSS, such niceties are not quite welcome and tensions periodically emerge. Recently, however, the RSS reasserted its hold over the party. When the BJP’s highest decision-making forum met in December 2006, an

aggressive Hindutva agenda was declared and the party constitution was amended to strengthen RSS control over it. Clearly, this is the route the BJP expects will bring it back to power.

Muslim politics: the secular/communal question

The emergence of Hindutva as a powerful political force in the 1990s has led to a concerted attempt by secular-liberal and left-wing parties and intellectuals to set up a secular versus communal polarity. To an extent, this has been supported by important backward-caste parties such as the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and the Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar. This is also backed by important sections of Muslim leaders who have been feeling immensely persecuted, especially during this period since the 1990s. Needless to say, such a situation of persecution and targeting of a particular community is bound to generate a sense of inwardness that demands closing of ranks and intolerance of internal dissent. And without doubt this has been the mainstream representation of the Muslim community in contemporary India.

While it is important to understand this strand of politics, it is equally important to understand the new challenges that have emerged from within the community that essentially form a part of the internal struggle for its democratization. These new challenges point to a complex dynamic that we cannot discuss in any detail here. It is important, however, to understand the broad directions these are taking.

First and most significant is the gender dimension of the challenge to the authority of the exclusively male religious leaders who are largely responsible for steering the community into fundamentalist directions in the present. As we saw earlier in this chapter, there was an outcry from the “custodians of the community” over the Supreme Court judgment on Shah Bano, claiming that it was contrary to Muslim personal law. The government’s surrender to these forces, by enacting a law overriding the judgment, provided the Hindu Right with a means to put into operation all the arguments against the Muslims in their arsenal. These included arguments about their “backwardness,” their “refusal to merge into the national mainstream,” their “innate separatism,” their refusal to change, and so on.

What was lost to the public gaze was the fact that large and vocal sections of Muslim women and men actively opposed both the government's surrender as well as the attempt by the mullahs to clamp down on issues pertaining to women. The struggle has continued since, and has been fought not just by secular, middle-class women and men but also by women within the community, who have demanded a space within the religious order and its social institutions. Thus, on the one hand, the constitutional validity of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act 1986 was challenged by two Supreme Court lawyers Daniel Latifi and Sona Khan and the court ruled that the divorced woman had the right to maintenance for life, unless she remarries (Khan, S. 2004). On the other hand, probably much more effective struggles have emerged at an everyday level within the community. Indexing such a struggle is the instance of Daud Sharifa of Tamil Nadu, who emerged as a key rallying point for women demanding a women's mosque. According to Sharifa, the fight for a mosque was important because "we want our space to meet, talk, discuss our grievances and pray. We want to have a say in community rulings" (Biswas, S. 2004). This struggle received the support of Badar Sayed, who was also chairperson of the Tamil Nadu Waqf Board.¹⁵ While the official All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has been forced to sit up and take notice of developments such as these,¹⁶ in 2006 a number of women in Lucknow went ahead and even formed a counter-body, the All India Women's Personal Law Board, claiming that the AIMPLB simply does not take the woman's position into account on matters of marriage and divorce (Awasthi 2007). Throughout this period, related issues kept coming up, such as the controversial Imrana case, leading to further restiveness among Muslim women.¹⁷

The other challenge to the traditional leadership of the community has come from the lower-caste groups. Although Islam is predicated upon a notion of social equality, the actual practice of Islam in India has exhibited both a classist and a casteist disdain for the lower orders by the elite political (and religious) leadership, the ashrafs. For many of the Hindu lower castes who converted to Islam, the road to social equality was barred by the ashraf elite. Organizations such as the Pasmaanda Muslim Mahaz (PMM

– Backward Muslim Front) or the All-India Backward Muslim Morcha (AIBMM) have emerged in the last decade or so and have challenged the dominant and traditional leadership of the community. The AIBMM was set up 1994 in Bihar by a young Muslim doctor, Ejaz Ali. According to Ali, the traditional Muslim leadership “had been championing merely symbolic issues, rather than taking up real bread and butter issues,” questions of jobs and education for the poor and backward Muslims (Sikand 2004a). The AIBMM has focused, since 1994, on the mobilization of Dalit Muslims and OBC Muslims and has now an organizational network all over north India. Ali Anwar, founder of the PMM, a journalist who quit his job to organize backward Muslims, recalls how the very organization of the first public rally by the PMM, in 1998, elicited a hostile reaction from the established classes. He mentions a national seminar organized by some elite Muslims who styled themselves “Muslim Social Scientists,” where the PMM was branded dangerous for Muslims. The organizers, according to him, worked directly under the AIMPLB. Similarly, the All India Milli Council organized an “international conference” against what it deemed “divisive” politics among the Muslims.

Apart from the traditional dominance of the ashraf elite, the more immediate fundamental conflict here is over reservations. The recent publication of the Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee Report on the current status of Muslims points to a gross all-round under-representation of Muslims in practically every sector of the economy and employment. Clearly, this under-representation is a consequence of a series of mechanisms of discrimination – visible and invisible – that concern the community as a whole. In this context, one of the important factors animating the movement of backward and Dalit Muslims is the demand for recognition that they constitute sections of the OBC and Dalit populations and are not simply “Muslim.” In part this is a reply to the efforts of leaders such as Syed Shahabuddin, one of the most important of the modern elite leaders, to posit the idea of a Muslim community for purposes of reservations. Clearly, Shahabuddin and other leaders believe that a separate recognition of OBC and Dalit Muslims for these purposes would weaken the community, while on the other hand, leaders of

the PMM and the AIBMM believe that if Shahabuddin's idea works, the ashraf elite will once again corner all the benefits of affirmative action.

Political assertions such as those discussed above should be seen as attempts to move away from platitudinous invocations of the secular/communal divide. For, while these new assertions among Muslims certainly share a common ground with secular liberal politics, they also attempt to challenge the established community leadership which continuously invokes the threat of the Hindu Right in order to demand closing of ranks. Most of the voices of the kind referred to above, on the other hand, involve a refusal to defer their specific issues any longer in the name of a larger community identity. It is an insistence that the real interests of the community and "essential practices" of Islam can be decided only by a democratized community.

Caste politics and secularism

This aspect has been addressed at length in the previous chapter. If the secular nation functioned at the level of the modern institutions of civil society, excluding the non-modern masses, another crucial, perhaps central exclusion, was that of caste. Consider the provocative statement made by Dalit intellectual Chandra Bhan Prasad: "The British came too late but left too early." Prasad's point is that "secular" India has tolerated caste inequality with equanimity both before and after Independence. It was only the British who made any dent in it through policies such as legally ensuring that "Untouchables" could attend government schools. When upper-castes in Andhra Pradesh seceded from these schools and set up their own, the British government restricted jobs in government to government school graduates (Prasad 2000).

Everything that is critical of "secular" politics need not, in other words, be simply "communal." So completely does the opposition of secular/communal shape theorizing on Indian politics, that the active presence of actors who constitute themselves outside of this polarity often fails to be seen independently of it. As we saw in the last chapter, the alliance of the Dalit party, the BSP, with the BJP in Uttar Pradesh is too easily read as opportunistic support for

Hindutva when it is more centrally about the politics of caste. The BSP needs to secure allies for Dalits against the dominant backward-caste (predominantly Yadav) parties of that state since backward castes rather than Brahmins are the immediate oppressors of Dalits in the villages of northern India. These parties are opposed by the BJP too, with its largely Bania–Brahmin support base; hence the alliance between the two.

We have to recognize that “secularism” has been implicitly regarded as Hindu upper-caste and modernized upper-class all along (Nigam 2006b). This recognition might enable us to see that the energy expended in producing the supposedly unmarked “Indian” citizen hid from us two kinds of counter-currents: one, subaltern voices (Dalits, Adivasis, laboring populations) asserting their identities and needs against the development juggernaut; and two, majoritarian voices, such as those of Hindutva (Menon, N. 1998). And as we have seen earlier, allying with Hindutva has been one route of subaltern empowerment. Many of the political developments of the last decade, in particular, are in fact incomprehensible without a framework that gives visibility to community/caste identity. Indeed, some scholars would argue that caste is as central to communal politics as it is invisible to secular politics. Dilip Menon (2006), for instance, suggests that communal violence is Hindutva’s attempt to displace its internal caste violence on to an external Other. This is an argument the lineage of which actually goes back to B. R. Ambedkar himself, who had often argued that Hinduism targeted Muslims and Christians as a way of dealing with their own lower-caste/Dalit people, who wanted to exit from the Hindu social order.

Hindus and Hindutva

Is there a community of Hindus whom the BJP can expect will unflinchingly vote for it? Would the RSS win an election if it contested one, even if the voters were all Hindu by birth?

As far as practicing Hindus are concerned, the answer is no. Even among Ram-worshippers, Hindutva politics is not an obvious choice. One of the staunchest opponents of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement was the head priest of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, Mahant Lal Das. He was vocal in his opposition, and paid with his life – he was

found brutally murdered on November 16, 1993. Within Ayodhya itself, there is organized opposition from local Hindu residents to the building of a temple at the site of the demolished mosque, and it is telling that fifteen years after the demolition of the mosque, and despite six unbroken years of the BJP being in power at the center, no temple has been built there.¹⁸

Or let us take the story of the Sankat Mochan temple in Benaras that was the site of a bomb blast in 2006. Veer Bhadra Misra, the *mahant* (head priest) of the temple, saw to it that prayers were resumed within hours of the blasts. Thereafter he evicted from the premises all representatives of the Hindu Right, including the Bajrang Dal and BJP leader, Vinay Katiyar. He then joined hands with Abdul Batin Nomani, the Mufti-e-Benaras and the imam of the adjacent Gyanvapi mosque, and together they went around visiting the injured in hospital, organizing joint programs including campaigns and music festivals and the recitation of the Hanuman Chalisa¹⁹ by burqa-clad Muslim women (Subrahmaniam 2006).

Another instance of the non-malleability of Hindu society in relation to Hindutva designs was seen a couple of years ago. The BJP tried to mobilize a “Hindu” wave after its electoral defeat in 2004 around the arrest of the Shankaracharya of Kanchi, a Hindu spiritual leader of south India, in a case involving internal rivalries within his *muth* (religious organization). The issue simply failed to take off, the Shankaracharya’s significance being limited to one sect of Brahmins in the south. It is revealing that the BJP miscalculated the importance of this issue to Hindus in general.

It is as political actors, not as believers, that many Hindus are mobilized for the politics of Hindutva. But there is also determined resistance from within the ranks of “Hindus,” for varying reasons, to being mobilized in this way – from Dalits voting with their feet as mass conversions to Buddhism continue to be staged publicly; from feminists; from the emerging movements of gay and lesbian people (a banner at one of the protests against the Hindu Right’s violent attacks on the film of lesbian love, *Fire*, read defiantly, “Indian and Lesbian”);²⁰ from corporate executives and businesspeople (“India Inc.,” as this section has come to be known), fearing insecurity that will affect investments;²¹ from the thousands of ordinary Indians of

all communities and walks of life who poured into Gujarat to help rehabilitate the Muslims affected by the violence there, disavowing the politics of Hindutva.

The politics of Hindutva is thus neither religious fundamentalist nor anti-modern. Ashis Nandy has long argued that communalism is in fact a product of the logic of modern governance (Nandy 1985). For Nandy, paradoxically, the demolition of the Babri Masjid was “proof that the secularization of India had gone along predictable lines” (Nandy 1994: 10).

When the Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992 the shock in secular ranks was matched by the confidence that this was only a matter of a short sharp battle. Over ten years down the line, with Gujarat behind us, secular India looks back on that shock as well as that optimism with disbelief – why was it taken so off-guard? And why did it appear to be such an easy battle to win? Why, to begin with, had the battle raging beneath the polished surfaces of Nehruvian secularism been invisible?

Locating secularism as it has developed in the Indian context, we suggest a distinction between secularism as a *value* (of non-discrimination, acceptance of difference, mutual respect) and secularism as a *principle of statecraft*. Recognizing the latter’s implication in statist and authoritarian discourses, political theory needs to unhinge secularism from the state, to rework it into our everyday practices. That reworking will have to confront the uncertainties of democratic functioning in political society, and not depend on moral and normative certainties to impose secularism from above. We believe it is possible to continue to call ourselves secular in the first sense while mounting a critique of the practice of secularism by the Indian state. Perhaps the greatest gain of the last decade and a half for democracy in India is the recognition that “secularism,” sixty years down the line, is and will always be in the process of becoming.

Times of India, July 17, 1998, p. 12, as told to Vidya Subramaniam. Uma Bharati has since left the BJP.

10 Saheli, Sabla Sangh, Action India, Disha, Women's Center, Forum Against Oppression of Women and Awaz-e-Niswan, *Development for Whom – a Critique of Women's Development Programmes*, 1991.

11 See Chapter 2.

12 There is now recognition on the Left, although it is grudging, that caste is a reality of Indian politics, and has to be dealt with. The CPI(M)'s *Draft of Updated Party Programme* (May, 2000) acknowledges that "The assertion by dalits has a democratic content reflecting the aspirations of the most oppressed sections of society. The backward castes have also asserted their rights in a caste-ridden society." This is, however, qualified by the following: "At the same time, a purely caste appeal which seeks to perpetuate caste divisions for the narrow aim of consolidating vote banks and detaching these downtrodden sections from the common democratic movement has also been at work" (p. 25). The Left engagement with caste is still very uneasy.

2 Politics of Hindutva and the minorities

1 Adivasi gods vary from region to region. In Dangs in Gujarat, for example, they worship Waghdev (a tiger deity), Nagdev (a snake deity), Dongardev (a hill deity), and Satimata, which is today interpreted in the terms of the *Ramayana* as a version of Sita. They also have their own *Ramayana* in which Ram is not the hero (Devy 2005: 9).

2 See Chapter 6.

3 Communalism/communal are the terms used in the Indian subcontinent to refer to exclusivist, religious identity-based politics.

4 "Jhajar lynching was mistaken identity," *The Times of India*, November 28, 2002.

5 Bajrang Dal means Squad of Bajrang or Hanuman, the most devoted follower of Ram.

6 "Globalization" functions in public discourse as a stand-in for a whole range of negative features such as privatization, trade liberalization and opening up for foreign capital. The complexity of this phenomenon is unpacked over Chapters 3 and 4.

7 A provision under Muslim personal law that enables Muslim men to divorce unilaterally by uttering the word *talaq* three times.

8 This was a case of a Hindu married man converting to Islam in order to marry for the second time. Flavia Agnes points out that the judgment focused entirely on Muslim personal law, avoiding entirely the issue of bigamy by Hindu men, thus deliberately, and wrongly, assuming that the only breach of monogamy among Hindu men is by conversion to Islam.

9 A recent instance is a 2006 judgment by the Supreme Court that if a male member in a Hindu family dies without leaving a will, his share of coparcenary (joint family) property should be divided among his children

on the basis of “notional partition,” i.e. as if the partition of property was effected just before his death on the basis of the Hindu Succession Act (HSA). Under this act daughters do not have a direct share in ancestral property, they have a right only to the father’s individual share of it. Thus this judgment ensured that instead of the two daughters and one son of the deceased man getting a third each of his ancestral property, the property was to be considered to have first been equally divided between father and son, and only one half (the father’s) was divided among the three children. This was a simply reported news item, with neither judges nor the media nor Hindutva forces becoming agitated about gender discriminatory aspects of Hindu religious personal laws. “Hindu law. Notional partition without will,” *The Hindu*, October 10, 2006. Available at <<http://www.hindu.com/2006/10/10/stories/2006101013200300.htm>>.

The HSA was amended in 2005 to give daughters equal share in ancestral property, but this does not apply retrospectively. Nevertheless, while lower courts had evidently accepted the daughters’ claim in this case, the Supreme Court judgment chose to interpret the HSA in a gender-discriminatory way.

10 For a more extensive discussion of the Uniform Civil Code issue, see Nivedita Menon (2000).

11 Another emotive site for Hindutva politics. See Romila Thapar (2005).

12 “Godhra train fire accidental: Banerjee Report,” *The Times of India*, March 4, 2006.

13 “Municipal win perks up Modi,” *Telegraph*, July 21, 2004.

14 B. R. Ambedkar, for instance, was labeled by Hindutva votary Arun Shourie as casteist and anti-nationalist for insisting on prioritizing caste oppression.

15 The Waqf is a religious endowment run by theologians and meant to finance religious activities.

16 Sikand (2004b) reports on an important conference in New Delhi, organized at the Jamia Hamdard, “that brought together a number of Muslim women activists from different parts of India, as well as some members of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board to discuss a range of issues relating to Muslim women.” More importantly, newspapers such as the *Milli Gazette* have begun to carry statements issued by the AIMWPLB. See report <<http://www.milligazette.com/IndMusStat/2006a/966-aimwplb-12jun06-reservation.htm>> for instance.

17 Imrana alleged that she was raped by her father-in-law, and filed a complaint with the police. Following this the ulemas of Darul Uloom, Deoband, issued a fatwa, saying she could no longer stay with her husband as she had had sex with her father-in-law. A major controversy erupted threatening to blow up into a Shah Bano-type polarization. The BJP was of course ready to pounce once again and raise the issue of a uniform civil code, while chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav came out in support of the clerics’ fatwa. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) was split over the fatwa. Eventually, the father-in-law was found guilty and

sentenced by a criminal court to ten years in prison, a decision welcomed by the AIMPLB. The last known of Imrana before she fell off the news pages is that she's been sent back to her maternal home with her five children, while her husband, a poor rickshaw-puller, has been thrown out of the house. The point is, however, that both she and her husband refused to be cowed by the fatwa.

18 For a history of Ayodhya as a multi-religious center with multiple influences from Buddhism to Islam and Sufism, see the Hindi book *Ayodhya: Sanjhi Sanskriti, Sanjhi Virasat* (Ayodhya: Shared Culture, Shared Traditions) by Vidya Bhushan Rawat, New Delhi: Books for Change, 2005. Book review in English by Yoginder Sikand available at <http://www.indianmuslims.info/books_info/history/ayodhya_shared_culture_and_traditions_vidya_bhushan_rawat.html?PHPSESSID=42e9f9db38eb87b09a5fcb2fd10997b4>.

19 Prayer to Hanuman, Ram's devoted deputy.

20 For a discussion of this episode, see Chapter 5.

21 See report "Gujarat riot toll: millions of pounds," Rashmee Z. Ahmed, *Times of India*, May 15, 2002, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com:80/cms.dll/articleshow?art_id=9984880>, accessed May 5, 2007. Subsequently, Gujarat has managed to recover from this setback and has been among the foremost state governments in attracting private investment.

3 Globalization I: accumulation by dispossession

1 We have borrowed the expression "accumulation by dispossession" from David Harvey (2003), though our argument takes a very different direction.

2 We are aware of critiques of this study by proponents of big dams, but we do not think that these are able to address the substantial questions raised by the authors. For one such critical review, see A. Vaidyanathan in *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 3, 2005.

3 See report by Independent Media in <<http://www.countercurrents.org/hr-im060106.htm>>.

4 "Jindal Stainless scouting for buys in Asia, Europe," Mines and Communities Website, August 23, 2006, <<http://www.minesandcommunities.org/Action/press1198.htm>>.

5 See official site of the External Affairs Ministry, <<http://meaindia.nic.in/indiapublication/Special%20Economic.htm>>.

6 Editorial, "Mining and industrialization update Orissa," p. 1, available at <<http://www.freewebs.com/epgorissa/M%20I%20Update/Final%20Mining%20Update%20-%20October%5B1%5D.pdf>>.

7 It may be noted that a book on the rise to power of Dhirubhai Ambani, the founder of the Reliance Group of Industries, by Hamish MacDonald, *The Polyester Prince: The Rise of Dhirubhai Ambani* (Allen and Unwin, 1998) has been made unavailable by the might of Reliance. One single copy is available at the time of writing this, on Amazon at the cost of US \$997!